BEACON LIGHTS

Remember now thy Creator
in the days of thy youth.
Ecclesiastes 12:1a

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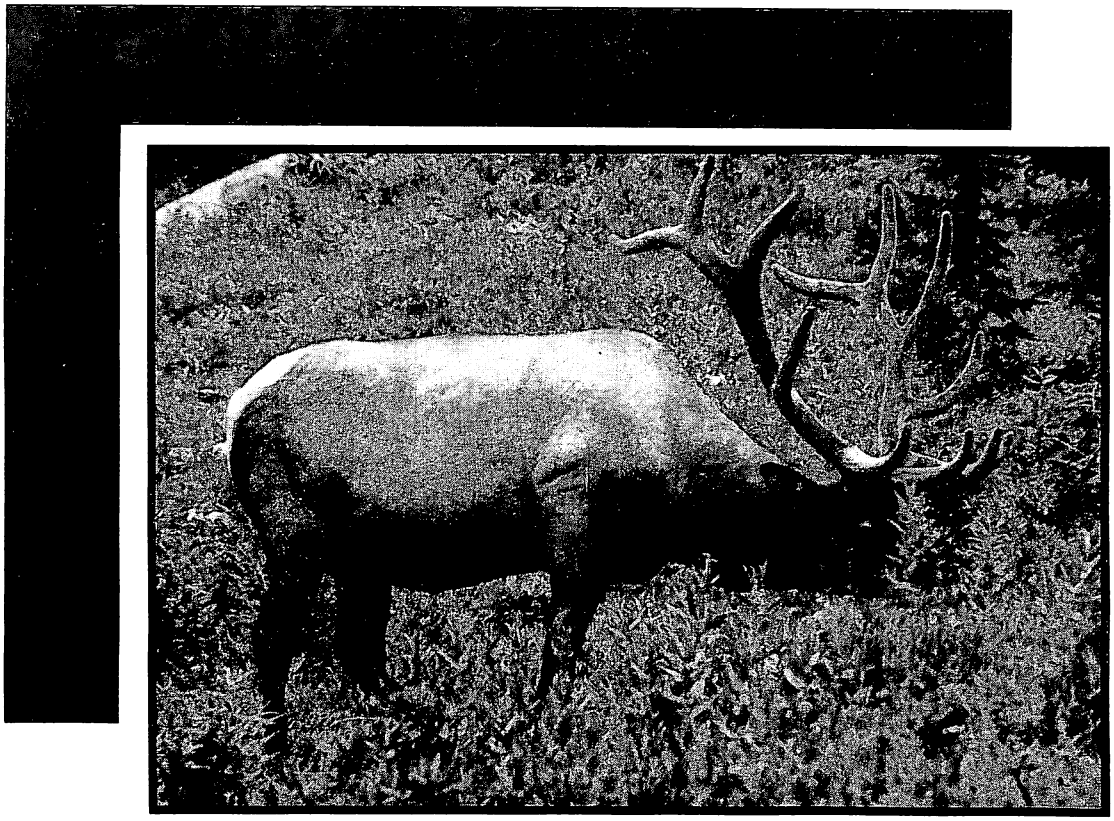

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The Holey Bucket

by Bruce Miedema

In your minds eye picture a pail of the type in which paint might be purchased. No, not just the typical one gallon paint can, but rather one that would hold five gallons. Sometimes this size pail is even called a 5-gallon pail or bucket. Next, picture a group of young men setting this pail up on a stump and taping a paper plate with a bull's eye on it to the pail. I'm sure you can imagine what happens next. Of course with each shot which comes close to or hits the target, two holes are blasted through the pail. It doesn't take many tries and this pail has many holes in it. Soon the pail is so shot through with holes that tape will not hold the plate to the now jagged surface, and the pail is thrown out and replaced.

Having spent the better part of a Saturday afternoon together target practicing, this group of young men has accumulated quite a number of discarded buckets. Without question, some of the pails are worse off than others. One pail may have many small holes in it as the result of being shot through several times with a .22 caliber rifle. Another may have larger holes in it from the blasts of a large caliber rifle or 12 gauge slugshot. And still another bucket may have a whole side or bottom shot away from the blast of 12 gauge buckshot. The degree to which each bucket is ruined will vary, and this can be shown by filling the buckets with water. With each bucket the water will drain away at a different rate, but in the end all are empty. All are ruined. Therefore, the significance of a holey bucket is, it simply will not hold water.

Can the life of a Christian be compared with the story of a holey bucket? Does any one of the holey buckets describe your life? The negative implication of the story is that everybody's life is changed by the experiences that the Lord God brings him through; however, this is the natural, human perspective. It is a sad thing when a young person is deprived of a physical ability and must spend the rest of his life handicapped. It is tragic when a parent or a child is taken from a family and those who remain must live on with that loss. These would be the traumatic incidents that change one's perspective in life. However, every experience, by the Lord's grace, empties one of himself and draws that person to God. Every experience that the Lord brings your way is designed to make you more conformed to Him and useful to Him.

How then is a person, who once was brimming with wholeness or emotional stability, more useful to God when he has a handicap or has to live without a family member? The Lord God will dwell within the empty. He will accept no cohabitation with any other thing within the believer. In II Corinthians 12: 9, Paul quoting Jesus said, "for my strength is made perfect in weakness," and in verse 10 Paul states, "when I am

weak, then am I strong." Also in II Corinthians 13:4, Paul, after condemning the obstinate and sinful Corinthians for their boast of might in Christ says, "For we also are weak in him (Jesus), but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you."

Pause here and think about what you just read. Does God handicap the believer or take away family members because wholeness or family members were put before God by that individual? God's providential love is far too multifaceted to be limited to that single scoped view. Further, one's love of God displayed in his physical ability or through a loved one are only some of the ways he demonstrates his love for God. Therefore, when health is taken away, the believer can say, praise God, and continue to praise Him throughout his handicapped life. Even in the soreness of the wound of death, the believer must say, praise God, and continue to praise Him. God will accept the love that the believer directs to Him through a family member as proper love to Him, and He demands this. This is the beauty of God's design in the family as a divine ordinance. But the ability to love God does not leave the believer when a family member is taken away. Job, with spiritual sensitivity and a willingness to conform his love to meet whatever God would send him could say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15).

