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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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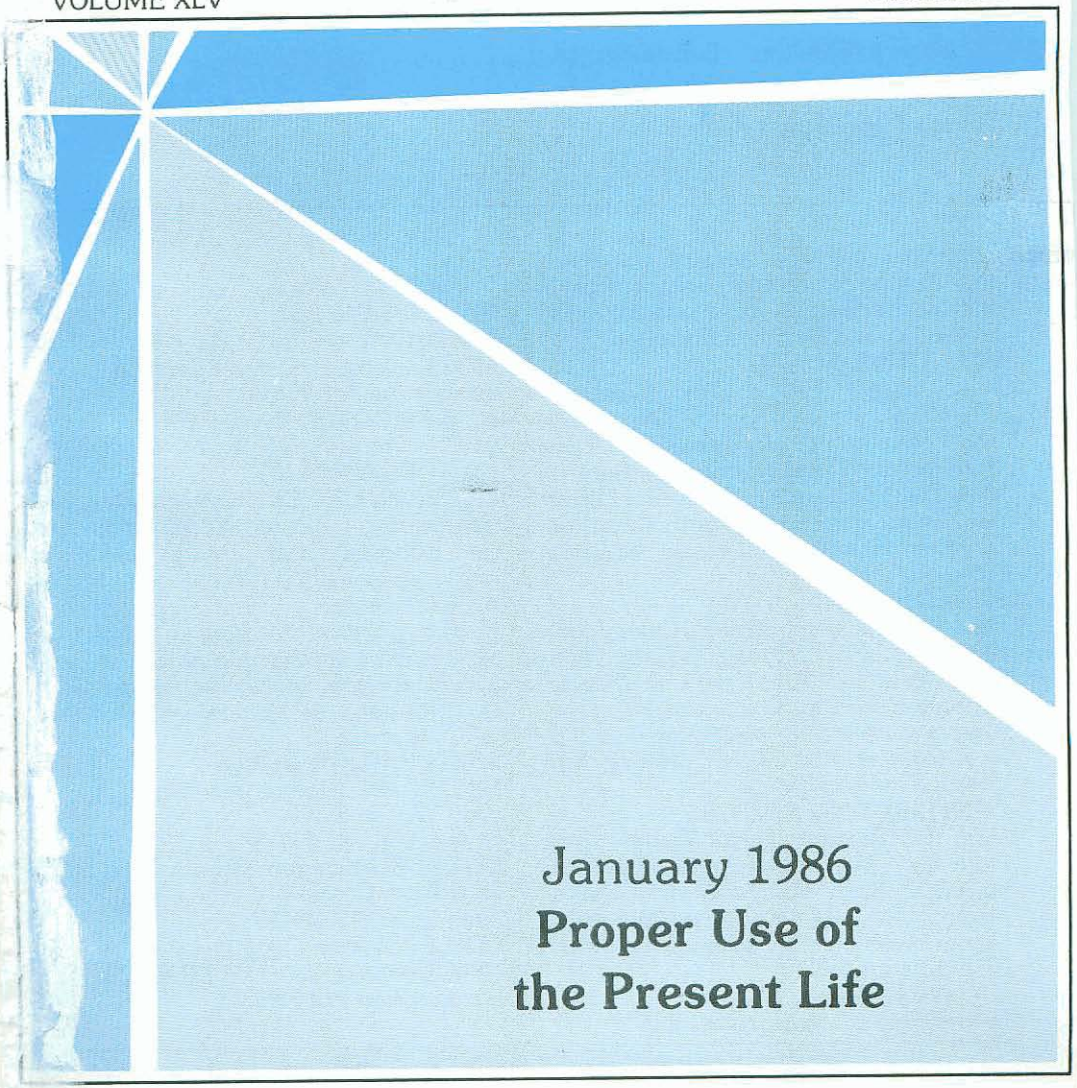

January 1986

Proper Use of the Present Life

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YOUTH AND MISSIONS

Editor's Note: The title on the cover ought to bring a lot of questions into your mind. What has the title "The Proper Use of the Present Life" to do with me? What do we mean by "proper use"? And, how does this relate to the rest of the title?

