BEACON LIGHTS

"The soul winner wins souls by living out his faith."

See "Winning Souls" by Pastor Ronald Van Overloop

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Contents

EDITORIAL
White Men Can't Jump - Tom Bergman 1
CHRISTIAN LIVING
Does Television Have A Place in a Christian's Home - John Huizenga 2
Testimonies - Sis Ying Ying 4
CHRISTIAN LIVING - "Winning Souls" - Pastor R. Van Overloop 5
Keeping Our Bodies Pure - Joe Brummel 7
DEVOTIONAL - Watching Daily At My Gates - Ship Hunter 9
KNOWING WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED
Reprobation and the Line of the Covenant - Rev. R. G. Moore 17
A View From England - Stephanie Rawson 19
Building A House Through Wisdom - Stefan Haney 20
Remember Now Thy Creator in the Days of Thy Youth - Philip Greatbatch 21
Adoption: God's Wonderful Plan - Ken & Sheri Pastoor, Dirk & Carol Monsma 22
He's Always There - Linda Pikkert 23
Preaching in the Past and Now - Rev. C. Hanko 24

White Men Can't Jump

by Tom Bergman

April 1, 1992- **White Men Can't Jump.** I saw that movie. I saw it at Studio 28 in Wyoming, MI. There was nothing special about the movie itself. It was hilarious, but it didn't win an Oscar. It was exciting, but not more than any other. It wasn't even the only movie I've seen; there were plenty others. My point is, **White Men Can't Jump** was the last movie I went to see and this is why:

Here are several evils I found in movies/TV:

1) Endless cursing and swearing . . . **White Men Can't Jump**

2) Brutal violence, child abuse, dishonor of parents, marital infidelity, lots of foul language, greed, and nudity . . . **The Last Boy Scout** (one of my favorites- saw it three times).

3) Earthly gain, power, fame, nudity, gross human butchery, emphasis on the power of man and the strength of his mind, and transsexualism . . . **Silence of the Lambs** (four times).

4) Multiple references to Mother Nature, rather than God the Lord and Creator . . . **The Bear**, other Disney productions

5) Graphic sex, not treated as a gift from God for husband and wife . . . **Basic Instinct**

6) Anti-Christian, "eat, drink, and be merry" lifestyles, problems addressed from a very humanistic, ungodly perspective . . . **Beverly Hills 90210**

7) Even worse . . . **Melrose Place, soap operas, talk shows**

8) Glorified violence for society's sake . . . **COPS, 911**

9) "Wonderful" family life apart from God. No mention of and no need for anything God-fearing . . . **Growing Pains, Family Ties, Home Improvement, Full House**

10) Most of the above, plus more . . . **In Living Color, The Simpsons, Married With Children**

These easy-to-get-to movies and programs are horribly wrong in their anti-Christian nature. I never **ever** want to see covenant youth attending such filth- in theater or in the home!

Are there any questions? Sure! Whenever we have a problem, we go to Scripture. **Scripture is the revealed Word of the Lord of your life!** We sing of Him every Sunday, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise Him all creatures here below." He is worthy of all blessing, honor, glory, and power. So before Him we humbly ask: What is taught to us in the Scriptures? How to honor and praise God, from whom all blessings flow, in our daily walk?

Matthew 6:19-21 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, . . . But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

I Peter 2:11 "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as pilgrims and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

There are plenty more passages. Find them. Search the Scriptures.

Two questions for you. Do we show thankfulness to God by what we watch? If not, is it a problem that needs to be dealt with among our young people, young adults, plenty-old-to-know-better adults, and our precious children? Oh, you don't suppose for one minute that the Almighty One who can snatch your breath away RIGHT NOW doesn't know about our pet sins? He knows us! You don't think that the One from whom all blessings flow doesn't understand our intentions as we watch hour after hour of worthless entertainment? He knows our frailty and the power and seduction involved! That's why He **CARES** for His children in time of need, giving them the above words of instruction and many more. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Psalm 103:13).

In spite of God's fatherly care, we often go against our conscience. I went to movies; I still have a TV in the house. **I loved them.** I surrounded myself with temptation and ended up consumed with lusts of the flesh . . . .

Consumed with lusts of the flesh? A little too harsh, don't you think?

Uh-uh. I don't think so.

I laughed as hateful insults were exchanged. I

laughed. I cheered for the violence, the kicks to the face and the bloody killings. I cheered for the **bloodiest!** I thrilled at the sight of a beautiful woman's half-naked body, especially the almost completely naked ones. Loved it! LOVED IT! And the movies with no sex, no violence, and no cursing- I easily slipped these past my conscience. Yet aren't these the grossest? Aren't these the subtlest? They have no mention of God's praise and honor, no indication as to a single Godfearing intention. Think about it. These are the ones we are quickest to allow - ungodly as they are. Remember what I said - no more movies, no TV (see also Rev. Gritters' articles in the Standard Bearer). None whatsoever, not even **Home Improvement**.

White Men Can't Jump wasn't subtle at all. But (go figure), there I was enjoying myself fully as Billy (Woody Harrelson) cracked a remark about his money jar, his wife, and a hideous desecration of sex, which is a gift from God. Follow me now to the tables of the law. Two tables. "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22). First commandent: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20). Movie attendance makes a sinful, harmonious link between the two tables. We covet these movies and TV's (10th commandment) and pledge our time and money to these for our enjoyment (1st) instead of "Seek ye first . . . ."

Do we show thankfulness by what we watch?

Do we have a problem in our lives? Over all, I say we do! The filth of television is causing our homes to look and smell like rotten cesspools!

Movies, television, or the like are not wrong in essence. Yet, if they hinder you from the work of God's kingdom, I suggest you stay away from all movies and throw the TV out. I do mean throw it out on the street for the garbage man to pick up! Please! people,PLEASE!!! Look what it does to your home! If you ignore the Lord of your life and still watch you are denying Christ, not yourself and your earthly pleasures.

The apostle Peter denied Christ. The story is well known. "I know not what thou sayest."

"I do not know the man."

"I KNOW NOT THE MAN!" (Matt. 26).

Peter wept bitterly after this denial of his Lord and Savior. Isn't it time we did too?

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Does Television Have A Place in a Christian's Life

by John Huizenga

You are most likely quite aware of the big three television evils: sex, violence, and profanity. No Christian should voluntarily sit in an easy chair and watch such things. But even if you watch only the "good" things like the news, sports, family sitcoms, or whatever, you may still be influenced by worldly philosophies. If you throw your television set out of the window, the evil philosophies of the television world still creep into your home. Television is powerful, and it is everywhere. As of January 1, 1991, 92,100,000 U.S. households owned at least one television set. That is 98% of all U.S. households! Television is huge; so huge that we loose sight of it as a whole.

Whether we watch or not, television influences us. We must know what television is in light of the Bible, in order to understand its influence and flee from its evils. In this article I will first discuss what television is and then we will see in the light of Scripture if there is any room for television in the Christian life.

What is television? Not, what is **a** television, but what is television. The responses of most people to this question reflect what a television does. It is a source of entertainment, it is a source of news, it is a teacher, it is bad, it is good. But such definitions do not get at the essence of television.

Magazines and newspapers refer to television as a media; more specifically, a form of mass media. Mass media is a means of communication that reaches and influences large numbers of people. It follows then that television is a means of communication. We usually do not think of television as communication. Who is talking to whom and what are they talking about?

The term "media" is simply the plural form of the term "medium" "Medium" in the sense of using turpentine as a medium for thinning paint. Turpentine as

a medium helps the painter acquire the right consistency in his paint so that he can effectively apply the paint on the object to be painted. When television is called a media, it implies that messages are enhanced in a number of ways to suit the technology of television and make communication easier and more effective. Mediating is the activity of television, that is, television functions as a mediator between the two parties that are communicating.

The question remains: who is communicating, and how and what are they communicating? To say that Hollywood is communicating all of its wicked ideas to everyone else is oversimplifying the situation. Most television in the United States is commercial television. Commercial television operates under the principle of maximizing audience size. The companies that are running commercials want the largest possible audience because then they will sell more of their product. If you want the largest possible audience, then you must show to the audience what you think they want to see at a particular time of the day.

Public television operates in a similar way. Instead of companies running commercials, the television stations receive their money from the government and from the people watching. What you see on Public television is a combination of what the government would like us to see and what the people watching want to see.

Hollywood, as the soul of most television, acts as the mediator of television. It mediates to people what it thinks the majority of the people want to see. But don't imagine that the devilish heart of Hollywood mediates the communication without first injecting it with its own corrupting virus!

At this level it is difficult to distinguish the parties involved in the system of television communication. It is like a dog chasing its tail. The people seem to be using Hollywood to tell themselves what they want to hear. But the communication takes place at a deeper level than what we are accustomed to thinking.

The word "communicate" comes from the Latin word "communicare" which means "to make common, to unite." Unbelievers want to unite because the world is very confusing for them. In the past they have tried to make sense of the world by inventing their own gods of wood and stone. Now they make high tech gods out of wire, silicon and plastic through which they can unite by sharing their ideas and feelings through the priests of Hollywood. Hollywood, with its culture antennae, picks up the ideas and feelings radiating from the raging world and merges them into a story, with which, they hope, the audience will be able to identify and feel a little closer to the rest of the world.

From this perspective it is easy to see how the world uses television as a religion in which man worships himself. Man is also using television in this connection to rebuild the tower of Babel. Even the world itself is proud to admit that it is rebuilding the tower of Babel. The television critic Robert Schraag claims that "television, more than any other facet of our society, creates the closest thing we have to cultural unity. It provides shared experiences to a fragmented society. It reports news that shapes our perception of the world and tells the stories that affect our notions of truth and reality." (Vande Berg 220)

Keep in mind, however, that a television set in itself is no more evil than the wood and stone that the Canaanites used to make their gods. Yet we cannot ignore the fact that the world uses the technology of television in its works of darkness. Keep in mind also that television is inherently very effective in communicating the imaginations of man. The television screen perfectly frames the human face through which man most effectively communicates what is in his heart and mind. We must be especially careful when we watch television. The Bible tells us to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph. 5:11) I personally find it very difficult to heed this demand of Scripture while watching television. Television is not exciting unless you participate in and identify yourself with the story being told.

Man pursues after his own lusts, but God commands his people to "depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it," to "ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established," to "abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Psalm 34:14; Prov. 4:26; Rom 12:9).

The world uses Hollywood and television as its mediator between worldly men and their god of wicked lusts. The children of the Living God have Christ as their almighty, omnipresent mediator, who hears the prayers of those who come to God in meekness and humility.

Television boldly expresses, through the vivid image of a man's face, the vain imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart, which are only evil continually. God has given to his people His everlasting Word: the glorious stories of his covenant faithfulness and the revelation of the fulfillment of his promise - salvation in Christ our Savior.