With an understanding of what it is to be shot through with holes and empty, look now at Genesis 12:2; 26:4 and 28:14. In each of these passages God is conferring the covenantal promises upon the spiritual fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and in each instance some form of "blessed to be a blessing" is stated. God's intention is to bless the recipient of His covenant and also bless them so that He might use them to bless others. The believer understands himself to be the recipient of God's blessing by virtue of his participation in God's covenant and therefore is an instrument through which God blesses others.

A bucket shot through with holes cannot maintain any level of fullness unless it is continually filled. The believer whose life has been radically changed by the Lord God will not be satisfied unless he is continually filled from the River Glorious (that timeless river of God's grace) and knows of the power, presence and friendship of God through Jesus Christ in a personal relationship. This same believer cannot keep the blessing either, lest it become stagnant and he lose the freshness of his relationship with God. Just as a bucket cannot continually be filled unless it is continually draining, so God will not pour His blessing where there is no craving for it and that which He has delivered He will not allow to become pungent.

In this year that lies before you endeavor to seek God early and in the midday and in the evening as a Daniel. Seek Him as one who has been radically changed and is in constant need of His grace and blessing. Seek Him as an instrument through which He is pleased to bless others.

The Information Superhighway

by Tom Bergman

Rushing into a new century, we no longer live in the Space Age or Information Age.

The newest emphasis, swift communication of information over long distances, makes it more of a Communication Age. This age is reaching maximum speed on the new "information superhighway." While the world indulges itself with such earthly devices, the Christian has a distinct calling in this day and age. That calling is to be aware of the current things surrounding us as we wander through this strange land. We need to see the Lord's hand in this respect.

An exciting frontier, the "superhighway" is a collection of computer networks linked together, spanning the entire world like a monstrous web of bridges. Rather than walking or driving on this web, the work is done solely at a computer while electronic signals do all the travelling. Such network communications whisk along by phone line, fiber-optic line, or even by satellite. Tremendous versatility allows for large amounts of information to be sent very quickly. How quickly? With the aid of some fiber-optics, a short message from my computer to Northern Ireland, England, Germany, or Singapore only takes a few seconds. A longer message, say the contents of a 500-page textbook or a short video, would take only a matter of minutes.

There is a lot of opportunity out there. More and more people are beginning to realize this. The Internet, the world's largest network (and a main portion of today's superhighway), is nearing an estimated 30 million users. Nearly a million are added to this total every month. Any one of these users can send electronic mail (e-mail) to China, trade recipes with someone in Russia, read medical research from Australia, and get files from Spain. What started out as a U.S. Defense Department project has blossomed into a wide spectrum of uses. It is also virtually unstoppable. Since there is no central governing body for the Internet, no one person or agency can shut it down. Not even a worldwide power failure could completely crash the Internet.

Besides the Internet, the past decade has seen the rise of online services or "bulletin boards." These are commercially run by private corporations for profit. What they sell is a collection of information and services for which users are willing to pay. Online services such as CompuServe, America Online, Genie, and Prodigy offer instant reference libraries, e-mail, electronic shopping, games, entertainment, financial information, as well as an abundance of international news. One can read the current New York Times, reserve an airline flight, or browse the Library of Congress right at home.

Many of the existing programs can be beneficial to the Christian user. Since a simple e-mail service can be extremely helpful for quick communication between distant cities, it has shown potential for missionaries laboring across the ocean or on the other side of the globe. Whether it is a brief memo or a full-page document, the e-mail covers thousands of miles with split-second preci-

sion—a type of communication never enjoyed before. Church directories can be stored in easy databases and passed around with relative ease. Sending a list of phone numbers to New Zealand over the Internet would beat out an air mail service by about two weeks. Hypermedia is another bonus for a Christian user. "Hypermedia" is the fancy name for text embellishment. Simple words of text, like the entire Bible, can be supplemented with pictures, maps, audio readings, and lightning-quick cross-referencing. For example, you might choose Acts 9 and see the chapter before you. By the click of a button, you could hear a variety of narrators recite the story of Paul's conversion. Clicking a different button might pull up a map showing the location of Damascus or a picture of the city today. All these options are expensive, but the whole package, or sample clips of it, can be zipped along the information superhighway from England to India and back again in the same amount of time it takes for a good stretch.

The speed and the ease of riding the superhighway *can* be put toward a good cause, as well as toward any other.

But, let this not go without warning. Man will undoubtably use this device for evil. He already has. That is all he is able to use it for. "There is none that doeth good, no not one" (Psalm 14:3). The existing superhighway is already being used for hate mail, pornography, and theft. We know the sometimes-scary significance of possessing a personal, unique social security number. We know the things that can be achieved with only a credit card number. Therefore, the global capabilities of an "information superhighway" device should not surprise you too much. The world does use this invention for its own ungodly causes. Although the information superhighway can be put to work for the church of God (and it is already today, at least minimally), this invention is a worldly one—an earthly treasure. Beware, "for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21).

For those of you who have been on the information superhighway, do not stop at Vanity Fair along your way. Many delightful chances to enter at the broad gate await you. If you would get caught up in sin, you can for a time hide in the private recesses of your computer. For example, you can tiptoe your way to the White House computer, or to one in faraway Sweden and very few people will ever know you were there. You can try to hide in the wilderness like Hagar, but Christ will come to recover his sheep. As it says in Psalm 139, "There is not a word in my tongue, but O Lord, Thou knowest it...if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there." Not a single keystroke is hid from the face of our God. So do not get so caught up in it so that you foolishly have to hide from your Savior. Instead, put this technological marvel to work for a good cause. Your nametag reads "C-h-r-i-s-t-i-a-n." Do not cover that up when travelling the information superhighway.

Those of you with little or no experience with computer-communications, at least be aware of your surroundings. Realize that the Christian uses are vastly outnumbered by wicked ones. Of course, the signs of the times are given to us in God's revealed Word. That is what we should be going by—God's Word! Ask yourself, after reading Mark 13 or Luke 21, could such an invention be a tool for the Antichrist? In spite of its usefulness, could it possibly facilitate persecution of the Church? *How can we see the Lord's hand in this?* Remember, God's eternal counsel determines everything (Hebrews 4:3). And in this too, somehow God is still laying everything out in preparation for Christ's return.