A few months ago, I encouraged the Beacon Lights Staff and the Young People's Federation members to provide our magazine with topics that our various writing departments could write about. The response to this encouragement was excellent. The next step was to appoint a committee of three to take on the task of organizing the topics for use in our magazine. After an evening of discussion, the appointed committee come to the July meeting of the Beacon Lights Staff with two special issues for January and March, focusing on the life of the covenant child today.

Each rubric was assigned a particular subject area to write on.

I have also included an article by Mr. Mitch Dick on Bible study which fits in with the emphasis of Part I.

by Prof. Robert D. Decker

Young people have a calling with respect to the mission task of the church. If fact, it may very well be that God has blessed some of our young men with gifts which He wants them to use for the ministry of the Word! Capable young men in the churches ought prayerfully and seriously face the question whether God is calling them to be ministers or missionaries of the Gospel. Aside from this, however, all young people have a calling to be involved in the mission work of the churches.

Christ calls and ordains missionaries and sends them out to fields both at home and abroad. Christ does this through the office of believer. It is the church, believers as the Body of Christ, that preaches the Gospel in all the world. The church does this through the office of believer. This is the way Christ works. According to Acts 13 the Holy Spirit said to the church at Antioch, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." After fasting and praying the believers there laid hands on Barnabas and Saul and sent them away on the first missionary journey. In close connection with this is the fact that through the consistory the believers supervise the work and life of the missionaries. Apart from this rule of Christ the missionary cannot and may not function.

Believers, also young believers, have the calling to support the missionaries. Believers are called to provide liberally for the earthly needs of the missionary and mission. God calls all believers to do this. Apart from this there can be no mission work at all. Believers must also support the missionaries in prayer. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesians to pray for him

so that he might have boldness to open his mouth to make known the mystery of the Gospel. He made the same request of the Thessalonians that the word of God might have free course. To the believers at Colosse came that same request. It ought to be obvious that apart from the support, encouragement, and prayers of the believers missionaries cannot labor. This calling does not merely come to the older members of the church. It is the calling of youthful believers as well.

All believers, also young believers, have the calling to be living witnesses of the gospel. The New Testament is simply full of this. I Peter 2:12 exhorts us to have our conversation (manner of living) honest among the Gentiles. The purpose is that they may see our good works and glorify God in the day of visitation. According to I Peter 3:15 we must be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks a reason of that hope that is in us. The purpose is that unbelievers who falsely accuse our good conversation in Christ may be ashamed. I Corinthians 10:31-33 teaches whether we eat or drink or whatever we do we must do all to the glory of God. We must not give offense either to the Jew or the Gentile or the church. We must follow the Apostle's example who sought not his own profit but the profit of many that they might be saved. And, to cite no more, Acts 8:4 tells of the Jerusalem Christians who were scattered abroad by the persecution which followed Stephen's martyrdom. They went everywhere preaching the Word. Literally they were "evangelizing" the Word, announcing the good news of Christ.

This is the calling of believers. They must witness by means of spoken word. They are called to evangelize, to speak of the Wonder of God's Grace in Jesus Christ. They must call people to faith and repentance. They must not keep still about God and His Christ and Word. Always they must be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks a reason of the hope that is in them. Believers are also called to witness by means of their actions and life. They must always live in every sphere of life in obedience to the will of God. Husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, single members of the church, young and old, all must witness to God's glory. This must be done in the home, at work, while on vacation. Always and everywhere believers all are called to live their lives in such a way that Christ is seen in them. This witness will have its fruit. It will provoke the hatred and persecution of the ungodly. It will render them without excuse and they will be ashamed in the day of visitation. This witness will also be God's means to bring His elect into the church where they will hear Christ through the preaching of the Word, believe in Him, call upon His Name and be saved. This truth is beautifully summed by the Heidelberg Catechism when it teaches that one of the reasons the Christian must do good works is that: ". . . by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ." (cf. Lord's Day 32)

This calling of the church is rooted in her eternal election in Christ Jesus. God's purpose in electing His church in Christ is that His praises may be revealed by the church. In I Peter 2:9 the Scriptures teach that believers are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people. The purpose is that they might show forth the praises of Him Who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

This means that God has set apart the church for Himself in the midst of the world. That the church is elect in Christ, therefore, implies a serious calling and that calling is to manifest God's praises. The church does this by the preaching of the Word and the witness of believers. By that mighty power the elect are gathered out of the nations, the ungodly are condemned, and the Kingdom of God comes in Christ in all its glory.