Young people, beware! When God saw the unity of man at Babel he said that "nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (Gen 11:6b) How true that is today with the unity which man finds in television. It will get to the point where if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect by their great signs and wonders. (Matt. 24:24a)

Rejoice in the God of your salvation. Have comfort knowing that God will destroy all the workers of iniquity. Comfort comes from knowledge of the Word of God; so listen carefully to your teachers and pastors, and diligently search the Scriptures. Even for Christians, the world may seem at times to be very complex and confusing, especially for high school and college students. Yet we must trust God and say with the

psalmist "Thou shalt guide me with thy council, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm 73:24) "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." (Prov. 3:13)

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Testimonies

by Sis Ying Ying, Rebekah

I have been thinking for days and weeks to write this testimony. It is not because I don't know what to write. In fact, it is how I should express the years of blessings that God had showered on me. Every moment of sorrow and joy he is with me. Every time I fall and cry He will pick me and comfort me. He encourages me throughout my 9 years of Christian pilgrimage.

I was introduced into FERC at the age of 10 by my cousin, Kim Fong. I remember attending Sunday School and going home after that. I simply find this a boring routine. I dread going to Church and soon, I gave up. I didn't find it beneficial at all, especially when it comes to prayer. But of course, according to my Sunday School teachers they claimed that we were talking to God. Talking to God? How can we? Don't we have to burn joss stick and incense paper in order to do that? How can they be sure that God hears our prayer? How can Sunday Worship be so simple? I remember taking alot of troubles worshipping "da bai gong" and other idols.

Gradually, my doubts began to accumulate but nobody helped me with it, so I backslide. During my 3 years of backsliding, I was taught a very valuable lesson - life without God is void. Ever since the time I "accepted" Christ, I was already conscious of God's existence and would turn to Him in times of troubles. I prayed every night just for the sake of praying. Hence, when I left FERC I never thought of looking for another church for fear that I would fall into cult groups.

I had no idea where I was heading. I felt life a void. By the grace of God, Johnson's family visited my family one new year. I was very happy to see them because I know they are Christians and I was hoping that they would invite me back to Church again. Frankly, after so many years of backsliding, I wanted very much to go back to church, but on second thought, I feared that my Sunday School teachers and friends would be indifferent towards me. However, by the perfect will of God, I received their warm invitation. I was jumping with joy and that night I made my first sincere prayer.

Ever since then, I became more sober as a Christian. I was also becoming sensitive and conscious about whatever I say and do. I realized the importance of God in my life and began to observe the Ten Commandments. I felt that I should thank God for the precious lesson He had taught me. If it was not the 3 years without Him, I would not have realized that I was too weak to depend on myself. I really felt everything going against me no matter how much of effort I put in.

But now I am going to be part of FERC and almost immediately this verse came to my mind, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28) I find myself involved in some of the church's activities like, babysitting and leading in the Pre-worship singing, I hope to serve God in any area He opens to me. Who knows, by the providence of God, I may discover my spiritual gifts.

Ten men were healed, but only one gave thanks. How prone we are to be like the other nine. We are anxious to receive but too careless to give thanks. We pray for God's intervention in our lives, then congratulate ourselves rather than God for the results.
-The Practice of Godliness - by Jerry Bridges, Navpress 1983

"Winning Souls"

by Pastor Ronald Van Overloop

"*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.*" Proverbs 11:30. The emphasis of this speech will be on the positive. We will strive to determine what the Bible means when it speaks of a "soul winner." We have assumptions, namely those of the Reformed faith which maintains God's sovereignty in salvation and man's absolute depravity

* * * * *

First, let us consider the idea of *"winneth"*.

Sometimes "win" is used in a bad sense, as in games of chance (lottery), or in games of sleight of hand. It is sad, but some try to win in religion with trickery. They use any and every means to get people to attend their church or Sunday school. This makes religion a game in which the participants are busy trying to get people's attention so they can save their souls. Many times these think that it is they who actually win or save souls.

The Bible uses the word "win" in a better sense, as in war, in wrestling, or in love (win the heart or affections of the loved). We may rightly assume that the Bible uses the word "win" in this better sense in Proverbs 11:30.

When we apply the word "win" to souls and come up with the expression *"winning souls,"* then too there is much misuse. However, the expression "soul winner" is legitimate in spite of its wide misuse. It is legitimate, first, because the Bible uses it. Any term used in the Bible we should be free to use. Secondly, the phrase "soul winning" is a legitimate expression just because the Bible supports the concept it expresses. The disciples were commanded to be "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19), called to catch their fellow-humans in the Gospel net. The believing wife is commanded to live in submission to her unbeliever mate, for such a conduct may be used of God to *"win"* the unbeliever. (1 Peter 3:1). James informs us that "*if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins*" (James 5:19,20). Jude 23 commands us to *"save with fear, pulling them out of the fire."* A text which uses language very similar to the context of Proverbs 11:30 is Daniel 12:3, *"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."* The classic passage is the language of Paul, I Corinthians 9:19-24, where he speaks of "gaining" and "saving" some.

This language of Scripture is reflected in the Heidelberg Catechism, which states that one reason for doing good works is "*that others may be gained to Christ*" (question 86).

What does the Bible mean by the use of this language?

To win a soul is to free that soul from the captivity of sin and of the devil and to bring it into the service of righteousness. It is much more difficult to win a soul than to win a battle or a city. A Christian soldier must know how to sap a prejudice, how to undermine an hatred and how to kill unbelief in the name of the Lord. The soul-winner comes into close quarters with the devil within men when he fights against their love of sin, their pride, or their despair.

To "win a soul" refers to conversion. It can refer to the initial turning away from sin to faith in Christ and into the service of God. But much more frequently a soul is won or converted in the sense of daily or continual conversion: sorrow, repentance, apology.

* * * * *

How do we "win" souls?

The great prevalence of unbiblical ideas of winning souls makes it necessary for us to say first how winning souls is NOT done. It is NOT accomplished by my thinking that I must have the powers to persuade or turn a soul. It is NOT thinking (really we should say, fearing) that the ultimate responsibility for whether an individual will be saved is mine. This is often what is thought, but it is very wrong.

The way in which the soul winner operates is not unusual. The soul winner simply conducts himself as all believers are commanded to do. The context to Proverbs 11:30 makes it clear that this is the Bible's answer. The soul winner wins souls by living out his faith.

Proverbs 11:28 provide the first big clue when it says that the *"righteous...flourish as a branch"*. The *"righteous"* is one to whom the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ has been imputed and imparted. This righteousness is manifested in his conduct. Specifical-

ly, the context shows that the *"righteous"* are righteous toward God, not trusting in riches (28a), but in trusting Christ for righteousness and for loving care. Also, they are righteous in their conduct toward neighbors: example, honest, virtuous, words seasoned with grace, etc.

Such righteous persons *"flourish as a branch"*, bearing fruit, which fruit is *"a tree of life"*. It is this tree of life which wins souls. This passage makes a parallel between "tree of life" and "winning souls."

The tree of life in both paradise (Gen. 2:9; 3:24) and in heaven (Rev. 22:2) is the source of spiritual strength to believers. The expression, "tree of life" is used concerning wisdom (Prov. 3:18) and fulfilled hope (Prov. 13:12) and with regard to the believer in Proverbs 15:4; 12:28; and 10:11. The believer, walking in righteousness, is a tree of life because he exerts an influence which is quickening, refreshing and happy. In the wilderness of this life, God uses the believer's righteous walk as a positive influence on those around him.

The righteous win souls by means of their righteous conduct. The righteous preach with their conduct and conversation. Our life illustrates what we say we believe. We are practical preachers (living out the preaching we hear). Just as we all first look at the picture and then at the print in the newspaper, so outsiders consider first our lives and then our doctrinal positions. And then, after learning what we believe, they look to see if we practice what we preach.

The godly wife wins the soul of her unbelieving husband with the wisdom of a conduct characterized by meekness and sobriety (I Peter 3:1). One saves his fellow-sinner from death with the wisdom of the patient energy of faith and love (James 5: 20). No Christian is to live unto himself, but for his or her fellow-saints (Rom. 14:17-19).

The righteous talk with others of the truth, because God is so worthy to be known and because they love their neighbor (love for the neighbor is chiefly concern for his eternal state and for his spiritual well-being). When timidity would prevent us from talking to others, then we must think of God's worthiness and of our neighbor's worth, rather than of ourselves.

A very important aspect of the walk of the righteous is that they strive to bring others to hear the Word preached. Do so with the prayer that your minister's sermon may be blessed. Before and/or after the service talk with visitors. The preacher may have missed the mark, so you should try not to miss it; or if the sermon struck, you make it go deeper. Seek to impress upon them the truth which the sermon put into their ear.

Soul-winners must be masters of the art of prayer. You cannot bring souls to God, if you do not go to Him yourself. When you are much alone with Jesus, you catch His Spirit, and are fired with the flame that burned in Him. Prayer reveals the wisdom that only God can reach the heart. So we pray every time we witness, asking God to bless our witness.

* * * * *

Is he who wins a love wise? Is he who wins a ball game wise? Maybe. But it is certain that *"he that winneth souls is wise."*

God's grace must make one wise to capture a soul. This is the wisdom of using the best means to gain the highest end. Jesus said that *"wisdom is justified in all her children"* (Matt.11:19), so wisdom is proven with souls won. Wisdom is the best use of the knowledge that only God can change the heart and that He almost always uses means. For example, wisdom uses the knowledge of God's Word that most children of believers are won through covenant training.

God Himself does not win souls without wisdom (He exhibits His infinite wisdom). In God's wisdom, the ability to glorify God in the eternal and perfect bliss of heaven is the highest end for man. To that end, the means God has determined to be best is Jesus Christ and Him crucified (I Cor. 1:23,24). In salvation there is as much wisdom of God as in His creating the universe. There is the wisdom of a perfect harmony between His Spirit and the activity of the sinner's heart and conscience. His wisdom is seen in that the Spirit makes salvation and its benefits desirable to the sinner. Further, the wisdom of God is seen in that the way to Jesus is faith, and the best means to attain that is the preaching.

Those who win souls will evidence and reflect God's wisdom. They will show the wisdom of seeking the highest good of their neighbor. Their wisdom will be seen in using, not the means the world would recommend (drama, music), but God's selected means: the preaching and our witnessing of the truths learned in the preaching.

Wisdom will be that of listening to the ones to whom we desire to witness. We will not bring the same pat answers in the same manner to everyone. Rather we will listen in order to learn the background and perspective of the person to whom we are witnessing or preaching. It was wisdom for Paul to become as a Jew to the Jews, as weak to the weak, and all things to all men that he might by **ALL means** save some. Note well Paul's declared reason for this wisdom: *"this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you"* (I Cor. 9:23).

Wisdom is the desire to bring God's Word to the person in the most effective manner. Wisdom is recognizing that the one witnessing must not stand in the way of one coming to faith, to repentance, or to a richer knowledge of the truth. Wisdom is recognizing that though nothing is impossible with God, the Holy Spirit usually uses the best means.

Be wise! Win souls!

Turn souls to see Christ (for the first time or anew) through the power of Holy Spirit.

Keeping Our Bodies Pure

by Joe Brummel

I was asked to review the young peoples mass meeting speech given by Rev. Spriensma on February 14, 1993. The topic of Rev. Spriensma's speech was "Keeping Our Bodies Pure."