Tom Bergman is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. He is studying at Grand Valley State University to be a school teacher.

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Arminius, A Man After Man's Own Heart

by Tom VanderWoude

Give glory to God. This should be the first thought that arises in our minds at the beginning of each day. This thought we should have before our mind's eye as we make our way through each day on our earthly pilgrimage here below. This should be our prayer as we lie down to sleep at the end of each day. How else can it be? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof..." (Psalm 24).

We are sinners through the guilt of our first father, Adam, and also through the guilt of our own sins. As sinners, our first thought is to give glory unto ourselves and to be carried away with our own vain imaginations...

James Arminius was born on October 10, 1560, at Oudewater, a small town in Holland. He lost his father in infancy but was taken under the wing of a man named Aemilius who saw to Arminius' early years of education in the city of Utrecht.

After the death of Aemilius, a man named Snellius, a mathematician from the city of Marburg, took him under his care. He brought Arminius to Marburg to place him in the university there. Shortly after his arrival in Marburg, Arminius learned that his family had been wiped out in the massacre of Oudewater (1575). After this experience he studied at the University of Leyden for about six years. In 1582 he went to study at Geneva under Theodore Beza. He took a trip to Rome in 1586 and then returned to Geneva. Shortly thereafter he returned to Amsterdam (1587) and was ordained to the ministry in 1588.

During his studies at Leyden, a controversy arose in the church there. Predestination was not the issue here, but the question of church order and the relationship between church and state were at the forefront. There were those who held strict Calvinistic viewpoints and held to the absolute authority of the consistory and its appointment of elders and deacons. Opposing them were those who held more liberal viewpoints and sided with the burgomasters (politicians) of that time and their exercising of a self-given right to pass on nominations for elder and deacon made by the consistory. It was with the latter group that Arminius was known to sympathize, although he was not directly involved in the conflict. This matter was reconciled somewhat by the National Synod of Middelburg in 1581. With these questions of church polity in the background, Arminius went on to his studies at Geneva with Theodore Beza.

Theodore Beza held to the position of supralapsarianism. He believed that God foreordained every man to his eternal destiny, whether it be elect or reprobate, even before the creation and fall of man. The other position to be taken on this

point makes man as he is already fallen the object of the decrees of election and reprobation. It was this question of the relationship between God's foreordination and man's free will that surrounded the church of Arminius' times.

Arminius was asked to defend sovereign predestination. He agreed, and the result was his eventual advocation of the position he had set out to refute.

In 1603 Arminius was appointed as a professor in the University of Leyden. It was during his tenure here that it became obvious that his ideas concerning predestination departed from the Reformed faith. He passed them on to his students, and it wasn't long before his influence had spread throughout the country.

Arminius taught that God ordained Jesus Christ to be the mediator. He taught that God determined to accept in Christ all those who repented of their sins and believed on Jesus Christ. He taught that all those who remained unbelieving under the preaching of the gospel were condemned by God. He taught that God ordained the means of grace unto salvation, that being the preaching of the gospel. He also taught that God foreordained some to salvation and others to damnation by His foreknowledge of who would and who would not believe in Jesus Christ.

From these teachings we can see the error of Arminius. He teaches that God depends upon the free will of man in order to select who will be saved and who will be damned. God's foreknowledge depends on whether, by his free will, the sinner decides to repent or not. He teaches that the gospel is grace unto all that hear and that Jesus Christ died for all men. He teaches that those who are damned are successful in rejecting the atonement of Christ's blood.

By reading the infallible words of Romans 9 we find the true God. Verses 15 and 18 plainly teach that God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He hardeneth whom it is that *He wills* to harden. Read Ephesians 1, especially verse 11, and decide whether God depends upon man's will to determine who will be saved.

The word of God is not grace to all. It is a two edged sword, dividing, not inviting (Revelation 1:16, Hebrews 4:12). In Revelations we see a picture of Christ as He stands at the center of the Church with the Word of God proceeding out of His mouth (the two edged sword). It is the word of salvation to those who believe by the grace of God (Ephesians 1:13) and the word of damnation to those who do not believe by the counsel of God (Jeremiah 6:10).

Jesus Christ died only for His Elect. By reading the parables of John 10 concerning the door of the sheepfold and the good shepherd, we see that the word of God comes as saving grace only to His Elect. See verses 3, 4, and 14. Jesus speaks the Word of Salvation to His own, they hear His voice because He calls them by name. He knows each of them intimately. He also knows the heart of the wicked and He speaks the Word to them, however the Word is a word of damnation to them.

Arminius died in 1609, even at the same time that a synod was being organized to settle the controversies that regarded his heretical teachings. However, his influence did not die, and the five points of the Remonstrants were developed shortly thereafter in 1610.

The Synod of Dordrecht of 1618-1619 marked the close of the Arminian controversy. The five Canons the Synod developed set forth the true doctrine as it is believed by the Reformed Churches. I would urge all young people to take the time to read and to think upon these Canons as they are an essential tool to the understanding of true doctrine as it was set forth by our forefathers. They refute the five points of the Remonstrance point by point with biblical proof.

Unfortunately, the Arminian teachings are still alive and well today. They were developed even further by Dr. Abraham Kuyper and embodied in the three points of common grace. It is a doctrine that appeals to the hearts of men. Man, in his sin, seeks good in himself and rejects God. Except for the grace of God, he will not give himself wholly over to the work of Jesus Christ but wants to play a part in his own salvation.

"...Man cannot be totally lost, he cannot be completely helpless. Look at all that he does and what he has accomplished. Why, I even think that the reprobate sinner has some good left in him, look at the good things that he does." The words of an unrepentant sinner are these and nothing else. For when Adam disobeyed God's commandments he and the whole human race died, i.e., completely, spiritually dead. Only God can save man, and so He does (Ezekiel 11:19 and Ezekiel 36:26). He saves His Church, the Elect, through their generations, to the glory and honor of His name forever.