This is the calling of all believers. Let youthful believers know this is their calling. Our prayer is that their youthful zeal and energy may be channeled into a living, powerful witness of the great things God has done for them in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition there are specific ways in which young people can be involved in the mission work of the churches. They can, for example, offer their time and gifts to the Evangelism or Church Extension Committee of the church of which they are members. Young People can assist in the mailing of tracts, pamphlets, and other printed materials. They can distribute these materials themselves among friends, coworkers, and/or fellow students. They can place suitable materials in doctors' offices, hospitals, and other places. These are just some of the ways in which the youth of the church can be actively involved. They can volunteer similar services to the Domestic and Foreign Mission Committees of our churches.

Your People ought also to correspond with our missionaries. Whether a missionary labors in North America or in a foreign country the work is difficult, lonely, sometimes even frustrating. It is encouraging to him and his family to receive evidence of the love, concern, and prayerful support of the youth of the church "back home." Young people can also correspond with young converts with whom the missionaries are working. This would be encouraging to the young converts, foster the communion of saints among the youth, and be helpful in building up new and youthful converts in the faith. Such practice would also yield increased awareness on the part of the youth of the specific needs and concerns of the mission field. Thus too the youth would be enabled to pray for missions more knowledgeably.

These are just **some** of the ways in which young people can be actively involved in missions. No doubt the readers can think of many more! Talk about these things among yourselves. Discuss these matters in your Young People's Society. Speak to your pastor and/or elders and your parents about this. Above all remember the word of Jesus which, though spoken to the twelve disciples, also applies to all of us: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32, 33)

According as we commit our way to our God, we are free from anxiety, and rejoice in the Lord. And that joy nothing can take away from us. It is abiding!

Rev. H. Hoeksema

Truth vs. Error
CONFESSION OF FAITH

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. . .And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:47, 69). These texts are rendered quite differently in most modern New Testaments. (See the pamphlet, "Bible Archaisms and Modern Versions," p. 20, 21). To make confession of faith is really to confess Christ. To be able to do that we must first know Him. We come to know Him only through the Bible. Therefore, we want the best Bible there is, the King James Bible. Modern Bibles as they are published leave us with a shorter and shorter Bible. So we want that version which provides us with the complete Bible, the Authorized Version. On verse 69 the modern reading is, "You are the holy One of God." The familiar reading is, "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Since we connect this with verse 47 we should note that modern versions from this latter verse omit the words "on Me." Lange's Commentary maintains that the King James Version's reading, **on Me** "refutes all forms of ecclesiasticism which throw any kind of obstruction between the soul and Christ as an essential condition of salvation, whether it be the authority of the pope, or council or creed or system of theology, or the intercession of saints, as good works of our own. . .Without faith **in Christ** there can be no salvation for any sinner!"

Taking these two verses together we have, "Amen, amen, I say unto you, the one believing on Me has everlasting life. . .and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." From this we see that believing in Christ is necessary to confessing Christ. We cannot confess Christ if we do not believe in Him. Peter, in this context, speaking for the apostles, expresses **their** confession. According to this passage there is an antithesis between making this confession and not making it. Making it ours we own Jesus. If we do not make this confession, we disown Him. (Cp. v. 66-67). So we believe that we may confess. Confession is the fruit of faith. "With the heart man believeth; and with the mouth confession is made" (Rom. 10:9, 10). When the confession flows out of a full heart, it is made freely, spontaneously and gladly. Haven't you been doing this and living in this spirit just about all your life? Isn't that the way it is with covenant children and young people? Then there will be, all in due time, that step taken of making public confession of faith before the elders and before the congregation. Finally, this inseparable connection of believing and confessing the faith will continue so long as you live.