The text used was I Cor. 6:18 "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." Because our bodies are not our own but belong to God who is holy, we must keep our bodies pure. Christ bought us with His blood and we are one with Christ. When we become one with someone other than our husband or our wife we corrupt our unity with Christ. We must keep from fornication!

We all know that we must keep our bodies pure but how are we to go about keeping our bodies pure? We are told that we must flee fornication because if we stay to fight the sin of fornication we will lose! We will lose in the fight against the sin of fornication because we cannot withstand the power of our flesh. If we do things that arouse the hormones in our bodies we will fall into the sin of fornication. So the way to flee fornication is to not arouse the hormones in our bodies. Very simple, isn't it?

So what can we do when we want to date some one we like? Well, we can do any thing with a young man or a young woman that does not get us sexually aroused. If we "play" with the person we are with on a date by touching and petting one another's bodies we are falling into the sin of fornication. The enjoyable feelings that come from this petting are the joys that are reserved for marriage. When you have these feelings that are the joy reserved for marriage with someone that is not your husband or wife that is fornication. Also, when we are with our friend we must remember that passionate embraces are the start of our fall into sin.

If we spend our time reading books or magazines that are sexually explicit we must know that we are on the wrong road. The same thing applies to movies and television shows that talk about and laugh about sex. These movies and television shows are designed to make us view fornication as something that is not a serious violation of God's law. A Christian is to have no part with the world when they are talking and laughing about sex. If we do not take sexual relationships seriously and in the light of God's work, we will fall into the sin of fornication.

We need to find ways to protect ourselves from the sin of fornication. The first and most important thing we need is the desire to keep our bodies pure. If we don't care or if we want to fall into the sin of fornication then we most likely will commit the sin of fornication. First of all we must have the desire to serve God in our dating and in our relationship with young men and young women. When we seek to serve God we will pray to God and read His word. By reading the word of God and by praying to God we are strengthened so we can withstand the temptation of the flesh.

Dating in groups is another way to keep from falling into the sin of fornication. If we date in a group we reduce the temptation a young man and young woman face. Another way is to control the input we receive while we are on a date by staying away from movies that make fornication look attractive. We must also prepare ourselves for our date. We must make plans as to what we will wear, where we will go, and what we will do on our date.

I also read a book recently, Dating With Integrity, by John Holzmann, which talks about the subject of dating in light of the Bible. In this book John Holzmann says that we can do the same things with a date as what a married man may do with someone who is not his wife because the girl or boy in our date is not our wife or husband. John Holzmann explains dating from the approach that young men and young women in the church must treat each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord. This relationship of brother and sister in the Lord is applied to all the aspects of dating.

The book Dating With Integrity would be considered a little far out to the people of the Protestant Reformed Church, but the book is worth while to read. I think Dating With Integrity is worth reading because some of our traditional ideas about dating are challenged.

BOOKS

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Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

August 1 — **Ruth 4:13-22** We do not know anything about the birth of David except for the names of his father and his father's relatives. We only know of a few of the women in his family, and the most well known of these were not even Israelites. The little we know shows us clear evidence of the providence of God and His wonderful grace toward us. Two of David's relatives were Rahab and Ruth. We should know the stories of these women well. Their stories serve to show the providence of God and His greatness. Their stories also show us His grace. First we see His grace to these women. Then we see His grace to us as from David's line comes our Christ. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift. Sing or read Psalter 211.

August 2 — **I Samuel 16:1-13** The next episode in the life of David is his anointing to be king over Israel. In our last devotional we saw that God's ways are best. This is true in this passage as well. Jesse had eight sons. Jesse and Samuel felt that God would appoint a king from the first seven. God did not agree. God told Samuel not to look at the outward appearance because He looked at the hearts of these men and they were not suitable for His purpose. We, too, must not be satisfied with the outward appearance of those around us. No, we cannot look into the spiritual heart of a person, but we can see from his spiritual life evidence of that heart. Young people, this is important even as you seek friends in this world. Look at their spiritual appearance and see if it is pleasing to God. Sing or read Psalter 214 especially stanzas 1, 6 and 7.

August 3 — **I Samuel 16:14-23** David has been given the title "Sweet Singer in Israel." As his many Psalms indicate, this title is well deserved. But David did not sing just any songs. David's songs were the songs of Zion. David's songs were songs that pleased God. We see this as God used the songs of David to chase the evil spirit from the heart of Saul. What about our songs? Do we sing songs that would earn us the name "Sweet Singer in Israel?" Do we sing songs that are pleasing to God? Do we use the musical talents that God has given us for His glory alone? When we listen to music, to what do we choose to listen? Is it God's music or Satan's music? Sing or read Psalter 277 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

August 4 — **I Samuel 17:38-51** You really should read all of today's chapter to appreciate David's actions. As we study David, we will see how he truly was "a man after God's own heart." Goliath was troubling Israel, and all Israel trembled at his feet. David was outraged that Goliath had defied the armies of the living God. He also was bothered that no one from Israel would stand up to this heathen person. David went to fight the Philistine with the only weapon the elect ever needs. He went to fight armed with the name of Jehovah. With this weapon of faith, he defeated Goliath and pictorially defeated Satan at his worst. We must also fight against Satan with the name of Jehovah. With that mighty weapon we will prevail in any situation. Sing or read Psalter 158 especially stanzas 1 and 6-8.

August 5 — **I Samuel 18:1-9** Can you be the kind of friend that Jonathan was? Jonathan, because he was Saul's son, had a right to the throne of Israel. But that right had been taken from him because of his father's sin. Did Jonathan go off in the corner and pout? Did Jonathan wish evil on David and do all he could to make sure that David could not get the throne? We never see that in Jonathan. If you remember, David and Jonathan had a friendship higher than that of marriage. Their friendship was based on God's Word. Jonathan acted the part of a true friend. You see that here as he takes his royal garments off and puts them on David. Are we that kind of friends? Are we willing to put our earthly desires behind us so that we may allow our friends to carry out the will of God? Sing or read Psalter 369.

August 6 — **I Samuel 18:10-16** Saul and David are excellent examples of the antithesis. Saul looked only after himself saying "yes" to the things of Satan and "no" to the things of God. David, however, by God's grace would say "yes" to those things of God and "no" to those things of Satan. Make no mistake; David was not perfect. He had the old man of sin present in him even as we do. He was only a picture of Christ. Jehovah was with David according to verse 14 because he walked wisely in all his ways. Do you desire God's favor, young people? Then walk wisely in all His ways. Only then will you experience the full measure of the grace of God. Sing or read Psalter 29 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

August 7 — **I Samuel 22:1-5** Saul's hatred against David continued to grow until David had to flee for his life. David made a mistake, however. David left Canaan to go to Moab. David left the promised land, the picture of the church, and the picture of heaven. What about us? Are we sometimes tempted to leave the church to go where there is not church because we are afraid of something? Are we afraid that we cannot make it financially where God is pleased to call His people together so we go to a city without a church? God sent the prophet Gad to call David out of Moab

and back to Judah. God's Word is plain today that we should remain where the church is. If we do not heed that Word, He will chastise us until we return. Stay near the church, young people, and receive the blessing of Jehovah. Sing or read Psalter 384.

August 8

I Samuel 23:1-6 As David was running from Saul, he was also careful to do the work of the Lord. The town of Keilah was oppressed by the workers of Satan, the Philistines. David's men were afraid, but God encouraged them to carry out His work. What about us? Are we afraid to do the work of the Lord? Are we fearful to stand up to the workers of Satan? We must not be! Even as God promised David sure victory over the Philistines, we have sure victory over Satan. It will not be easy. David had to flee shortly after winning. We will be scorned for a righteous stand. We must have confidence and faith in the ways of Jehovah, and He will give us the victory. Sing or read Psalter 293.

August 9

I Samuel 24:1-15 Even though David was promised the throne, he had to wait upon Jehovah's time. Even though Saul had forfeited his right to the throne, David could not take the throne until God gave it to him. David could not touch the man anointed by God to be king. We, too, must realize that we must wait upon God's time before we do anything. We must never run ahead of God. Running ahead of God is easy to do. Sometimes we think we know the answers and so we do not wait for the will of God. This is wrong of us. God's will is best; ours must be subservient to His. Patience is hard to practice; but practice it, young people, and God will bless your way. Sing or read Psalter 72 especially stanzas 3 and 4.

August 10

I Samuel 25:1-3; 23-31 If the account of this chapter is not familiar to you, take the time to read the whole chapter. David had done good to Nabal; Nabal repaid him with evil. David thought to destroy Nabal and his house. Then Nabal's wife, Abigail, comes to David and speaks peaceable words. Abigail is the peacemaker Christ speaks of in the beatitude. There, peacemakers are called blessed and children of God. What about us? Are we peacemakers in the church? Do we stop our brethren from causing trouble even when they have been wronged? This is our calling from God. Notice how Abigail brings peace. She does it using the Word of God. That is what we must do as well. Sing or read Psalter 350 especially stanzas 4 and 5.

August 11

I Samuel 30:1-10;21-25 David goes and fights against the Amalekites who had wronged him by taking his wives and his men's wives. They win a great victory and gather many spoils. As David is dividing the spoils he gives some to some men who had stayed behind guarding the luggage that had been discarded to make the battle easier. In doing so, some men who had fought became jealous against their brothers and did not want them to share in the spoils. Using his God-given wisdom, David decreed that those who stayed behind were as important as those who had fought. We must remember this principal in the church as well. All are not called to the front lines in the church. God ordains that some stay behind, but yet we must not disdain them because we know that they as well will share in eternal life. Sing or read Psalter 156.

August 12

II Samuel 5:1-12 Amid terrible civil war David received his kingdom. Notice he received it. In verse 12 we read that the Lord established David as king. It was a long wait from the time Samuel anointed him king in Bethlehem. Many events occurred. But it was all in the hand of God who wanted this man king. God wanted this man to be the picture of His Son, Christ Jesus. The throne would be established in David and would continue until Christ came. We must always remember that David is a picture of Christ. There is much for us to learn as we read the accounts of history and as we read David's Psalms. We must learn this because it deals with our salvation. Sing or read Psalter 264 especially stanzas 1-3.

August 13

II Samuel 6:12-19 David wanted the ark brought back to the tabernacle. In this chapter we read of two attempts to do this. In the first God's laws are disregarded and a man is killed for disobedience. In the second David is found in joyful celebration and is scorned by his wicked wife, Michal. There are many things to be learned in this chapter. The one to which I want to point you is that of worshiping Jehovah. This must be done, and it must be done correctly. The Lord will have nothing else. There is great blessing to us when we worship Jehovah in spirit and truth. David rejoiced to see the symbol of Jehovah put in the tabernacle. Do we rejoice whenever we get opportunity to worship Jehovah? Sing or read Psalter 378.

August 14

II Samuel 7:1-17 David wanted to build a beautiful temple for God. This seemed to both Nathan and him to be a good thing to do. But this was not God's plan. God decreed that David's son would build a temple. David was to be a picture of the warring Christ. David had to fight and win the battles against God's enemies. In telling David this, God gave the promise that Christ would come from his line, and that his line would continue on the throne until Christ would come. In the last part of chapter seven, David responds with a beautiful prayer of submission. Let this be our prayer as well when God reveals His will for us even when it is not what we think is right. Sing or read Psalter 367 especially stanzas 1 and 4.