Tom Vander Woude is a member of Southwest PRC. He is also one of the newest members of the Beacon Lights staff.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Tom Vander Woude

January 1

What did you do last night? Did you foolishly spend your time with the world in drunken revelry, in the making of foolish resolutions soon to be broken? Do you find yourself today with your mind clouded by the effects of too much alcohol from the party last night? Or are you a wise person, a faithful Christian, who spent last night meditating upon the Word of God with fellow believers. If so, you find yourself today with a clear mind, able once again to go to God's house to hear and understand the pure preaching of the Gospel. You are built upon a firm foundation and are prepared for a new year of service to the Lord. **Read II Corinthians 6, especially verses 14-18.**

January 2

The holidays are over. A long cold winter still looms ahead. It is time to return to your daily labors. Do you despair? Does it all seem too tedious and boring? The devil tempts us with such wicked thoughts. If we give ourselves over to these temptations, then we are in danger of seeking after the devil's solutions—worldly pleasures. But the wise man does not despair for he is built upon a firm foundation—his Savior, Jesus Christ. It is to Him that he turns for strength to continue on this earthly pilgrimage. He turns to the Word of God each and every day, for therein he finds true joy. **Read Matthew 7, especially verses 24-27.**

January 3

By now most of the foolish resolutions that were made New Year's Eve have been broken. Have you broken yours? Did you make a foolish resolution? There is only one resolution that should be made by all of us and that would be to commit our lives unto the service of our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. Every day, morning, noon, and night, should be spent in an effort to conform ourselves unto His example. Did you read the Scriptures today? If you haven't, do it now. **Read II Timothy 3, especially verses 14-17**.

January 4

The world breathes a sigh of relief. "It's Hump Day", they say, "halfway to the weekend." They are happy because the weekend draws nearer. Then they will be able once again to pursue their worldly pleasures for a couple of days, free from labor, able to do as they please. Is this your hope, too? Do you work for the weekend and that's all? The destroyer roams about seeking whom he may devour. Do his temptations assail you today? They assail me. What do we do? Turn to the Word of God. Seek after Jesus for He knows these temptations since He dealt with them also when He was on this earth. He will give you the strength to turn away from them. **Read Psalm 17.**

January 5

Have you set up before yourself a graven image today? Did you take a piece of wood and fashion it to look like some bizarre creature and set it before yourself to worship it? Probably not, but it is easy to do this very thing when we put our trust in anything besides God. If we trust money, or fame, or honor of men, we have made an idol and God is displeased for He is a jealous God. Break these idols and turn to God and Him alone. Pray to God that He may give you the strength and it will be done. **Read Exodus 34, especially verses 12-17**.

January 6

The world is gleeful today. It's Friday and tonight the party begins. They will be let loose from their labors, so let's buy a case of beer and celebrate. Discover the folly of their ways. For they are happy now, but come Monday they will be singing the blues again. If you spent this week in the

service of Christ you also will be happy today. But your happiness will be true joy. The joy of Jesus Christ will fill your heart, a joy which will take you into everlasting peace. This joy may not always be apparent on the outside, but it will always be in your heart, even in times of trial and affliction. **Read I Samuel 2, especially verses 1-11.**

January 7

God gives us the weekend. It is not our own time to do with as we please. Even today, when most of us rest from our daily labors, we must still be busy in our labor to serve Him. So whatever you do today, do it in the service of God. Do it to seek His Name's honor and glory. Prepare your heart and be glad, for tomorrow Jesus comes to speak to us and to bless us. **Read Psalm 8.**

January 8

Are you glad to be able to go to church today? If you dread it or you do it out of custom or superstition you have a spiritual problem. Pray to God that He may put in you a heart that is glad to go up to His house of prayer. Jesus Christ comes to speak to us His Word through His faithful servants. A Word that will lift us up and make us strong. A Word that will prepare us for another week of labor on our temporary pilgrimage here below. **Read Psalm 122.**

January 9

This is a gloomy season we are in—the dead of winter. Gone are the green leaves and the colorful flowers. All that remain are the bare branches. Gone are the boisterous morning song birds. We awake each morning in silence, under a blanket of snow. May we see God's Word in this for it is a picture of the result of our sin. When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, not only did man die, but all of creation died too. **Read Genesis 3, especially verses 17-18.**

January 10

It is important that we remember this earth that we live on is not the original. The beauty of the original is beyond our comprehension and was lost in the fall. Furthermore, the earth and every creature on it groans and travails in pain waiting for that day when it will be brought into glory with the Church of all ages. Oh! What a day that will be, our frail minds cannot even begin to imagine the glory that will be revealed in us. **Read Romans 8, especially verses 19-22.**

January 11

Do not think for a moment, as some would have you to believe, that Jesus will come to set up His Kingdom on this present earth. Scripture is very clear on this. It doesn't make sense either. How can something which will be so glorious be accomplished on this present, sinful earth? This creation has been cursed by God Himself as we saw in Genesis 3. This earth is full of sin and is doomed to destruction. The signs are like brilliant billboards all about us. Floods, earthquakes, famines, pestilence, this earth will be destroyed and out of it God will create a new heaven and a new earth, not one that is dying, but one that will last forever. **Read Isaiah 65, especially verses 17-25.**

January 12

There is separation between the world we live in and the world God lives in. We live in a physical world. We see, touch, smell, and can feel all the things round about us. God is a Spirit, and He dwells in a spiritual world. When Adam sinned separation was made between the heavens and the earth. Rev 21:1 says "there was no more sea." The sea causes division. I believe this means in the new heavens and the new earth this separation will be taken away and the physical and the spiritual will be joined into one. Remember, I am just a sinful, humble layman. **Read for yourself Revelation 21.**

January 13

Well, it's Friday again. And not only that, it's Friday the 13th! So we're all going to have bad luck, right? The world in its foolishness certainly amuses itself in silly ways. But those who are faithful to God know better. We are all in the palm of His hand. Not a single event takes place except it be according to His will. So if something good happens today, go to God in prayer and give Him thanks. If something bad happens, go to God in prayer and ask Him for the strength to see you through it. But do not be so foolish as to blame it on the date. **Read Matthew 10, especially verses 29-31.**

January 14

So what are you going to do today? Most of us do not have to go to work today since it's the weekend. Does this mean we get to do as we please? Can we go drink ourselves silly, or lie in front of the television all day? Remember that even today you are called to serve your Master. Which master do you choose? You cannot have two. There is a right way and a wrong way to rest. You cannot go wrong if you follow the Good Master's example. **Read the Good Master's Word in Mark 6, especially verses 31 and 32.**

