BEACON LIGHTS

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

Psalm 90:2

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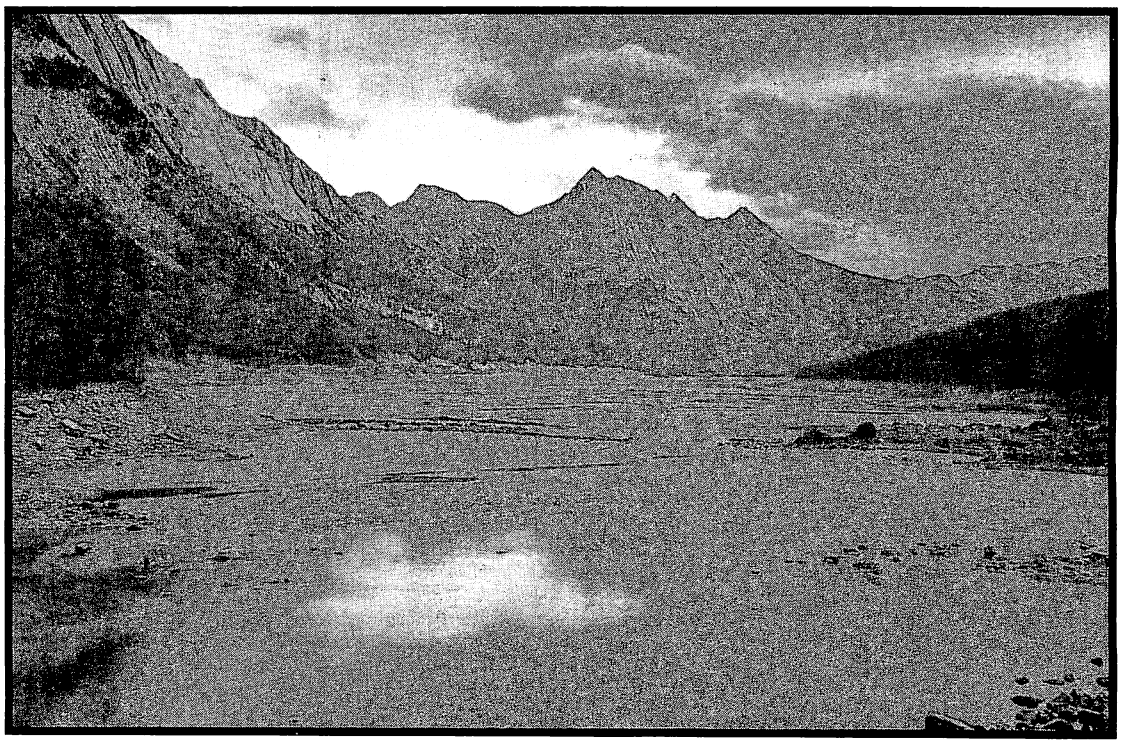

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Responsibility for School Education: Not the Government, School, or Church

Parents are responsible for the education of their children. This basic principle and truth is being called into question today. Many people and groups would like to seize this responsibility of educating the child. What is even worse than this is the compliant parents who almost willingly let someone take over the duty that they have been given.

God has given the duty and responsibility of education to the parents. God explains this in Deuteronomy 6 verses 7 through 9,

> And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

The Bible is so clear that it is the parent's duty and responsibility to teach their children. Later in this same chapter Moses says, "Then thou shalt say unto thy son." Call your son and daughter to you and teach them for it is your duty. Besides these verses there are many others that speak about this parental duty and responsibility. It is not that the parents share the responsibility with a person or an organization, rather they are solely responsible. This duty, right, and obligation should frighten some parents who say, "I hardly see my child, they are always gone here or there." These parents have a right to be frightened if they have lost control of their child, because God requires that they perform this duty. It is not the truth: when the children are at home the parents are responsible; when the children are at school the teacher is responsible; and when the children are at church, the elders are responsible. No! The parents are responsible in every aspect and in every sphere of this child's life.

We must ask ourselves if this is also true for the formal education of the child? By education here we mean the three R's that are taught usually in the school setting. Three groups today more than ever would like to usurp the parent's responsibility. The three institutions or organizations that we have in mind, as identified in the title of this editorial, are the government, the school, and the church.

First, the government would like to take the responsibility for educating children in government approved schools. But nowhere in the Bible does God talk about the government's role in educating the children. We shudder when we think about mandatory attendance of government schools.