August 15

II Samuel 9 David never forgot the kindness Jonathan had shown him even when David was running from Saul. He also remembered the covenant they had made because of the beautiful spiritual friendship that was theirs. He seeks out crippled Mephibosheth and gives him a place in his house. We have a spiritual friendship with Christ. We must seek out those who need special attention because of their lot in life. We must not only seek them out but we must make sure that they have a place in the fellowship of the church of Christ. Christ died for our sins because He loved us. We must show our gratitude by our care for others. This care must not be selective; we must care for the Mephibosheths in the church. Sing or read Psalter 305 especially stanzas 1, 3, and 5.

August 16

II Samuel 12:1-14 We must never forget that even though David was a picture of Christ he was still a man with the old man of sin in him. David fell into wickedness in his lifetime. In chapter 11 and 12 we see him brought down because of his pride. He has forgotten that God has called him to fight, and he wants to enjoy the lusts of this world. God must chastise him severely, and He does it by killing his son. There are many lessons to be learned in these chapters. One of them is that we must not give in to the temptation of committing adultery and fornication. If we do so, we can be sure that God will chastise us. When we are chastised, then we must turn to God and ask for forgiveness. Forgiveness will be found for the child of God. Read the Fifth Head Article Four of the Canons of Dordt for more on this. Sing or read Psalter 140.

August 17

Samuel 15:13-18 David had sinned against the Lord. One of the chastisements that he received was that strife would never leave his house. One of his sons, Absalom, rebelled against him. David, for the good of Jerusalem, flees from his son until God allows him to return. Through all of this account David shows that he is a man after God's own heart. It was a hard trial, but David knew that it was from Jehovah. God brings trial to us, as well. Sometimes they are because of our sin. We must realize that all things come from God's fatherly hand and acknowledge that He will carry us through all trials. Sing or read Psalter 202.

August 18

II Samuel 24:1-4; 15-25 Once again David's old man of sin rose up against him. A sin common to all of us grasped him so tight that he could not be dissuaded. This common but great sin was pride. If there is anything that can wreck havoc in the church quickly, it is the sin of pride. Pride causes us to say and/or do things which are so vile in the sight of God. Pride causes brother to sin against brother. Pride causes good friends to speak hard words against one another. We must constantly fight against this tool of Satan. If we wish peace in the church, we must put aside pride in ourselves and seek pride in God's name. The whole nation felt the sting of God's wrath against David's sin of pride. Let us pray that He will spare us from this sin. Sing or read Psalter 366.

August 19

I Kings 1:28-37 As David neared the last days of his life, one of his sons, Adonijah, rose up against him and tried to make himself king. Through the faithful work of Bathsheba, Nathan, and others, David was persuaded to give the command to make Solomon king. Why was this so important? It is important because through Solomon's line would come the Savior. The promise of an eternal throne led through Solomon. The last verse you read contains the words of the covenant promise. That promise is for us as well. God saves in the line of covenant generations. Faithfulness to His Word bring great blessings. The ultimate blessing is life with Christ in heaven. Sing or read Psalter 151 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 6.

August 20

Psalm 24 David the "sweet singer of Israel" wrote at least seventy-three of the Psalms. In this one we see a description of the elect and also of Christ. We read that being elect makes it necessary that we live a life of sanctification. Just because we are elect does not mean that we can "sin that grace may abound." Our lives must be pure before God. It is those who will receive the blessings of salvation. The elect must also seek the face of God. This cannot be done while enjoying the pleasures of sin. We must constantly be looking upon Jehovah who made heaven and earth. Finally David tells us about Christ. He describes Christ as the King of glory but also the Lord of hosts. David was a warring king leading Israel to victory over its enemies. Christ too is a warring king leading the church to victory over its enemy, Satan and all his hosts. Sing or read Psalter 59 especially stanzas 1-3 and 7.

August 21

Psalm 27 In this Psalm we see many aspects of David's life. We see his trust in the Lord who is the strength of his life. Also we see his constant call to battle against the enemies. Then in verse four David's love for the house of God is evident. Finally in verses eleven through fourteen, we read that David wants no way but the Lord's, and he asks for patience until that way is revealed to him. Young people, are your desires like David's? Do you battle sin? Do you have a zeal for the house of the Lord? Is God your strength? Our prayer must be that we always wait upon Jehovah. David gives us a good example; let us follow it. Sing or read Psalter 73.

August 22

Psalm 3 It is thought that David wrote this Psalm while fleeing from Absalom. If this is so, what a tremendous confession of faith verse five is. David was fleeing from his beloved son who wanted to kill him. He left Jerusalem, the royal city. While fleeing David prays for comfort. The comfort God gives him allows restful sleep at night. What a beautiful thought for us! Young people have cares and concerns. Their flight from sin can cause restlessness at night. Young people, go to God in prayer with your concerns. Because Christ sits at His right hand, God will answer your prayer, and give you rest. Then you can say with David the words of verse eight. Sing or read Psalter 5.

August 23

Psalm 110 There are many Psalms which are prophecies of Christ. One such Psalm is the one we read for today. Here we have a clear picture of the priesthood and kingship of Christ. David was a picture of Christ the king as we have pointed out before. The Holy Spirit shows us that Christ was more. Christ was a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Christ is the priest who fulfilled the work pictured in Aaron's line. On the cross Christ made the final and complete sacrifice for our sins. It is of Him that David sings in this Psalm. We too must sing of Christ and the blessedness He gave us with His sacrifice on the cross. Sing or read Psalter 302.

August 24

Jeremiah 23:1-8 In the prophecies Christ is stated many times to be of the seed of David. Today's reading is one of those clear examples. Israel was in desperate times. Their sins were great, and Babylon was on their doorstep. During these perilous times Jeremiah comes to the elect with the comforting words that Christ would come. He would come from the promised line of David. Jeremiah's comfort was founded on the sure promises of God. The faithful need not fret that the church would be destroyed. We must cling to those sure promises today as well. Even in these days of apostasy we know that Christ will return "to judge the living and the dead." Sing or read Psalter 58.

August 25

Luke 1:26-33 For hundreds of years Israel waited for the son of David who would redeem them. Then one day to a virgin girl the angel Gabriel came with the good news that Christ would be her son. Every faithful woman in the line of Judah had this hope. Gabriel states that Jesus's father was David, and He would rule on David's throne. What joy is here not only for Mary but for the church of all ages. David's son is coming! That should be our joy today as we are thankful for Christ's coming and dying on the cross. We need to embrace Christ as the royal sufferer because through Him comes salvation. Sing or read Psalter 3.

August 26

Acts 2:22-36 Today's portion of Scripture comes from Peter's inspired sermon on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit throug . Peter makes it evident that David was only a picture of the Christ. This was done to prove to the doubters that Christ was truly the Son of God sent into this world to die for the sins of His people. But Peter wants to show more than that. Peter wants to show that Christ rose from the dead and is ascended into heaven. He does this by referring to many of the Psalms of David which state this very fact. The final reference is to Psalm 110. Peter shows the crowd and us that it is a crucified Christ Who is responsible for salvation. There is no other way to heaven but by that Christ Who is the son of David. What a joy that is for us! Is that your joy? Sing or read Psalter 303.

August 27

Revelation 22:12-21 Our final look at David is found in the last chapter of the Bible. Here Christ Himself claims David for His father. This chapter is for us as we wait for the return of Christ. We can take great comfort that Christ claims David for His father. This gives testimony to us that all the words of the Bible are true and not to be tampered with. We know our salvation is sure, and that we can expect Christ to return even as He has said. Let it be our prayer and guide for our lives that we want Christ to return quickly. Sing or read Psalter 27.

August 28

Proverbs 5:1-13 Within the next few weeks school doors will once again be opening. What will you learn? How will you understand the knowledge that is presented to you? Solomon in the book of Proverbs especially in the first few chapters spends a considerable time on this subject. The main thrust of his message is wisdom. This wisdom is characterized by the fear of Jehovah. Christian teachers have made it their concern to instruct the covenant children in the fear of Jehovah. How are you receiving such instruction? Do you love it? In these verses Solomon discusses the folly of not walking in the wisdom of God. Reread these words of God carefully and plan to spend the next nine months seeking true wisdom. Sing or read Psalter 326.

August 29

Ecclesiastes 12:8-15 Solomon, the wisest man ever to have lived, concludes this book with words which are well applied to our schooling. Verse twelve is one which students sometimes appeal to in order to find relief from their school work. This is not the meaning of the verse at all. Solomon had looked at all of life and had found that without God there is no purpose - all is vanity and vexation of spirit. This is true of education as well. If our education is not grounded on the fear of God (verse thirteen), it will have no purpose. As teachers and students we need to remember this as we begin a new school year. Each lesson would be better not learned unless it is learned in the fear of Jehovah. Pray for the grace to attend school each day with this truth in mind. Sing or read Psalter 359 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

August 30

Philippians 2:1-8 What is your attitude, young people, towards those with whom you go to school? How are you going to treat every member of your class? Are you going to treat them nicely with the love of Christ in your heart and manner? Christ came to earth and died for those who have treated him most shamefully. Who are those people? The answer is simple - US. As you meet your classmates again let the mind of Christ be in you toward them. Help those who need help. Weep with those who mourn. Have joy with those who rejoice. Then you will show yourself to be a true follower of Christ. You will also find that the school year will go much easier. My prayer for all students is that they love one another even as Christ loved us. Sing or read Psalter 51.

August 31

Psalm 119:97-104 How could it be that David became wiser than his teachers or his elders? Was it because he had more intelligence than his teachers? Is David using boastful words out of pride? The answer can be found in the second parts of the parallels used in these verses. David makes the claim because of the understanding of God's law which God gave him. These are not man's boastful words but rather the words of faith. This should be our goal as well - not merely to be wiser than our teachers - but to give God glory for using their efforts in our behalf. Our teachers can only take us so far; God's grace must lead us the rest of the way. Pray for that grace in this new school year. Sing or read Psalter 64.

Sept 1

I Thessalonians 1:1-10 Young people, are you an example to all who believe around you? Does your walk and conversation show that you are a Christian? This is a serious calling. We must never fall into such sins that our brothers are tempted to do the same thing. We must never cause our weaker brethren to fall into sin on our account. Then, too, our faith must show to all who are around us. When we are not in the company in the saints, those around us must know who we are. We must show the salvation given to us to all with whom we come into contact. Our example must be such that others may be led to Christ. Sing or read Psalter 6 especially stanzas 1-4.

Sept 2

Lamentations 3:22-32 Most of us have never felt the depths of despair felt by the prophet Jeremiah. If you read the preceding verses to our text, you will find a man full of sorrow. He had been afflicted by his own people because he preached the truth. When he showed them their sin, they afflicted him. But worse than that, Jeremiah was witness to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. He had seen terrible things done to God's people. Then he remembered the promises of God. He knew that all this was done for Israel's profit. He knew that Jehovah's mercies were sure, and that God would bring back His people and send the Christ. This must be our comfort in all affliction. Jehovah's compassions are new every morning, and great is His faithfulness. Let us continually give thanks to Him from whom all blessings flow. Sing or read Psalter 79.