January 15

It is the Lord's day today. Therefore, we are commanded to rest from our labors. Does this mean that we can sit idle all day, or spend the day in sleep? No, but we must be busy today. We must abstain from daily labor, but we must busy ourselves in the worship of God. We must frequent His house of prayer and we must meditate upon His Word. May we do this by God's grace and may our prayer be that our worship is acceptable to Him. **Read Genesis 4, especially verse 4.**

January 16

Men certainly like to brag about their strength. Some men and women busy themselves in the gym, daily pumping iron to ever build their muscles, some even to the point of grotesqueness. They boast of their power. But how frail we are when compared to the Almighty. God is Power. It is one of His attributes. Nothing can stand in comparison to it. All power starts with God. We are upheld by His Word. May we not boast in our own strength, but may we put our trust in Him. **Read Psalm 62, especially verse 11.**

January 17

The power of God is all encompassing. There is not a single thing on the earth that is not upheld by the power of His Word. From the tiniest insect to the largest beast there is not a single creature that exists except it be upheld by God's power. From the smallest stream to the greatest river there is none except it be maintained by His power. From the deepest chasm to the highest mountain there is none except it be according to His Word. Fear God and give Him praise. **Read Nahum 1, especially verses 3-6.**

January 18

Today man attempts to unravel the "mysteries" of Sodom and Gomorrah. They dig through the ruins on the edge of the Dead Sea and wonder at the remains that they find. They marvel that these remains could actually prove that these cities had existed and they were possibly destroyed by fire. The righteous person needs no proof. All he needs is the infallible Word of God and faith in its inerrancy. He then stands in awe at the power of God and His punishment against sin and evil. **Read Genesis 19, especially verses 24-28.**

January 19

Imagine yourself walking through a wilderness and up ahead you see a fire. As you draw closer to this fire your curiosity is changed to wonderment because you see it is a bush that is on fire, and yet it is not on fire. Even though flames shoot out from the bush, the bush remains as green and healthy as those around it. Once again God demonstrates His power over the creation and all of its elements in this event that is recorded for us in Scripture. May we, with Moses, hide our faces before the Holiness of God. **Read Exodus 3, especially verses 2-6.**

January 20

God's power is revealed unto us through the many events that led up to the deliverance of the children of Israel. His all encompassing power is especially shown to us in the events at the edge of the Red Sea. God hardens Pharaoh's heart so that in his sin he pursues after Israel. God stands between Pharaoh's army and Israel separating them through the night as darkness on Pharaoh's side and light on Israel's side. God divides the sea allowing Israel through and brings destruction to Pharaoh's host by the same means. God's power is awesome. **Read Exodus 14.**

January 21

One important point that we learn through the lesson of Israel's deliverance from the oppressing hand of the Egyptians is that God redeems His people through judgement. The ten plagues brought much untold pain, suffering, and death, and yet it is through these means that Israel was given deliverance. Remember that the ten plagues are symbolic of the judgement that is yet to come. Through many terrible plagues, and ultimately fire, God will destroy this world and will redeem Zion through judgement. **Read Isaiah 1, especially verse 27.**

January 22

Once again our hearts are filled with gladness with the arrival of another Sabbath Day. Pray unto God that He will give you strength to resist the temptations of the Devil that would have you desecrate the Sabbath Day. Pray to the God of Power, the sovereign ruler of heaven and earth and He will give you strength. Give worship to His Name and receive His blessing and we will be prepared for yet another week of labor. **Read Psalm 29.**

January 23

Wicked man always does the opposite of what is required of us by God. The man of this world always tries to build himself up in the sight of other men. He will do whatever it takes, good or bad, to climb the ladder of success. He will ridicule others to make himself look superior. The problem is I find these faults in myself all too often. Then we must go to God in prayer of repentance

and ask Him to give us grace to humble ourselves and to esteem each other better than ourselves. **Read Philippians 2, especially verse 3.**

January 24

Do you mortify the deeds of the body? Or do you walk the wide and easy pathway which leads to destruction. Being wicked is easy and a lot of "fun." But remember a lifetime of wicked fun is only temporary and an eternity of damnation follows. Walking the hard and narrow pathway which leads to heavenly glory is difficult. But through prayer and supplication to God you will find the strength of His Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body and therein you will find true joy. **Read Romans 8, especially verses 13 and 14.**

January 25

Using filthy language is an abomination to the Lord. This seems to be an especially strong temptation to us in our teenage years. When we are teenagers we wish to appear to be "street wise" so we use the language of the street. Just imagine that Jesus was there at your side the last time you let trash expletives dominate your vocabulary. Well...He was, so turn away from this sin and **read Matthew 12, especially verses 35-37.**

January 26

Using filthy language is one thing, but to let your vocabulary include the taking of God's Name in vain, or blaspheming His Name is deadly serious. More and more today you hear His Name being tossed about as though it were worth but a penny. If the penalties of the laws of Moses' day were still being executed today, our streets would be littered with dead bodies from all the stoning, and we would be running out of stones. God commands us not to take His Name in vain, and if we do, He is deadly serious about the consequences. **Read Leviticus 24, especially verses 10-16.**

January 27

When we profess to those round about us that we are Christians and attempt to prove this by going to church on Sunday, but then lead a life of partying and blending in with the world the rest of the week, we blaspheme God's Name. We also give occasion to unbelievers to blaspheme God's Name on account of our evil witness and put ourselves under God's chastising hand. His chastisement can be of great price to us. **Read 2 Samuel 12, especially verses 10-14.**

January 28

The ultimate blasphemer, of course, will be realized in the Anti-Christ. He will exalt himself to the point that he will claim to be God Himself. He will claim to be the return of Jesus Christ that everyone has been waiting for. Do not become too proud and boast that you will recognize and oppose him immediately. He will deceive many, for he will blend in well with the world and he will please many men with what he has to say and with what he does. Those who oppose him will be mocked and ridiculed; they will be persecuted and finally put to death. Prepare yourself by the constant study and meditation of the Scriptures. **Read II Thessalonians 2, especially verses 3 and 4.**

January 29

Do your sins overwhelm you? I know mine overwhelm me. There are times when we feel so strong and sure of our redemption, and there are times when we feel like we are alone and lost. But beware, for this is a favorite ploy of the devil. He loves to attack with this tactic, especially when we are at our lowest points in life. During times like this we must turn away from the devil and put our trust in God for He is full of redemption. **Read Psalm 130, especially verse 7.**