Also there is first of all believing in order to be sure. This divine order is the very opposite of the human (scientific) order, which is, I must be

sure first, then I can believe. But we cannot be **sure** of God's Truth until first we have **believed** it. "I had fainted unless I had believed" (Ps. 27:13). Nor is it that we must understand first, then we can believe; for it is "through faith we understand" (Heb. 11:3). There are those who "desire to **understand** the mystery of the Trinity **before** they will believe it." But that will never work. For "a wise man will **hear** (believe and obey). . .to **understand**. . ." (Prov. 1:5, 6).

"The living God" stresses what the Father is in distinction from the idols of the heathen (I Thess. 1:9), rather than the Father in distinction from the Son. For the Son Himself is the living God, and is called that in Heb. 3:12 with 6, 7, 14. Our confession, then, an earnest expression of our faith, is **lived** in turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God!

In this Gospel According to John there are many other confessions. There is the confession of John the Baptist: "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world . . .and I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God" (Jn. 1:29, 34). Then there is the confession of Nathanael: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel" (1:49). The confession of the converted Samaritans was, "we. . .know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (4:42). Martha's confession was, "Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ the Son of God which should come into the world" (11:27). Thomas' confession was, "My Lord and my God!" (20:28).

Making confession of faith formally and publicly is something you do at a point between your baptism and your coming to the Lord's Table. That does not mean that before doing so you never have made any sort of confession of faith. For when at home you take part in Family Worship by hearing and reading the Scriptures, and by prayer, sometimes you yourself leading the others in prayer, you confess **the** faith and faith in Christ. When you attend the house of God and listen to the preaching of the Word on the Sabbath days, by such a "life-style" you confess the faith. To attend a public school when there is a Christian school to attend is to deny the faith. Regular attendance at the Christian school is a way of confessing the faith. From birth, in the Christian home, in the Reformed church, in the Christian school, and in the Sunday school and catechism classes you have been taught (and rightly so) what to think, what to believe and what to confess. As you progress through your instruction in Bible History to Reformed Doctrine, you learn that as you grow older there is always more, in detail, to confess. But recall when you were in the Bible History for Beginners class: you believed what you were taught then, didn't you? I did! You believed it because that was what your parents believed; and you have since learned that they were right. You believe what your minister preaches, because he backs up everything he says from the Bible. Isn't that why you all along have believed what you were taught—because "that's what the Bible says"? Even in your pre-school age you made a confession of faith every time you sang, "Jesus Loves Me," or "Praise the Lord, for He is good" (Psalter No. 292), or when you learned to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd" and to recite the Twenty-third Psalm. So that the making of public confession of faith springs out of a life of confessing Christ and

His truth from early childhood on. Abraham Kuyper said, "children should be constantly confessing their Savior."

Children in our Christian schools learn to confess their faith by writing poems and articles for the school paper. It could be that in connection with a "current events" class their teacher assigns pupils to write a one-page composition on, "Why I Do Not Fear World Destruction by Nuclear War." That would provide an excellent opportunity to confess one's faith. (For many children in and of the world have their hearts failing them for this fear.) Perhaps another Christian school project might be to have the pupils write to the (Dutch) Afrikaner children of South Africa to encourage them in their Christian schools, home and Reformed church life as nationally they face bitter opposition from almost all other nations. What a practical way to confess the Reformed Faith!

So our covenant children and young people grow up confessing and learning more intelligently to confess their faith. They ought then to have an increasing awareness of the fact that they are members of a confessing church. That awarness ought to fill them with a joyful anticipative desire to know more of the great Reformed confessions. Why should I/you feel that way? Because of what my church confesses, which is, the most glorious Gospel truth! That confession of my church cannot be expressed more beautifully than it is in the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day, Ques. and Ans. 1): "My only comfort in life and in death is that I with body and soul, both in life and in death, belong unto my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil. . ." Can you quote the entire question and answer from memory? Some may criticize catechetical and Bible memorization, arguing, nothing like that can take the place of personal heartfelt experience. But memorize that entire introductory paragraph of the catechism anyway. Then ask yourself what sort of real spiritual experience may you expect in your life? You will experience all your life long, in ever increasing richness, exactly the covenant mercies there so perfectly described by the Reformed fathers.