Sept 3

II Peter 1:1-11 Making our calling and election sure is serious business, young people. It is also very necessary. Peter, in addressing the elect, includes all elect, even young people. Some of you have made confession of your faith. Others are contemplating that serious step in your spiritual life. To you comes the command to make your calling and election sure. This is done by your walk. What you speak with the lips must be shown by your life. Go back and reread verses five - eight. In those verses you see how to make your election sure. No, this is not man doing anything for himself, but rather the exercise of the faith given by God. Then, too, see the promise of the last part of verse ten. "For if ye do these things ye shall never fall." What a blessing for all of God's people including the young people. Sing or read Psalter 10.

Sept 4

Malachi 1:6-14 Tomorrow is the Sabbath. What will our attitude be as we celebrate the Lord's Day? It is possible to attend church twice and still profane the Sabbath. God said that Israel did just that. They kept all the sacrifices, but yet they felt that it was weariness. They felt that keeping the law was more than they wanted to do. What about us? Are we resentful that God commands that we keep Sunday holy? Do we feel that part of Sunday belongs to us to do what we want? Let's stop and look again at the Fourth Commandment. "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy..." What a small thing to do in thanksgiving for our salvation! Sing or read Psalter 226.

Sept 5

I Thessalonians 2:13-17 The word "tradition" to some has an unpleasant denotation. To some it means that if it is just tradition to do something then it does not necessarily have to be done. In fact some say that if it is tradition then do not do it. Here Paul is using the word "tradition" to speak of the long history of God's covenant faithfulness. Most of us from the cradle have been taught about the blessedness of the covenant and our God. To that we must stand fast. We must not look for new things but rather hold to the old as set forth in the Scriptures. In holding to the traditions of which Paul speaks we will receive the comfort that comes only from Christ. Sing or read Psalter 342.

Sept 6

Leviticus 1:1-9 Much of the book of Leviticus talks of the ceremonial law for the Old Testament church. Even though Christ fulfilled that law there is much that can be applied to our lives today. Today's portion of Scripture speaks of sacrifices. Our sacrifices now are not the bloody sacrifices of Israel. Yet we still bring sacrifices. Psalm fifty-one speaks of sacrifices being a broken spirit and a contrite heart. We bring our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving when we pray and sing. We often talk about the sacrifices necessary for the work of the kingdom. All of us must sacrifice to Jehovah. These sacrifices must be from the heart for then they will be acceptable. Sing or read Psalter 147 especially stanzas 1,4 and 5.

Sept 7

II Timothy 4:1-8 Paul feels that his life on earth is over and so he gives Timothy some final exhortations. Paul is content to die because he knows that to be with Christ is the greater glory. The Holy Spirit through Paul says that he had fought the good fight. The fight he speaks of is the fight of faith. Is this your testimony, young people? Are you fighting the fight of faith? If God would take your life today, could you make the same claim as Paul? Paul knew his reward would be a crown of righteousness. That is the reward for all who faithfully fight in the fight of faith. Sing or read Psalter 121.

Sept 8

Micah 7:5-13 Whenever we read many of the prophecies, we must always remember that Israel was facing captivity. We must also remember that there is a message for us today in the word of God. Today we face apostasy and wickedness all around us. Sometimes the child of God despairs at what

he sees. But yet we have the same comfort Micah felt in verse seven. We must trust in no man. Men are weak. We must wait with confidence upon Jehovah. In waiting upon Jehovah, we trust in Him for our salvation. We also have the confidence that He will hear our prayers and answer them. Sing or read Psalter 21.

Sept 9 — **III John 9-14** Paul mentions two people who are opposed in viewpoint. The first is full of pride and wants his way all the time. The second has good report of men and also of the truth. John gives direction in verse eleven which is easy to follow and must be followed. When you must make choices, young people, make your choices based on verse eleven. Verse eleven speaks of the choice of the antithesis. Follow not the evil but follow the good. Following the good is following the command of God. Following the evil is following Satan. Sing or read Psalter 43 especially stanzas 3, 5 and 6.

Sept 10 — **Nahum 1:9-15** The book of Nahum is written to foretell the destruction of Nineveh, the chief city of Assyria. Assyria had afflicted Israel much in its history, and now God will bring vengeance upon them. Besides the word of destruction to Nineveh, there is also a word of instruction to Judah and us. The last verse of the chapter tells us to keep the preaching in high regard. The minister is the ambassador of Christ and must be regarded as such. We must also keep the way of the Lord in the church as well. We may not change what God has ordained, or we will go the way of Nineveh. Sing or read Psalter 224.

Sept 11 — **James 2:14-26** One part of every Christian's life must be a walk of sanctification. The word sanctification means holiness. After being justified by faith, we must walk in a holy manner all of our lives. This is what the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of when it speaks of thankfulness for salvation in the third section. This is not something that can be mandated; it is something which must flow from the heart of the redeemed child of God. As we see in this chapter, it is very necessary. Are you joyful because you are saved? If you are, then walk in the way of sanctification. Sing or read Psalter 50.

Sept 12 — **Nehemiah 13:10-22** Do you tire, young people, of hearing of things you must not do? Does it get old when teachers, elders, ministers, parents, and others constantly tell you not to do something? If you would go through the Bible, that is what you would find. God's people need to be told often to obey Jehovah. Nehemiah had left Jerusalem and had gone back to Babylon. After a period of time he returned to Jerusalem. In this chapter we read of some of the sins to which Israel had returned. Nehemiah had to rebuke them. Today is the Sabbath. It is good that we read these words and examine ourselves to see if we are "Remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy." Sing or read Psalter 67.

Sept 13 — **Luke 16:19-31** Parables, you remember, were used by Christ to teach about grace and the kingdom of heaven. In this parable we learn about how not to enter the kingdom of heaven. A nameless rich man had all for which a person could wish. But yet when presented with an opportunity to thank God for that, he refused. Lazarus was put right on his doorstep, but the rich man ignored him. We can be guilty of this same fault. We sometimes ignore those who are placed before us and need our mercy. Thankfulness and sanctification are required by God. Are we ignoring them? Sing or read Psalter 61.

Sept 14 — **Numbers 6:22-27** The familiar blessing we just read is full of comfort. Look at it more closely. First of all notice that there is nothing for us to do. All of the work is dependent upon Jehovah. He will bless us, keep us, be gracious unto us, and give us peace. Because of this we know that the blessing will come to pass. If we tried to bless ourselves, we know that our sins would rise up against us, and nothing good would happen. Secondly notice that it is to be done in the name of Jehovah, and He will bless us. Through His name we can do great things. Hosanna, blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Sing or read Psalter 318 especially stanzas 4-7.

Sept 15 — **Mark 6:21-34** Jesus was a man of great compassion. We see it expressed here to two groups of people. The disciples had just come back from their preaching tour of Galilee. They were extremely joyful because the gospel was having a good effect. Then they were crushed by the news of the murder of John the Baptist. Jesus took them into the wilderness to comfort them. Very soon afterward a multitude of people came to find Jesus. He, realizing that they desired the Word, began to preach unto them, and when they became hungry fed them. This is the Jesus we confess. Are you down, lonely, or depressed? Seek the Comforter who will show you all things. Sing or read Psalter 114 especially stanzas 1, 4, 8, and 10.

Sept 16 — **Obadiah 10-16** As Israel was being led into captivity, Edom stood round about mocking and scorning them. There was nothing that Israel could do because its sin had put them in that sorry

state. God, however, saw Edom's scorn. Because they mocked His people, they mocked Him. In this prophecy we see that God will bring vengeance upon those who mock Him and His people. Sometimes we feel the sting of other's mocking. Sometimes it seems that everything we say does nothing but make it worse. Do not despair, people of God. Our God has said, "Vengeance is mine," and "I will repay." Do not be thinking of ways to get revenge. Cry to God and He will answer. Sing or read Psalter 253 especially stanzas 1, 5, 11, and 12.

Sept 17 **Philemon 9-22** While Paul was in Rome, a man who was a slave ran away from his master and came to Paul. The slave became a willing worker in the gospel, but yet Paul knew that the slave belonged to his master and had sinned by running away. In this short letter Paul asks for forgiveness for the slave and even offers to pay any loss the master has incurred. This must be our attitude as we work for others, or for students as they do their school work. We must realize our duty, and if we shirk it, we must ask for forgiveness and make up the wrong that we have done. Sing or read Psalter 281.

Sept 18 **Proverbs 16:1-7** By nature people are planners. We wish to do this or that. This is not all bad. God has given us minds with which to plan. He had given us knowledge to use. But yet we must wait upon Jehovah as well. Man's plans are tainted with sin. Verse three tells us to "Commit thy works unto the Lord." Young people, as you look ahead to your future life, stop and ask yourself, "Is this what God would have me do?" Search the Scriptures to see if your plans are in accordance to the will of God. Verse seven contains the blessing in this. Plan, people of God, with God in mind. Sing or read Psalter 95 especially stanzas 2 and 3.

Sept 19 **Philippians 1:12-20** Paul wrote this epistle as he was in prison. This circumstance did not distress him as he had been imprisoned because of the gospel. He also felt that the gospel was being spread because of his imprisonment. How about us? Do we look for the gospel to be spread by our actions? Do we realize that God can use any situation for the spreading of His word? Paul was happy that Christ's name was being glorified through his discomfort and even possibly through his death. Do we have this outlook on life? Do we try to have Christ's name glorified or ours? Sing or read Psalter 76.

Sept 20 **Psalm 48** This Psalm celebrates the beauty of the church. In the Old Testament physical Jerusalem served as a picture of the spiritual church. We see here that the church is the advantageous place to be. It is beautiful to the eye, it is defensible in time of battle, and it is a place of great joy. We also see a command to stop and consider the church. Look at her history. Not for pride in human strength, but rather because of what God had made her. Then the last verse of the Psalm gives the reason. This God will be our guide even unto death. By staying in the fortress of Jerusalem, Israel was safe from enemies. By staying in the fortress of the church we will be safe from our enemy, Satan and all his hosts. Sing or read Psalter 133.

Sept 21 **Revelation 6:1-8** Yesterday's devotion encouraged us to look and study the history of the church. In reading today's passage we see the worth of studying the history of the world. When Christ opened the book of the counsel of God, He set in motion actions which take place in history. Among these actions are the running of the four horses with their riders. As we study history we see the effects of the horses' running. In different eras different horses are prominent. As we move toward Christ's return, we see all of the horse running. Are we watching? Are we praying, "Thy kingdom come?" Sing or read Psalter 182 especially stanzas 1, 2, 5, and 7.

Sept 22 **Ruth 2:1-9** One of the commands that God gave was that farmers had to leave certain portions of their crops untouched for the poor. Here we have three people who studied and loved God's commandment. Ruth, the Moabitess, even though she was from outside had learned that she being poor was entitled to a portion of a farmer's crop. Naomi knew that she must let Ruth go and glean because that was the station God had placed them. Boaz, too, knew and obeyed the law that he must help those who were poor. How do we know the law of God? We must study it, and we must take every opportunity to learn it. Our lives are ordered by God, and in His Word is the guide for every step of our lives. Sing or read Psalter 149 especially stanzas 1, 2, 5 and 6.