January 30

When we are young, and many times rebellious, we like to exclaim to our parents, "It's my life, I'll do as I please!" As we grow older and become independent we are tempted in the same manner. We wish to do with ourselves whatever we please. But it is not our life, nor are our bodies our own. We are purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ and we are His members. Hence we must strive to glorify God with our bodies and our lives because He dwells in us and we are not our own. **Read I Corinthians 6, especially verse 20.**

January 31

When Christ was crucified, we, His elect saints according to the foreknowledge of God, were crucified with Him. We are delivered from the death of sin, and Christ now lives in us. So live by faith in the Son of God. There is nothing in this life that we can experience that He did not experience Himself when He lived on this earth. He was tempted in all points such as we are. So go to Him and bring your needs to Him for He has died for you. **Read Galatians 2, especially verse 20.**

Borrowing Money

by Rodney Kleyn

The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.
Proverbs 22:7

Our text says: "The rich ruleth over the poor." There are two classes of people mentioned here, the rich and the poor. Those who are rich are the upper class. This class, who have more in earthly possessions, lord it over the poor. Read James 2:1-10. When we read this passage from James, the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ, who must have learned much from his wise and sinless brother, we can see that we are called to "Love our neighbour as ourselves." There is more in this passage though. Verse 5, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith." We must do the opposite to ruling and despising the poor and must befriend them, as they, more than the rich, need Christian companionship.

The second half of our text says: "The borrower is servant to the lender." This is actually and literally the case, for when we borrow money or possessions we then owe a certain part of our existence to the lender. In our modern day there are countless numbers of lending institutions and one can borrow almost as much money as he or she chooses. The question then is, *How much can or should we borrow?* or *Should we borrow at all?*

The Scripture as our only rule for life also gives us direction in this area of our life. Our Savior Himself has said to us (Matt. 6:19), "Lay not up for yourself treasure on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal." He then goes on and tells us to set our heart on Heaven for the treasures that will never perish. This, though, is not as easy said as done, because we are here on this earth and living by faith and not by sight.

How then are we to view our earthly possessions? We are called to replenish and subdue the earth. We are called to be wise stewards of that which God has given us. Let me at this stage define two terms. Our needs and our wants. Our needs are our basic necessities for life, namely food, clothing, and shelter. Then there are our wants. Our wants usually stem from a sinful desire to be rich, to enjoy the pleasures of our day and to satisfy the lusts of our sinful flesh. (I Tim. 6:9) "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." One who desires to be rich leads himself into temptation. The text then says further, that he, like a mouse at a trap, is snared and caught so that there is no turning back: "Which drown men in destruction and perdition."

We have pointed out then that our wants are not what should govern our lives, but our needs. (I Tim. 6:8) "And having food and raiment let us therewith be content." This then should govern our borrowing of money also. We should not borrow money for items that perish, or to put it better, that lose their value quickly (e.g., cars, furniture, vacations, etc.), and we should never borrow money for an item if when the item is sold it will not repay the loan completely.

The Bible also gives us a pattern in our loan repayments. (Rom. 13:8) "Owe no man anything." When we do need to borrow for our necessities, we should work hard to pay off that loan, and should not squander our money indulging in worldly pleasures.

(James 4:13-15) "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."

We must not presume on the future. We should borrow not to "get gain," but should give God the thanks for what we do have, for tomorrow it may not be ours.

In our western culture we have all. There is a verse in Scripture which describes that well. (II Cor. 9:11) "Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness," but the text goes on to say "which causeth through us thanksgiving to God." Does it? or do we want more every time? The one main cause of financial bondage and psychological illness in our day is a "lack of contentment" and a spirit not of thanks, but of unthankfulness and ingratitude for what God has given us. We run ahead of God and lead ourselves into temptation. We sell our freedom for the luxuries and pleasures of this lost and fallen world.

Having talked about borrowing money, what now about spending it? Being a steward also involves spending our money wisely. Our tithes are our first and most important investment (Mal. 3:10). If we put God first, He will surely bless us. Another important investment is the preaching of the Gospel (Prov. 11:30). When we put these things first, as did the early Philippian Church in supplying Paul with gifts for the furtherance of the preaching of the Gospel, then we, too, can be assured that (Phil. 4:19) "our God shall supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

As well as this, when we are wise stewards of our money in this way, putting God first, then He will give us freedom from financial bondage. This involves, for us, freedom from debt, pressure, love of money, pursuit of earthly riches, business entanglement, "get rich quick" schemes, gambling and guilt. He will give us peace of conscience, so that we may learn whatever state He puts us in therewith to be content.

We then also who abound may look not every man to his own needs but to the needs of others. Think about that and give to the needy also. Care not for what you are wearing yourself, but see to it that your Christian brother is clothed. Do you need to throw out last summer's clothes not because they are worn out, but because they have "gone out," out of fashion? Do we need a new pair of shoes just because the white on our current pair is a little yellowish? We must be wise stewards of every cent He entrusts to us. If we fail in this area and squander what we have we are counted by God as worse than an infidel (I Tim. 5:8). God then has no place for us in His Heavenly Kingdom. As we seek also in the stewardship of His gifts to us to follow Him, may He grant each one of us His blessing and wisdom.

Rodney Kleyn is a member of the Burnie Congregation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

My Favorite Verse

by Bruce D. Hugg

One of my favorite Bible passages is found in Matthew 6:25-34. In this portion of Scripture, Christ instructs us to seek "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." This text is important to me, because the teaching of Christ here touches the life of every child of God.

We, as believers of the Word, often find ourselves wondering about the cares of this world. At times we even become burdened because we are uncertain as to how we will obtain the very necessities of this life such as our food, our drink, and our clothing. These concerns as well as many others which come to mind are truly real, and they weigh heavily on our souls at particular periods in our lifetime. Consequently, Christ gives us a word of blessed assurance in this text. That assurance is this, that we as the children of the covenant of God are graciously provided for by our Heavenly Father. For in verse 32, Christ says, "for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

Therefore, we are to seek "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," for in so far as we do this, we realize increasingly that our sovereign Lord and Father places us in every instance of our life, and we know too that He will make provision for every need and circumstance which He has seen fit to place in our pilgrimage upon this earth.