You see, then, the way in which we must go in order to make public confession of faith. First, we must read and study the Bible; know that the Bible **is** the Word of God, and that it is because God speaks only in that Book. He is its Author. The Bible is the very foundation of our Reformed Faith, and is the fundamental basis of our confession. Second, the heart of the Bible is Christ. He is the One we confess. Third, the manner in which we confess Christ is in the way of repentance and faith. So we read in the Form For the Administration of Baptism, p. 57, that "the Apostles, as appeareth from Acts 2, 10 and 16, baptized none who were of years of discretion, but such as made confession of their faith and repentance." Compare also Acts 20:21, where it is recorded that the Apostle Paul in his preaching went about "testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Fourth, there ought to be, and we believe there is, generally, evidence that covenant people have from earliest childhood been living a life of repentance and

faith; and all this while they have been instructed in the Bible at home, in the catechism class, in the Christian school, and in the church through the preaching of the Word. Finally, they are instructed in "The Essentials of Reformed Doctrine." By this time they have "come to years of discretion." The next step is to make confession of faith before the church and before the whole world. But it is often right at this point that the young Reformed Christian hesitates, "shakes in his boots," fearful that he will not be able to **live** his confession in a life of godliness and thankfulness. It is of little comfort to him to be reminded that for years now he has already been living what he has been confessing. For now, more than ever before, he is conscious of his sinful nature and of his "youthful lusts." How shall he ever "hold out"? He fears the shame of bringing dishonor upon Christ's name. How then dare he take such a public stand for Christ, to publicly commit himself henceforth to **live** the life he professes and confesses? How can he live such a life "for the advantage and salvation of other members" of Christ's church (Heidelberg Catechism, Ans. 55) and to the glory of God?

It is impossible to live such a life in our own strength. We would certainly fail if we thought we could do anything in our own strength. Jesus reminds us, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). Paul, on the positive side, puts it this way, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). To keep us living, faithfully, a life of thankfulness, the Lord has provided means of grace in the worship of God's house, prayer, the sacraments and the preaching of the Word. By these means we shall be spiritually nourished, grow in grace to become strong in the Lord.

Current Events and Comments
COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS

by David Rau

The **Beacon Lights** staff asked me to write an article on the communion of the saints. I was glad to oblige for we all need to be reminded about this aspect of our lives. As Christians, why is it so v al to have communion of the saints? It is one way in which we express our gratitude to God for that work of salvation which He has performed in us.

It would be helpful if we first defined what the communion of the saints is. According to I John 1:3, communion of the saints is fellowship that the saints have with God and Christ, and with fellow saints. This fellowship is rooted in Christ's love towards us. Without Christ's love, there is no communion of the saints. Communion of the saints is putting the brother or sister's welfare ahead of our own. We care nothing for ourselves.

Our love for Christ is bubbling over. We want our fellow saints to experience that love. This love for our fellow saints can take many forms. It may be helping a brother through a trial God has placed upon him. It may be just a kind word.

We probably have little trouble expressing the communion of saints within our own small circle of friends, but when we must show our love towards others, not in that circle, we shy away from that. Gal. 6:2-3 states, "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." This text points out that it is our duty as Christians to help and give assistance to other Christian brethren as circumstances may require. It is our duty to help not just those we want to help, but all Christians.

What does this help consist of? First of all, pray for your fellow Christians and their needs. Bring their needs before the throne of grace. Give your assistance and support whether it be in a spiritual matter or if the brother has a physical need. Help to build up your fellow Christian so that he too, fully experiences the grace of God. So often we are so concerned with ourselves and our own selfish desires, that we forget all about our brother and his needs. Help him to fill his needs.

Too often, we try to build our own selves up by pulling our brother down. We seem to think that by making him look bad, we will look better to others. We do this by ignoring those who aren't in our little clique! Or worse, we destroy someone's reputation by talking behind his back; we tell lies and half-truths that make it impossible to have Christian fellowship with that person. Even the truth should remain untold if it is damaging to someone.