Sept 23 **Romans 6:12-23** We live in an age in which sin abounds. The printed page, the music, and the airwaves celebrate sin in a way not often known to man. The church cannot help but be affected by this attitude. This is serious because we are commanded to be holy and sin not. Paul throughout this chapter warns against the attitude that because we are saved we can sin all we want. This is never so. The last verse of this chapter should make this clear to us. We need to examine our ways and turn from sin so that we may ever be assured of eternal life which is through Christ. Sing or read Psalter 8.

Sept 24

Song of Solomon 3 This book celebrates the beauty of marriage of a man and his wife. Through our Scripture we can find passages with this theme. But we must remember that like all ordinances that God gives there is a picture to be considered. Marriage is a picture of Christ and His bride, the Church. Marriage must be held sacred. Just as Christ only has one bride, a man or woman are only to have one partner. Just as there is a beautiful friendship in marriage, so is there a beautiful friendship between Christ and the church. If you are contemplating marriage, consider that it is a picture of the bond between Christ and the church. Marriage is beautiful but not to be taken lightly. Sing or read Psalter 124 especially stanzas 1, 2, 8, and 9.

Sept 25

Titus 3:1-8 These few verses show what good works accomplish and what they do not accomplish. First the negative is shown. Not a single good work can give us salvation. Salvation is only obtained through the mercy of Christ through regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Then we have the positive. Because the Holy Spirit imparts regeneration upon us, we believe, and then we must be careful to do good works. This is the whole process of salvation. Good works come because we are saved. They are expression of our thankfulness to God for giving salvation. Let us walk in them because they are good and profitable unto us. Sing or read Psalter 162.

Sept 26

Zechariah 4 There are two verses in this chapter which should always serve to uphold the child of God. The church has always been small in the world. Israel was never accounted as one of the great civilizations of its day. Isaiah called the church a hut In a garden of cucumbers. In the New Dispensation the church was in danger quite often. Even today those who believe the truths as expounded in the Scriptures are few in number. But the faithful need not despair. God is faithful. He has promised that all things work together for the good of them that love Him. Have you picked out the verses of comfort? They are six and ten. Sing or read Psalter 160.

Sept 27

John 4:31-38 During the episode of the Samaritan woman, Jesus took time to instruct His disciples concerning the kingdom. At this time of the year, it is good for us to listen to the instruction as well. As we look around us, we see crops ready to be harvested. Corn, fruit, and many other crops are waiting for the laborers to take them to be stored. Christ gives us this picture of the kingdom so that we may see that the laborers come from the church. Are some of us called to gather the fruits of the work of the Spirit? Each of us must pray and ask what we are to do in this matter. For some it is to take up the calling of minister. Heed that call, young men, and prepare yourself to take up the work of harvesting. Sing or read Psalter 169.

Sept 28

Zephaniah 3:8-13 Zephaniah prophesied to Judah during a period of great wickedness. We read that Judah was serving other gods and trying to serve God their own way and not His. To the faithful, Zephaniah encouraged them to be faithful and wait for God to bring salvation. In verse nine he says that when salvation comes the people will have the language to serve God. This language will come from God. It will not be of man's doing. In this day of constant change to the word of God we need this encouragement as well. We do not need to be trying to find new ways to call upon God's name. God will show us His ways, and we know that they are best. Sing or read Psalter 327 especially stanzas 1 and 4.

Sept 29

Acts 10:9-17 The vision which you have just read is a great blessing to most of you. I say this because most of you are Gentiles. You are not Jews the original branches of the vine which is Christ. Peter had a hard time with this vision. In it God turned his whole world upside down. He was pondering the meaning when messengers from an Italian came to bid him come and preach to him. On the way to Simon's house the Holy Spirit showed him the meaning of the vision. In verse 34 Peter confesses that God is no respecter of persons and that in every nation He has His people. Is this our confession? Sing or read Psalter 178.

Sept 30

Amos 9:11-15 One of the blessings to the elect is to know that God will never forsake them. Israel constantly sinned against God causing Him to bring justice against them. God has to do this because He is holy and sin cannot go unpunished. But for the righteous there is the beautiful promise of Christ. This is seen in these verses. Once again the church is pictured as a plant that is cared for by a faithful gardener. This gardener will care for His vine so that it is safe and brings forth fruit. We, too, can be comforted by the promise that God will care for us. Sing or read Psalter 220 especially stanzas 3-6.

Reprobation and the Line of the Covenant

by Rev. R. G. Moore

I have been asked to write on the idea of the covenant being two sided - that is that the decree of reprobation cuts through the line of the covenant. In response to this request I would like to treat the topic from the point of view of the Word of God that we read in Romans 9: 9 and **its context.**

In Romans 9: 6-9 we read, "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son."

The occasion is the agonizing of Paul over Israel according to the flesh, he does so because in his words they are his kinsmen. Paul speaks about the Jewish people among whom he was raised, and it was in the Jewish schools that Paul was trained. They are a part of the church to which he belonged. A church that had been known as the chosen of God, they were the people unto whom God had brought His Word, they belonged to that which was the line of the covenant.

Within ourselves today we also can find comparative deep seated thoughts as those of the apostle Paul. We too have the same agonizing over those that are a part of the church to which we had once belonged. A church that had the Word purely preached to them, which belong to that church through which the line of the covenant passed. We have relation within the confines of a church that has walked in apostasy as had the Jews, or we have immediate family that went to church with us, but are now departed from the true faith and have left the church where the truth is manifested in its purest way.

Paul says of his kinsman according to the flesh that they are Israelites: to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises. This is quite a profile of his kinsman, and speaks of the great heritage that his kinsman had. Paul may say that to them pertaineth the adoption, because with them God had established His covenant on the basis of the adoption in Christ that was to come. The Church is not made up of members that are natural sons, but the grace of God is bestowed upon the children of Israel to make them sons of God. This was revealed in all that they were taught under the Old Testament shadows and types. Further, then they had been made a glorious people, as God was on their side and defeated their enemies and maintained them as His people. The whole testimony of the Old Testament was that Israel was the favored nation.

They had been a nation that God richly blessed and for which He cared. And to them pertained the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God. God richly revealed Himself as the Gracious and Merciful God to Israel. All Israel came under the signs and seals of the covenant, they were all circumcised, they were represented at the temple by the priesthood. Of all the services, the special sabbaths, and feast days, etc. they were made to be partakers. And the promise was proclaimed clearly in their midst, They had come under The Word of God.

So that the Jews of whom Paul speaks could trace their lineage to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were according to the flesh of those who were richly blessed of God, and who were saved and delivered from all enemies, who were typically covered by the blood of Christ. They were of the lineage of the covenant, of the promised seed according to the flesh. And the Word had been given them in the law and the sacraments to lead them to Christ. They in other words had the richest of heritage, and had received the clear testimony of the way of salvation. They had been given the Word that could lead them to the knowledge of God Who is blessed forever.

But they did not hear, they did not obey, they would not humble themselves before God and His Son Jesus Christ. They removed themselves from the only comfort in life and death. They rather followed a walk of apostasy that would prevent them from experiencing the blessings of their fathers. That would deprive them of the mercies of God. And Paul agonizes over them, and says that if it were possible he would that he be accursed from Christ for his brethren.

This is quite a strong statement, but it shows to us the tremendous love that Paul had for membership in the Church of Christ. And how greatly that he treasured the riches of salvation. But has not this same thought entered your minds concerning your kinsmen, your family members that have departed from the faith of the fathers. Does not your heart go out to those that are deprived of the blessed testimony of salvation by grace alone, declared in the pure preaching of the word. If it were possible would you too not be cursed of God if it could mean the salvation of your fathers or mothers, your sisters or brothers, or even your uncles and aunts, or even further, those that had been once fellow members with you of the household of faith.

For us, however, this is not possible, nor was it for Paul. Paul admits this and is satisfied with this also, he knows above all that God perfectly brings all things to pass. Paul knows and confesses this and so must we!! This does not mean that Paul will not continue to seek the salvation of such as are ordained unto life, both of the Jews and Gentiles, but he does bow before the revealed will of God to praise Him. Even so we will not cease to pray for those we know who have departed from the faith, but will also acknowledge that God's will be done. And therefore, He confesses that the apostasy among His brethren according to the flesh is not contrary to the will of God. So that Paul states that it is not so that the proclaimed Word of God has no effect. But rather the case is that they are not all of Israel, which are Israel. Not all within the church are elect seed, chosen in Christ unto salvation, **neither were they meant to be.** So that Paul turns to the only source of salvation and declares that God is Sovereign and wise in His saving of the church.

This means that the salvation of the church is not determined by the flesh, it is not because they are the seed of Abraham that the church is saved. Now understand the apostle has pointed out the many advantages that the Jews had being in the line of generations. And we must never look with disdain at that advantage, in every way it is within the line of continuing generations that we are to look for God's children. And **there** we may expect to find the true believers, also; this means that it is right for parents to encourage their young people to look to that line of generations to find their spouse. And this becomes the reason that our parents encourage us to take in the young people's conventions and activities also. And this indeed is as it ought to be, and on our part this is the reason why we seek out fellowship and communion within that line of the continuing generations.

However, we must also see that Paul realizes that not all of those in the line of continuing generations are believers, and this is true because the children of the covenant are not the children of the flesh, but the children of the promise. If there be those that are the children of the flesh that depart from the paths of obedience to God, and walk in the way of apostasy and impenitent sin, we must understand this does not mean that God has **failed** to save them. But rather that they were never truly children of God at all, for the true believer is the child of the promise, which does not embrace every person even in the line of continuing generations, much less the world at large.

This truth was demonstrated often in the old dispensation, in that even in Israel it was often only a remnant that were the true seed. We could offer many examples of this, Isaiah 1 being one such example where we read in verses 8 and 9, "And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." The children of the promise makes up that remnant, and by this terminology we find Paul speaking of the election of the church by God, and to the covenant that He establishes with that church of His election. And that God's church is made up of the children of promise means that God has divinely pledged to save that Church of His election. The counsel of God therefore is that which determines who the church shall be, and not the mere fact that we have a certain father or mother.

The pledge of God to His people of salvation is rooted in His will and because He is God it is rooted then in eternity. Thus Paul is pointing out in this connection that we must look to God's will when considering the church that is saved. Then Paul can be content when not all Israel embraces the Christ. And we must trust that God Who does all things well is right when not all of our children, or friends or relatives embrace the truth. It is **really to live after God, it is to acknowledge His Perfection and Holiness, and finally to give Him all glory as He saves His church.**

It must be remembered that none of us are worthy of being His children. By nature none are the children of God, by nature the Jews are no different than the Gentiles, we all live under the condemnation of the law. We are in the words of the Scripture, ***dead in sin and trespass.*** So that we cannot any of us boast that we are worthy of being called the children of God. But according to the promise and eternal will of God, we are counted for the seed, to be the children of God. And children are heirs of the Father, we have a place in His house, we are partakers of His blessing, and receive the inheritance of life. So that the believer has comfort that knows no limits. The reason for this is that we are counted for the seed. This simply means that the righteousness of Christ is imputed unto us. So that we are adopted for children and made heirs of the promise.