Are You Baptized—Really??

by Dan Van Dyke

Wait a minute! Before you pass over this article because it looks a little too doctrinal and dry, think about that question. Are you *really* baptized? Dumb question, right? Of course I am. My parents took me to church when I was very young and my minister baptized me—what's the point?

Baptism. It seems pretty simple, doesn't it. I mean, either you are or you aren't. Why put such a simple topic in a young people's magazine? This isn't nearly as appropriate to a young person's life as smoking or alcohol or T.V. watching. What difference does baptism make to me? I don't care if you're a young person or not, if these are some of your thoughts, pay attention. Baptism makes a difference!

Let's think about that for a minute. Does baptism really make a difference? If you know any Roman Catholics, you know that baptism makes a big difference. Ask a Roman Catholic how old he was when he was baptized. Chances are he wasn't more than twenty-four hours old. You see, to a Roman Catholic, baptism makes an eternal difference. Baptism makes the difference between one child going to heaven and another going to a place called "limbus infantum." In our language, that's a place which is neither heaven nor hell, but where infants (infantum) are held in a kind of "limbo" (limbus). They don't go to heaven or hell, but must stay in this middle place for eternity with no hope of escape. Pretty scary.

For us, baptism isn't that powerful. It doesn't matter to a Reformed believer if his child dies the day before baptism or the day after. We trust that the child will still go to heaven. This brings up the real question then. What difference does it make whether or not we have baptism? Well, let's take a look now at what we believe about baptism. I'm going to make this very brief, so pay attention. Even though you've heard this a million times, baptism is simply a sign. That's it. It has no practical value for making you a better person or even for making you a child of God. You don't enter God's kingdom when you are baptized. That's already taken care of. It's a sign.

Now before you get the idea that I'm trying to say baptism isn't important, listen to what this sign means. When your parents baptized you, they were really saying, in effect: "We recognize that we have been given a child from God. We realize that we have a responsibility to this child, to train him to be an active citizen in the Kingdom of God." Think about that for a minute. Baptism doesn't give a baby salvation, but it acknowledges that salvation has already been given. Of course not every baby born to Reformed Christians is a child of God, but most of them are God's children.

Why are you a child of God? If you are like most of us, you are a child of God because you were born to members of God's kingdom. Now you had better be catching on, young people. I'm sure you remember nothing of your own baptism. So you had better be paying attention when you see other babies being baptized. Every time you see a baptism, remember that your parents were up there holding you about sixteen or seventeen years ago. If you still think that this isn't as important as dating or school or whatever else, think about this. First, try

to imagine all the people in the world right now. Then think about all the people that have ever lived on this world since its creation. That's a lot of people. Now, out of all those people, think about those that have been misled by the Devil to believe in a god other than the one true God. Finally, think that out of all these billions and billions of people, God decided to choose *you* to be His child. Why weren't you born to Hindu parents, or Muslim parents and left in that Paganism? Just because God wanted to love you. Think of all the public high schools in Grand Rapids. Most of those high school students are just like you except they have this world to enjoy for eighty years or so and then it's an eternity of misery and suffering which is beyond our ability to imagine. On the other hand, because God gave you Christian parents, you have eighty years or so to enjoy with a loving family and then you still have an eternity of unimaginable joy to look forward to.

Are you beginning to get it? Do you see now why this is so much more appropriate for you than dating or school or alcohol? Think about this incredible fact: God, for some unknown reason, chose you to be His child to live with Him forever and therefore gave you Christian parents who promised at baptism to make you a thankful child of God so that Satan would not get his hands on you. Wow! Okay, now think of that history test you just failed, or the girlfriend who just dumped you, or the "friend" who just called you a geek at school. It just seems to help, doesn't it, knowing this world isn't even your real home, as the hymn says, "I'm just passing through (this world)." Your treasures are in heaven.

Recently in our church, we had the privilege of seeing an adult baptism and profession of faith. If you've never seen an adult baptism, I hope you have the opportunity soon. It's quite an experience. This young lady had been going to our church for about one year and when the moment of her baptism arrived, she went up to the pulpit and knelt down and bowed her head. Then the minister baptized her! I talked to this young woman after the service and I told her that this baptism was the first one to bring tears to my eyes. She had just told everyone that she belonged to God. I could almost imagine God coming to this lady, giving the Devil a crushing blow on the head and pushing him far away from her, taking her by the hand and saying, "You are Mine!" God does that every single time a baby, who is one of His, is baptized. He did that at your baptism and at mine. Since you don't remember your own baptism, think about it every time you see a baby being baptized in your church. Think about it and thank your ministers and teachers for helping your parents in this eternal effort. Think about and thank God for adopting you for His own, and then thank Him again and again and again.

Dan Van Dyke is a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church and is a teacher at Heritage Christian School.

God's Will

by Amy Steenholdt

God's will—God's Grand Plan—those are two very significant phrases in the lives of Christians. In this paper, I will analyze and attempt to answer the question: What is God's will for my life?

First of all, there is the question of God's grand plan for all His children and how it applies to me. The answer to this can be found by turning to the book with all the answers: the Bible. When I pray, "Thy will be done," I pray it very seriously. I know

everything happens according to God's will and that He reveals it to me as I go along in life. God is interested in me because I am a Christian. He is my Father and I am His child. Ephesians 1:11 assures me that I was predestined by God as His child and that everything will work according to His will. And Psalm 37:24 comforts me by saying that although I may stumble, God will uphold me by His hand. God's will is best for me because He is all-knowing and all-powerful. Romans 8:28 says, "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." That is very reassuring! And Romans 12:2 tells me that God's will is good, pleasing, and perfect. A harder question to answer is, how do I know what God's will is? But to answer that question also, I can look to the Bible. First, we must not worry. According to Matthew 6:31-34, God will take care of tomorrow, and Philippians 2:13 says God works *in* us to act according to His purpose. I also believe one of the best ways to know God's will is to pray and to listen to Him—trusting that He will work His will through me one day at a time. I fit into God's will through Jesus, because I'm rooted in Him, as Colossians 2:6-7 say. Proverbs 16:3-4 tell me that if I commit everything I do to the Lord, my thoughts will be established and that the Lord works everything out according to His will. God knows what is best for us, and if we trust Him and leave everything up to Him, He will guide us on His path.