Scripture is filled with passages that teach us how to treat one another. Romans 12:10 states, "Be ye kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Phil. 2:3 says, "Let each esteem other better than themselves." So then we are to view our fellow Christians in love; not as someone who is odd or weird, not even as one who is our equal, but as someone who is better than we. We must always seek to build him up. We must never destroy our brother by ignoring him or his needs. So often we see only what we want to see, help only those we want to help, and fellowship only with those we want to fellowship with. That is not right. God commands us to love one another.

Christian fellowship with one another must be an important part of our lives. A good starting point is to belong to societies and be an active member. Well, you say, society is a real drag. Why? Only because you get out of it exactly what you put in. If you don't prepare **and** participate, how can you possibly expect to get anything out of society. Societies are not to entertain us, but rather, to help one another grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.

James 1:19-20 gives us an excellent guide on our relationship to our brother. It states, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

Remember those words when you are dealing with other Christians. Remember that we are all part of one body: the body of Christ.

Critique

DATING IN THE LORD

by Bernie Kamps

As we consider this enjoyable and pleasant time of life, the first premise we must establish is an all important and encompassing one. We must date only those who love the Lord. If through dating we find our mate we will be joined together in one faith, one hope, and one doctrine. We will have unity in our God. Therefore, before the end of dating, Protestant Reformed young people will desire to and should only marry mates who confess and love the doctrines of Scripture as we hold to them in our Protestant Reformed Churches. I hope this strikes you as a thought provoking statement. One that limits you to dating a believer and limits your marrying a believer who holds the truth as you do.

We must remember that normally dating is not an end in itself. Dating is ultimately the ground work of getting married. I realize that in your early dating years you are not consciously contemplating marrying the one with whom you spend some time. But God has created us as people who are attracted to the opposite sex with view to us marrying and living together as a rule as a family, with children being born into the covenant. The Lord ordained marriage for the establishing and furthering of His church. We do well to bear this in mind and to realize that dating leads to marriage, which leads to a blessed state of serving God as a picture of Christ our husband loving us His bride the church.

Because of our desire to date and eventually to marry, let's discuss a few qualifications for the elect child of God to follow.

Earlier I mentioned that you should only marry those who confess the doctrines of Scripture as you hold to them as a Protestant Reformed believer. My reason is to establish a spiritual bond with whom you date, a bond of common beliefs in doctrine and a unified world life view. In order to be happy together you two must confess the same God, having Scripture as your foundation, common rule and guiding light. If you do not believe the same or are not actively working toward this, it is impossible to be dating harmoniously before the Lord. All of your other common interests, likes and dislikes of a secular and general nature are of little consequence. Your like faith is of utmost and primary importance. Look around you in the world and in the church - is there any sure foundation other than our common love and devotion to our Lord? Only as spiritual brothers and sisters can we live in harmony and confidence.

If you date outside of your denomination you must strive to be one in doctrine, one in interpretation of Scripture, and one in walk. So prior to marriage you confess the same doctrine held by your Protestant Reformed Church. Doctrine which dates back to the early church and the apostles. Doctrine which has withstood storms

of controversy during the time of the Reformers. Now the modern winds of change blow and give new direction to the church world today. Only by God's grace can we remain true to His Word. Be prayerfully careful who you date. In this way you will marry a mate who confesses Jehovah as you do.

What is the purpose for dating? Isn't it to get better acquainted, to grow in affection for one another? Dating is a lovely time. A time when you mature in responsibility and independence. You feel as though the whole world lies before you waiting to be discovered through the two of you. As you date you constantly seek for your partner's happiness. It's a time of sharing. A time of discussing all your interests and values.

Be sure to hold nothing back. As the two of you fall into love, remember how sweet it is to care for someone more than anything, even your father and mother. Remember too, to continue that devotion into marriage. Work hard toward retaining the new and fresh air of togetherness. If you think dating is a wonderful place to be, wait till you arrive on the path of marriage, it truly is a continuation and growing of commitment and love.