Paul therefore, uses in our text the example of Isaac and of Ishmael to point this out to the church in Rome. He calls attention to the fact that Isaac is not

the only child of Abraham, in fact he was not even the firstborn son of Abraham. Ishmael was also a seed of the flesh. But Ishmael was not counted for the seed. He was not the child of the promise. This meant for Abraham that he had to excommunicate his own son, whom according to the flesh he loved. It mattered not that Abraham enjoyed the presence and company of his son, Ishmael; still he was not the seed of the covenant, although he had come under all the means of grace. Yet the truth had no place in his heart, and Abraham could not cling to the flesh, but had to look to and trust in God to bring forth the seed of the promise. Which God did do when He gave to Abraham and his wife Sarah the son according to the promise. Even doing this when it was humanly impossible. So that it became evident that the salvation of the church was wholly of God. By grace is the church saved according to the counsel of Jehovah. And with this we must be content and rejoice. Our comfort is found in the faithfulness of God to save His Church.

A View from England

by Stephanie Rawson

Measbro Dyke Church is a small independent church situated in a town called Barnsley, in the county of South Yorkshire, England.

Barnsley is approximately 180 miles north of London and has a population of 240,000 people. Unfortunately, not many of these people seem to attend church - although the two or three charismatic churches in the area have a rather large following.

Our church is the only church in Barnsley itself which holds firm to the true doctrines of scripture.

Measbro Dyke Church has a congregation of 30 individuals. We have few young people. These consist of two at 10 years of age, two at 15 and six between the ages of 18 and 25. As you can imagine with the ages scattered over such a broad range, it is difficult to have such things as "Young Peoples" or even bible classes together. Most of the activities we arrange include the whole congregation and, being such a small church, organizing such events is a lot easier!

We have two worship services on the Lord's Day - morning and evening. We are blessed with our own full-time pastor for which we are thankful to God. We also have Sunday School on an afternoon.

The Sunday School is well attended by children within the local vicinity of the church. These children are mostly from non-christian and broken homes. We as a Sunday School have a duty to instruct these children, however simply, in the ways of the Lord.

Over the past few years we have seen the numbers in Sunday School rise from five or six to a total now of approximately 20, which by our standards is rather a lot!

Sunday School is split into three categories - Primary for the under sevens; Juniors for the under elevens and Bible Class for 11 +. The Bible Class has the lowest attendance, most of the class being made up of the younger teenagers of our congregation.

Although we try to encourage the parents of these children to come to church, as yet none have attended on a regular basis. However, the witness, with the Lord's help, continues.

Our mid-week meeting is a Bible Study held on a Thursday evening. This is a preaching service where the pastor often concentrates on a certain book of the Bible or does a series on a particular doctrine.

We have no contact with any other churches in Barnsley but there are one or two other independent churches outside of Barnsley, which like us hold to the Reformed faith. The young people from our church meet together with the young people of these churches once a month on a Saturday evening for a preaching service followed by a supper. The ministers from the churches involved each take a turn at speaking at the meetings.

These gatherings are beneficial to all who attend and the supper afterwards gives us an opportunity to meet with and make friends with other Christians.

We long and pray for our church to grow numerically but realize that faithfulness to the truth in England invariably means a small congregation.

The Lord has richly blessed us at Measbro Dyke as we seek to remain faithful to God's word.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them."

Matthew 18:20

Building a House Through Wisdom

by Stefan Haney*

In this country unemployment is on the rise. Many see the current economy with a dark view. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find and hold a job with which one can support a family. Although there are less high school students graduating each spring college campuses have swelled due to more students from these high schools heading off to seek a degree. The hope of better jobs has caused many older students to return to join the young hopefuls behind a desk.

Other high school graduates choose to immediately explore opportunities in the job market among a variety of jobs which require the knowledge of learned skills and apprenticeships such as electricians, plumbers, and contractors. While college is not necessary for everyone, the years spent studying have value far beyond the degree earned.

The college environment is a large change from the high school classroom. One is completely surrounded by people with extremely different backgrounds filled with a veritable plethora of opinions. If one chooses to become involved with a student organization such as the student government, intramural sports, or a club to explore other interests it requires learning to work with a diverse team of people to obtain a personal or common goal.

To do this effectively it is impossible to have a closed mind. Listening to their whole opinion without "turning off" is important, no matter how strange or wrong what they think or believe is to you. The same is probably true of your beliefs and opinions to them. To most people you meet going to church twice a Sunday sounds absurd, but there are quite valid reasons for this practice. Just as the decisions you make are backed by reasonable beliefs, the people you meet will have opinions backed by what they believe is reasonable information.

Most people will feel more respected and are more willing to listen to you if you listen to everything they say. If you choose to disagree they will respect you more if you can rationally defend yourself.

At school the Christian student has moved in most cases from a room full of classmates who hold to the same beliefs to being surrounded by classmates who have read little of the Bible or are of a religion which is much different than the Reformed faith. Through exposure to people of other beliefs one can become more solid in what he believes.

The environment can be quite different. The Christian students finds himself required to make choices that were never even a thought before. It is very easy to become a rationalizing creature rather than a rational, moral creature.

It is very easy to look at the alarm after a long Saturday night and think how nice it would be to sleep till noon and think oh well, you can still attend church at night. These experiences force the student to determine for themselves how they will choose to live and what they truly believe and why they believe it.

College a is wonderful testing ground to explore options and find something you enjoy studying or doing. Many students graduate from high school and have no idea what they'd like to do or know even half of what is available to them. A year at college can expose options or develop skills which may lead to a degree and career.

While many women choose to become married, a college degree is hardly wasted. If in the event of an accident which forces their spouse to be unable to work or at this time it is easily conceivable their spouse might not be able to get a job with which they could support a family, a college degree would allow them to work at a job which could better support or help support a family than what is available with a high school diploma.

Even if the degree is never used in the workplace the knowledge obtained is never wasted. It can be used in all aspects of life. The Bible speaks of the importance of wisdom and knowledge throughout its books. Proverbs 24:3-5 "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established. And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength."

*Stefan is a Junior at Western Michigan University

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth

by Philip Greatbatch*

With so much discussion by the media and the academics, on the problems facing the natural world, it is good to look again at how God encourages His people to trust in Him.

We hear of the effects of water and air pollution. You may have asked, do the holes in the ozone layer really exist? There is much talk about the so-called greenhouse effect. We read of the rapid depletion of the Earth's forests and good land turning to wasteland. It would be unnatural if we were not concerned. Does all this mean then, that the universe is falling into chaos? Will God let His creation fall apart?

Our universe is not a chaos nor has it been or will it ever be. It is a cosmos, an orderly union of all the various parts. Indeed cosmos means "orderly universe". It is this very order by which we can discover and describe the laws that govern it. We know for reasonable fact that the sun will rise at a fixed time tomorrow and set again later in the day. So sure are we that the sun will follow its course through the sky, that we can predict to a high degree of accuracy when the sun will rise. Daily newspapers often print to the nearest minute, when to expect sunrise and sunsets.

The motion of atoms and the rotation of galaxies can be shown to follow strict laws. As scientists have studied these laws, it was soon found that if the rules were slightly different, the universe would soon fall into chaos. A perfect balance is evident between the many natural forces which pulse and flow in the universe. For example, we move about freely on the surface of this planet because of the precise balance of gravity with the force that tends to throw us into space as the world spins.

Curiously however, there is a physical law often called the "law of entropy" that tells us that anything organized, tends with time to become disorganized. In other words, any physical system left to itself will fall into decay. Instead of being highly organized, like our Earth's systems, everything will break down.

But everything is not breaking down and continues in a highly organized state. The processes that govern the atmosphere, the oceans, the relationships between plants and animals, all take energy from the sun and use it in an organized way. Far from breaking down, these systems seem to adjust continuously to keep the delicate balance that ensures that life on our Earth continues.

A Russian scientist, Dr. Dotsenko, who was taught throughout his life not to believe in God, began to think about why entropy did not over-rule the systems of the universe. In time, he realized that a very powerful force was acting against this disorganizing tendency. It kept the universe controlled and in order. He realized that the force could not be material or it too would become disordered. He decided that this power must be both all-powerful and all-knowing. "There must be a God controlling everything." In later years, God led Dr. Dotsenko to believe in Him whom he was sure must exist.

Let's return for a moment to the topical question of holes in the ozone layer. Surely you say, this is evidence that this world is falling into chaos? Actually, no one knows why the ozone layer is thinning and no one knows how thick it should be. We can be certain however, that this marvel of God's creation, is one of His processes that operates for life to continue on this Earth.

To answer concerns about the greenhouse effect, be aware that no one is willing to say that the Earth will become a greenhouse. Today there are many more people on Earth and the forests that cover the planet are being cut down. Today we burn more and more fuel leading to an increase in the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The carbon dioxide tends to keep in the heat rather than let it escape into space, meaning that world-wide temperatures could rise perhaps three to four degrees. Would that make a difference? The airflow patterns could change, affecting rainfalls in regions dependent on crop production and so forth. With a warmer atmosphere, the polar ice-caps might melt and cause the oceans to rise several feet, flooding the major cities of the world.

God gave Jeremiah a promise. (Jer. 5:22) "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and

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though waves thereof toss themselves: yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" God's perpetual decree, His presence will deny the forces of decay to neutralize His works of creation. The sea cannot rise above its present level.

The grand claims of the philosopher and humanist that technology and science will supply the solutions to the world's problems, are vain and misplaced. Instead of finding answers, the problems always seem a few steps ahead. For instance, it is generally agreed in medical research, that a cure for cancer is as far away from being reached as ever it was.

As those who are led by God's Word, we are not left in the darkness of man's wisdom. God continues to be the Lord and ruler over all His works. The world does "groan and travail". Man is a poor husbandman. He has left a legacy of destruction, but God mightily intervenes to show, likewise to unbelievers, that He is "possessor of the heavens and the earth". He provides us with many promises. Noah believed when God said to him, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Gen. 8:22) More than four thousand years later, you are witness to the truth of these words.

CONTRIBUTION

Adoption: God's Wonderful Plan

by Ken & Sheri Pastoor
Dirk & Carol Monsma

The purpose of this article is threefold. First, to give readers a brief overview of the process of adoption from the perspective of couples who have adopted. Second, to present factors and issues with which parents of adopted children have to concern themselves. And, finally, to discuss the Scriptural references to adoption, both natural adoptions and our spiritual adoption by God.

After being married for some years it seemed evident that it was not in the Lord's plan for us to bring children into our homes in the usual manner. So, we began to consider the possibility of adoption. After much prayer we decided that adoption was the means by which God would bring children into our homes, and more importantly, into His church.

We proceeded by contacting Bethany Christian Services, an adoption agency in Grand Rapids. We were required to provide the agency with personal references, a statement of faith, medical information, financial information and a written autobiography. We were also required to participate in a series of interviews with a caseworker. This process, referred to as a home study, took approximately 6 months. Once approved as adoptive couples we began the wait for our children. The Lord answered our prayers sooner than we expected and within a year our children were born. For each of us the process of adoption was a wonderful and special experience.