A more specific question I wonder about is what God's specific will is for me, and how I go about finding it. First of all, I realize that God isn't going to tell me exactly what's going to happen in my life before it happens. God will reveal it slowly along my way in life—step by step. There is a way to go about finding God's will in bits and pieces. I've discovered this in class at school. I need to look in the Bible first, to see if anything applies to my situation. I realize God will guide me through the circumstances He brings me through in life. God also guides me through the counsel of Christians who know me well, like my family and friends. Prayer is also very powerful in this aspect of life, as it is in *all* ways of life. Every day I pray for guidance and that God will lead me according to His will—as I know He does. I also specifically pray for guidance in career, college, and marriage. Also, in order to find God's will there are prerequisites to follow. I need to make sure I'm a child of God, which I know through the Holy Spirit, Who testifies to me in my heart. I need to be willing to obey God with a *good* attitude and I also need to be willing to accept what God has planned for me. I can't try to do what I want for myself. That won't work. God is in control. I just need to *trust* Him in all things.

There are a few specific things I've been wondering about. What has God planned for me? One is: whom will I marry and how will I know he's the right one? First of all, I know I can't have a totally specific answer for that right now (especially since I don't have a boyfriend—yet—but that's beside the point). I've discussed this question with a few people to obtain their Christian guidance. My parents told me (as they always have), that it's in God's eternal plan and He will guide me. I know that's the truth and that's why I pray about it every night. My friend Beth told me she thinks I'll marry someone who's practical and down-to-earth so that he can "bring my head out of the clouds." (Is she trying to tell me something here?!) Another important question in my life right now is where I will go to college. I'm pretty sure about the answer to this one, but I still pray about it daily. I'm planning on going to Western Michigan University here where I live. Beth thinks I should go to Calvin, but I like it here. I really am content to stay at home (at least at first), and go to college. I can keep my wonderful Chicken Coop job and some of my friends are staying here in town, too. I wouldn't mind living on my own somewhere around here, but living in a dorm just doesn't appeal to me. I plan to go into elementary education. I'm afraid I won't find a job, though. Then I may be a writer. All I really want to do is get married and have a family, but I feel I *should* go to college and hopefully marriage and a family will come along. Beth realizes I'm pretty much set on Western, so she just advises I get involved with Inter-Varsity to make Christian friends.

Through this project I've come to realize even more clearly that God is in control over everything. Only He knows what the future has in store. I've also realized that prayer is a powerful and helpful resource when it comes to God's will. I love my Father in Heaven and I trust that He knows what's best for me—His child. Although I face confusing and difficult times and decisions right now, I look to Him for complete guidance.

Amy is a member of Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church.

Trinity Christian College

by Kevin Van Overloop

Driving through the suburb of Palos Heights, Illinois, a visitor could very easily pass the campus of Trinity Christian College and not even realize that he/she had done so. Tucked between a small patch of woods and a quiet subdivision, the beautiful campus stretches over what used to be a golf course. The college is not only a home to students, but many small critters would like to call it home as well. In fact, I think there might be more squirrels than students. It's quite hard to find such a place so close to the "Windy City," Chicago, Illinois.

The factor that attracted me to Trinity is that it is a small Christian liberal arts college.

First a word on the size. There are approximately 550 to 600 students at Trinity. About two-thirds of the students live in the three spacious dorms, while the remaining one-third commute. As you can imagine, it doesn't take very long to get to know most everybody. It is definitely not a place to go if you want to get lost in the crowd.

However, attending a small college creates some advantages in receiving a quality education. Most of the class sizes are quite small. Although you might find some core classes with forty to fifty students, a majority of the classes, particularly the concentrated classes, have between five to twenty students. This type of class size allows for more open discussions, and one on one teaching, than you would find in larger classes. The professors are very willing to continue discussions outside of the classroom. It is up to the student as to how he/she will use this opportunity to further his/her education.

Secondly, Trinity is a Christian College. Although classified as non-denominational for support reasons, most of the professors are Christian Reformed or Reformed. This becomes quite evident through their lectures. Whether the class is Bible, English, Nursing, or Business, the teachings in and outside of the classroom bring up Christian ethics with a Reformed perspective on that particular subject. In my business classes, I was taught how to view different situations in the workplace from a Biblical perspective. Personally, I think this is one of the most important things to look for in a college.

And finally, Trinity is a liberal arts college. Although it doesn't have as many programs as larger colleges or universities, Trinity offers all of the basic degrees. Nursing and Business are two of the stronger fields of study, which stems from being so close to Chicago. This allows for students to participate in internships in local hospitals and businesses. This provides for excellent hands-on training to go along with the book knowledge.

If a student applies himself/herself correctly, the future Trinity graduate will have a solid college education.

I thoroughly enjoyed my four years at Trinity, and I recommend it as an excellent place for a Christian young person to further his studies and receive a solid education.

Kevin Van Overloop is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . LET IT SHINE!

by Connie Meyer

Before His Cold
Psalm 147:15-19

The cold and snow,
The wind that blows,
It's time to go
Inside he knows.

Then just as soon
He's in the room,
He hears the tune
Of drums—boom! boom!

The ice and hail
Hit hard the door,
They would assail
Him all the more.

But safe inside,
He sits in peace.
He will abide,
The cold will cease.

"Spring—it is near!"
Warm breezes tell.
Ice sheds a tear;
The rivers swell.

So he sees then
God's perfect way,
Of every season
In every day.

Seasons	Spring	Summer
Autumn	Winter	Warm
Cold	Ice	Snow
Wind	Rain	

S	C	O	L	D	N	W	A	I	M
P	N	E	A	I	A	D	S	C	E
I	D	N	I	W	I	N	T	E	R
M	E	C	O	I	O	M	A	C	O
M	T	N	W	S	P	R	I	N	G
A	S	R	A	I	L	D	T	M	S
L	O	E	R	W	N	O	F	U	L
W	S	A	M	T	U	B	I	T	P
S	I	H	W	R	E	M	M	U	S
N	G	L	A	C	I	H	D	A	E

Connie Meyer is the mother of 5 children and attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

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Look for more details in following issues!