The joys of dating may never, nor should ever be marred with using one another for sinful lust. You will find that a great temptation exists as you two get to know each other intimately. Be on your guard. Be on guard especially of the temptation of wanting to be liked, so that you as a young lady will give up your morals for a special young man's affection. If you think sex will attract a guy, you're right! But if you think it will keep him, you're dead wrong. He will love you for your personality, not your body. God demands purity. We must serve Him with a chaste walk and conversation. Christian young men remember that as a man God has placed you in the leadership role even in dating. You may not tempt a young lady into immorality. As the leader, you must show that you are spiritually mature enough for marriage by leading in all aspects of dating life and godly walk. Too often young men look at worldly girls, as well as Christian girls, as a challenge to see if they can overcome the girls' reluctance to sin through their ability to charm. Rather lead to the path of Christian enjoyment and not the devil's playground.

Because your dating years are so special, enjoy them. You will always look back to them as pleasant, carefree days. Serve God in your dating life and pray with King David in Psalm 19, verse 13, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

Let us ask those who possess nothing but church membership, and yet want to be called Christians, how they can glory in the sacred name of Christ? For no one has any communion with Christ but he who has received true knowledge of him from the word of the gospel.

Golden Booklet of the true Christian Life by John Calvin

So very often. . .

by Mitch Dick

So very often when I read the Bible I do not study it. Oh, I look up from the words once in a while or reread them so that I might think about them a little more—but so very often I run stuck. And it is easy for my mind to wander. My mind does not think too long about just one thing, but it likes to bring in other thoughts which have nothing to do with the words I read. No, I will not kid myself or you: I am the one who likes with my mind so often to think about everything else except the subject at hand. Thus, when in my hand is the Bible, I often imagine it were a tennis racket or a novel or some sort of puzzle with which I could play. So often it is that I am crying to myself with the Bible open before me: "Oh that I could do anything but study the Scriptures!"

Why just the other day I was reading in Luke the 12th chapter. As so very often is the case, I was reading in the Bible just so that I would feel good about having read at least **something**. I was in that lazy frame of mind where it did not matter to me how much I understood, nor did it matter if I learned anything new or anything old in a new way. No, I just wanted to get through my daily routine which I so often pretend is devotion to God. Reading then I was fighting off boredom. Actually, I was not even fighting: reading, and right there in Luke, the words of our Savior even, was a real chore.

Please, I must show you how and what I was thinking.

The words of Jesus in Luke 12:29 were before my blank eyes: "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind." I had just eaten a couple of burgers and corn and ice cream for dessert and had washed it all down with some Mountain Dew. I was full. So full was I that most of my blood was down in my stomach, I am sure, helping me to digest. Only enough blood was in my head so that I could think that sleeping would be a very good thing to do soon. Jesus' words I did not hope to study. Indeed, at that point all I longed for, after this big meal and after such a long day at work, was a nap; all I wanted was to catch a few winks. The Bible would soon be my blanket.

"Why," you ask, "did you pick up the Bible in the first place?" The answer is: I really do not know. Maybe I picked it up as I pick up and read the Press. Reading the Press I choose what I want to read and disregard the rest. Also of press articles I judge what is true and what is false and what is important and what is unimportant. Yes, I do think that in my tired and lazy state I was reading God's Word as if I were skimming the headlines, glancing at an editorial, or reading statistics in the sports section. What was true to me in the Bible was only what I wanted to see with eyes half-shut and with my mind set to justify myself. I was full **of myself**, and there was no room, no room in my heart, to eat and digest **God's** meat and drink of **His** Word!

Bound for bed I quickly read: "And seek not ye what ye shall eat. . ." Our Lord must not have been referring to me in this verse in Luke 12, I reasoned. Why I am full of food and surely do not need to be warned not to anxiously seek what I am already full of. If I do get hungry after my nap there is plenty more food and drink in the refrigerator—no doubting that! This verse must be especially for Christians in Ethiopia. I could even upon reading that verse say to myself: "Our God is great Who provides for **us** in such abundance! Now He is providing me with sleep—the sleep of the righteous!"

That verse read much to my satisfaction, my eyes began to quiver shut. Before I dozed off however, I shifted my place in my easy chair and shook my head back and forth to clear my mind. You see, I was determined to get at least **one** chapter of news!

Verse 30: "For all these things do the nations of the world seek after. . ." Well, I can be quick about this one I thought. After all, I have been taught that as a covenant child I am not of the world even though I am in it. The word "world", I began to argue with an imaginary foe, must be understood in its context. Here in Luke 12:30 the context is clear: world, nations of the world, must refer to all those who are not of the little flock (verse 32). I, who am different from the world (and proof of this is that I so faithfully open my Bible!), must only remember not to be like them.