During the interview process we were asked to consider a great many factors. Would we accept a child with a handicap, a child of mixed race, a child whose mother had abused drugs or alcohol, etc. However, never once during this process did we consider not adopting a child in the event that as an adult the child might leave the church. Nor did we feel that the child's biological parentage was an important factor. What is important is that the Lord has placed these children into covenant homes by way of adoption and they are being raised as members of His church. There seems to be an assumption that because these children are not born into the church they are more likely to leave the church when they become adults. Since an actual study has not been done which documents that this is indeed the case this assumption remains unsubstantiated. Many biological children, that is to say children born in the church, do not remain in the church as adults. Did their parents consider not having a biological child in case that child should leave the church one day? We do not believe this was a consideration for these parents. One must also keep in mind that only after much prayer was the decision made to adopt. Now we place our faith in our heavenly Father and His will be done concerning the children He has given us.

In Reverend Flikkema's article in the May issue of the Beacon Lights he refers to the fact that adoptive couples must be content knowing that "though they can make that child legally their own they can never make such their own flesh and blood." Speaking from

personal experience, not only are we content but overjoyed with the children the Lord has so graciously given us. Yes, they are adopted and not our own flesh and blood but this makes no difference to us or our families. (Just ask their grandparents!) We insist that this fact make no difference to the people in the church where our children will grow in the knowledge and fear of the Lord. If the knowledge that these children would never become our own flesh and blood was a factor we could not have considered adoption.

Some couples who adopt also receive the added blessing of conceiving biological children. Occasionally it is felt that if these couples had been more patient and had waited for the biological child with which the Lord had blessed them adoption would not have been necessary. We do not feel this is the case. In His infinite wisdom the Lord led us to adopt our children. It was His plan that these specific children be placed into our homes by this special means.

Although it is true that Scripture neither encourages us nor forbids us to adopt, God's Word does make several references to adoption, both to natural adoption and to our spiritual adoption by God. References to adoption can also be found in our baptism form and the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XIII.

Exodus 2:10a refers to the adoption of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter. " . . . and the child grew and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son." Esther 2:7 refers to Esther's adoption by Mordecai. We also know that Jesus was raised by Joseph though he was not Jesus' natural father.

Throughout the New Testament one can find references to our spiritual adoption by God. Ephesians 1:5, 6. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Romans 8:15 refers to the fact that we "have received the spirit of adoption." Galatians 4:5 and 6 reads as follows "To redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons; And because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." One must also keep in mind that as Gentiles we are not the physical seed, but the spiritual seed of Abraham. God's covenant with His people is a covenant of grace not of blood. This is clearly stated in Galatians 3:7 and 14. "know ye therefore that they which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham." And verse 14, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith," Our baptism form refers to us as "his children and heirs." Through Christ's blood we have been adopted and accepted by God as His children and heirs. The fact that we are not God's natural children (this is true only of Christ) does not exclude us from all the blessings of salvation.

We view the adoption of our children as a picture of our spiritual adoption by God. These children have become legally our children and as such are entitled to all the benefits of being members of our families. Such is the case spiritually with us. Though not God's natural children His adoption of us entitles us to all the benefits of being a part of His family, the church. We view God's adoption of us as a wondrous privilege. We view the adoption of our children in the same way.

He's Always There

by Linda Pikkert

In the dark of the night
when I was lonely and sad
I sought the Lord
but to me it seemed
He wasn't there
and I grew afraid
that maybe I had
overstepped the limit
and sinned against
His holy name
so much
that He could never again
forgive me.

So I hung my head in shame
and tried to
examine my life objectively.
And in the quite of the night
I knew that
when I call upon His name,
He will neve r turn away from me
And because He loves me,
I know He's always there.

Please, God, forgive me for doubting.

Preaching in the Past and Now

by Rev. C. Hanko

Particularly the older members of our churches must have noticed that a gradual change has come about in the contents of the preaching from our pulpits.

It must be understood that I am not writing about the quality of the sermons. If I were to compare the quality of the sermons delivered from our pulpits in the Past and now I would readily admit that today the students have had more training and are better equipped when they enter into the ministry than years ago when they were hastily sent out because of the demand for supply in the newly organized churches.

In times past, especially in the early years of our existence, a strong emphasis was laid upon doctrine. Some sermons that were preached were strictly doctrinal. In its defense it was said that doctrinal preaching is practical, and if the preaching is sound, the application must naturally follow.

As a result, the congregation could give evidence of their knowledge of the truth. When I was teaching a class in essentials I told the young people to ask their parents which was a better view of God's counsel, the supra-lapsarian or the infra-lapsarian view? The next week they all without exception had an answer. In those days members of the church could get themselves involved in a discussion on mediate and immediate regeneration. Another topic that came up for discussion at times was whether our justification before God is from eternity or is strictly limited to time. In fact, a very heated discussion could arise on the question whether the basis for baptizing infants lies in a conditional promise or in presumptive regeneration. Not to mention that fact that a great controversy was waged on the subjects of common grace and the general, well-meant offer of salvation.

When I entered the ministry a very considerate elder urged me not to preach on God's covenant until I was sure that I understood the truth of the covenant, since, in his opinion, there were almost as many covenant views as there were theologians. Let me add, how thankful we can be for the covenant view that has been developed in our churches in the past.

In many homes were found books of theologians like Calvin, Comrie, Brakel, Smytegeld, Kuyper, Bavinck, Ten Hoor, Berkhof and Hoeksema. There were men and women who were also well acquainted with the writings of some of these men. From my own experience I know that they could refer to book, chapter and page of a certain author when some question had come up about his teachings.

Much of this must be ascribed to the type of preaching that was heard in those days.

You will all agree with me, that times have changed, and along with the times the preaching also has changed. Today, even in treating the Heidelberg Catechism (in which virtually every point of doctrine is referred to), the preaching is not as doctrinal as in times past. Far more emphasis is laid upon practical living, and particularly on family life.

The question arises, is this advancement or retrogression?

To a great extent this difference can be ascribed to the times in which we live.

In the early years of our existence the members of our churches were almost entirely first or second generation Dutch, who carried along with them the differences that still existed between the sons and daughters of the Secession (1834), and those of the Doleantie (1836) (Separation under Dr. A. Kuyper).

These issues no longer hold great importance for us.

Besides that, the radio and television have made inroads into our homes and lives. It is so much easier to hear the news and seek our entertainment from the radio or see it on the television screen. Moreover, our lives have become much more involved. We are so busy. Even with all our modern conveniences we are busier than ever. Even our children complain of being too busy to study their catechism lessons. Family life is on the way out. We hardly find a quiet time to read our church papers, much less to make a study of doctrinal matters.

Add to that the fact that our scope of life has expanded tremendously. Our forefathers sought isolation when they arrived in this new country. And to an extent they also attained it. Besides, life was much simpler. Now world affairs have their influence upon our country, but also the affairs of our country press

in upon our lives. Even the church world is confronted with serious problems concerning daily living. Questions like divorce and remarriage, abortion, the "rights" of homosexuals, women in office, and the constant threat to our Christian Schools demand our attention. We as Christians live in threatening times even in the business world.

All of this is bound to have its effect upon the pulpit. As we are confronted with all the problems round about us we seek the guidance of the Scriptures, so that the pulpit naturally becomes involved in our daily affairs.

Yet the question may well be raised, has the pendulum swung too far in the other direction? Are we becoming so involved in our daily living that we are losing sight of the fundamentals, the sound doctrine upon which our lives must be founded? Have we lost our appetite for the Truth whereby we grow into spiritually strong saints in Christ? Have we become anemic Christians who can no longer digest solid foods, but must content ourselves with milk fed to babes?

Well may we ask ourselves in how far are we as individuals weaned away from sound doctrine. Are we still eager to know more about the fundamental truths revealed to us in the Scriptures? Do we attend church with a hunger for the Word, that we may grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ? Are we eager to become stalwart soldiers of Christ, to fight the battle of faith in an evil world even unto the end? How much time do we devote in reading sound, edifying literature? Do we put forth a serious effort to be instructed in sound doctrine from the pulpit? Do we instruct our children in the Truth that is most precious to us?

As young people we must realize that our worship on Sunday is not a time to sit down and relax. You probably see persons who settled down as if they are all ready to take a much needed nap. But that is nothing short of dishonoring to our God. That is sin. In our public worship we are not passive, but intensely, even eagerly active. We come to glorify God by singing His praises, worshiping in prayer and supplication and listening to His instruction from His holy Word. Only by active participation can we expect to receive His blessing.

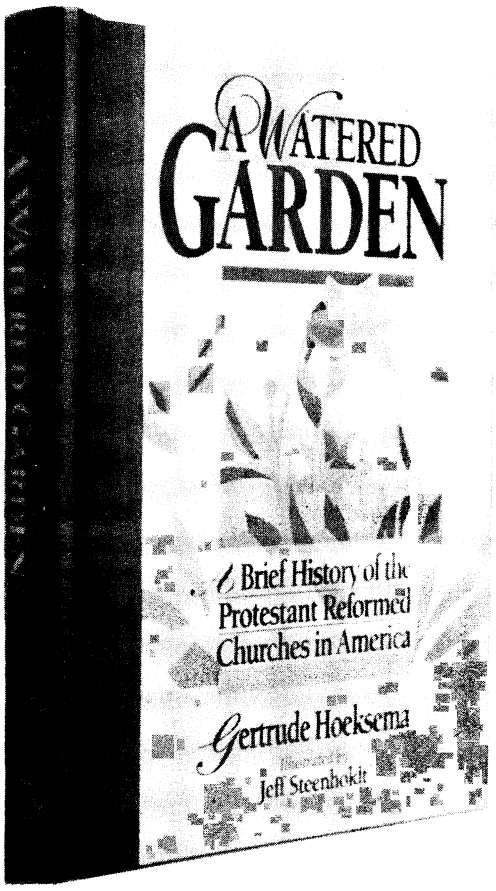
The apostle Paul warns, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." (Eph. 4:14,15)

Let us maintain sound doctrinal preaching along with the practical application to our daily lives.

(to be continued)

Now that does not just mean hurriedly reading your daily portion and rushing off to catch your train. That is not really taking the Bible as food. I am a great believer in systematic Bible reading. People waste a lot of time in opening the Bible at random or reading favorite passages. There is nothing better than to be a systematic reader of the Bible, and to make sure that you go through the whole Bible at least once every year. But the devil can even make a snare of that. You may have your daily portion printed on a card, and the danger is that you become more concerned about reading your daily portion than about what you are reading. And so it does not help you at all. You can so skim through, and skip over, verses that you might as well have been reading a novel. You may have read your daily portion, but have you got the Truth, have you really taken it in? But you must not bolt this food. You have to chew it and to masticate it, so that it may be thoroughly digested and become part of your constitution and build you up. True understanding, true knowledge, is something that makes us strong and builds us up and establishes us in the faith.

-p 78. The Christian Soldier
D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Baker Book House 1977



A WATERED GARDEN

A Brief History of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America

by Gertrude Hoeksema
illustrated by Jeff Steenholdt

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