Verse 31: "but rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." Not doubting the promise of this verse for a minute, I could boldly say with all my heart: God has been good in adding unto me all the food and drink I just had, parents, friends, this chair in which I now rest. . .And He has added all this because I seek the kingdom of God. How good of me to seek and how good of God to reward me for my seeking!

Verse 32: "Fear not. . ."
As so very often when I come upon the word "fear" in Scripture I right away thought of those perilous end-times. In those dark days, I thought, maybe in 50 years from now, when the church is being persecuted, we will look at this verse and be comforted. For now, I must only remember in case anyone quizzes me that the Bible tells us not to fear. Fear is for babies who can not defend themselves. Also, the warning not to fear is especially for those last Christians. They will be on earth trembling in caves when in the future the nations of the world will try to overthrow their faith. Again and again in that last age to come God's people will have to remember not to fear.

Verses 33 and 34 of Luke 12 I read having crawled onto the floor in order to prepare myself for a delicious sleep. Maybe I was not really **that** determined to finish the chapter after all. There I was lying stretched-flat-out on our shag rug with a pillow tucked under my chin, my glasses laid to the side. From this comfortable position I yawningly concluded that these verses must have applied only to the stingy disciples in Jesus' time. **They** had to be told "sell that ye have and give alms." The treasures of salvation in Jesus Christ, and of salvation by grace alone, did not glitter so much to them as to us. **We** have had for almost 2000 years now His Holy Spirit poured out upon the church and in our hearts telling us better things than could be imagined before Pentecost. Among the better things we

hear is that there are deacons now who are supposed to give alms. We ought to be thankful that that burden is placed only upon a few men, and not upon us all. . .

My eyes snapped shut and I must have sunk into sleep for about 15 seconds. When I jolted awake my chin was still on the pillow, but my Bible had slipped from my fingers and my head had tilted slightly off to the right. I fumbled for the Bible and tried to read the next verse. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. . ."

Loins? What are loins?, I wondered. Sounds like something good to eat. We must gird them about with onions and peppers from the garden. Right at this moment, however, I do not need them. And girding them about I can only look forward to when I am hungry again. zzz. . .

As so very often is the case, I fell asleep reading the Bible. Maybe next time I will be able to **study**, and with you, what is seeking the kingdom by this, what seems to be a strange means indeed, of girding our loins and burning our lights. Until then may we sincerely pray that the Lord will wake us up. And as those who are awake may we be **fighters**, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5).

WHAT'S HAPPENING

by Paula Faber

BIRTHS:

God Blessed:

-Mr. and Mrs. P. De Young, of our South Holland church, with a son, Kyle Lewis.

-Mr. and Mrs. F. Van Baren, of our South Holland church, with a daughter, Katie Lynn.

-Mr. and Mrs. E. Vander Meulen, of our South Holland church, with a son, Timothy Joel.

-Mr. and Mrs. J. Meyer, of our Lynden church, with a son.

-Mr. and Mrs. T. Pomales, of Southeast church, with a son, Jason Jerriek.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS:

-Grandville church received the papers of the Jim Peterson family from Hope Church, the Bill Bos family from Loveland Church, the Bernie Wigger family from Faith Church, David Van Overloop from Hudsonville Church, Sandra Van Dyke from Faith Church.

-Lynden Church received the papers of Ivan Bleyenberg from our Edgerton Church.

-Hope Church received the papers of the Marvin Mastbergen family from Southeast Church.

CONFESSION OF FAITH:

-Tim Hanko and Ron Kuiper made public confession of faith in Hope Church in Grand Rapids.

-David De Vries, Karl Doezema, Steve Flikkema, Peter Faber, and Kathy Vander Vennen made public confession of faith in Southeast Church.

-Kristi Griffioen, Denise Miedema, David R. Ondersma, Michael Potjer, and Pamela Veldman made public confession of faith in Faith Church on December 1.

WRITE TO OUR MISSIONARIES TODAY!
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