Second, the schools, even Christian schools, would sometimes like to take on the responsibility for educating the child. The parents may hire someone to teach the child. You could say this is their right as parents. The parents may be unqualified or unable to teach, so they hire a teacher to educate their children. The Christian schools today are made up of parents coming together for a common purpose. They come together to educate their children and form a Christian school. There is nothing wrong with this if it is done properly. But, our concern is for the schools and the teachers to realize that they are assisting the parents. If hired, the school or the teachers do not take the responsibility

away from the parents. No, the parents remain responsible for every aspect of the child's life whether a school is involved or not.

A danger that must be avoided by parents is to give the total responsibility of the child to the teacher. The parents renounce their duty to the teacher. I suppose you will always have parents who write a check, mail it to the school, and feel the responsibility of educating their child is off their shoulders. It is a danger that the parents almost eagerly give up as much responsibility as possible to their teacher, so much so, that the teacher may feel that he or she has adopted the child. This danger is to be avoided at all costs.

Thirdly, the Church may want to take responsibility for the child. It is interesting how someone could conclude that it is the church's obligation to teach the three R's in education. The church must not fall to the notion that this is its duty and try to take the responsibility away from the parents. The baptismal vows are sometimes misquoted but they are very clear. They state:

> Thirdly, Whether you promise and intend to see these children, when come to years of discretion (whereof you are either parent or witness), instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?

The church body here as witnesses agree to help bring the children up in the aforesaid doctrines. And the question then is asked, what are the aforesaid doctrines? For someone to conclude that the aforesaid doctrines are mathematics and reading is a complete mistake. Aforesaid means something that was previously mentioned. Mathematics and reading of course were not previously mentioned. The second point of the baptismal vows sheds light on this. It states:

> Secondly, Whether you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testaments, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and which is taught here in this Christian Church, to be the true and perfect doctrine of salvation?

Here you have some of the aforesaid doctrines in which the child must be instructed.

Also frequently misquoted is Article 21 of our Church Order that states, "The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant." The church should pray for the schools, and encourage the parents, but may not take away the responsibility that the parents have been given. The *Church Order Commentary* by VanDellen and Monsma is specific,

> The wording of this article might lead one who is not fully informed to think that our Church Order stipulates that Consistories, (1) must organize and maintain Christian Schools, (2) must see to it that parents send their children to these Church Schools. This however is not the meaning of article 21.

This article of the church order means that the consistories shall encourage the parents to have their children instructed not in the philosophy of the world but in the principles of the church.

God instituted the family and we must remember that He has told us in the Scripture that we should teach our children. So, we can only conclude, that formal education remains solely the parents' responsibility. Parents are the heads of their homes, and they are responsible for their children. Only with God's help can parents fulfill this incredible, encompassing responsibility.

—Editor

Our Mission Work

by Tom Bergman

What is mission work?

Mission work is the means God uses to preach the gospel of salvation. The Lord uses the preachers sent by His church to proclaim Christ to the wandering and lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 1:6; 15:24). Through mission work, established churches call those outside of Christ to repentance according to the commission of Christ:

> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. (Matthew 28: 19,20)

What is a missionary? Does he have to be an ordained minister?

Bottom line: A missionary is a preacher. A preacher called and ordained by God to carry the word of salvation to all peoples (Ephesians 4: 11,12; Mark 16:15). "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Romans 10:15) This does not mean that a missionary is the sole fixture in the work of missions. Proclaiming the gospel is the work of the church, and many helps are needed along the way. But the Word of God leaves no doubt about the primary act of evangelism: official proclamation of the gospel. The missionary must be a preacher.

> How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:14)

What are the needs of a missionary family? How are they met?

A missionary and his family have ordinary and special needs. The church supplies for both. Since evangelism is the work of Christ through His church, missionaries are not supposed to fend for themselves. The instituted church supports all physical and spiritual needs of the missionary and his family. You will find the church back home raising money to support them well with food, clothing, and shelter. You will find the church back home sending frequent letters and words of encouragement. You will find the church back home praying to God for the missionary's well-being. This is the church's calling. Therefore, it is *our* mission work.

Who can go on mission trips?

Consider the December 1994 earthquakes in Japan. May we send people to help the earthquake victims? May we call this mission work? What about medical doctors and relief workers? Should these go along with a preacher?...before him, after him, or doesn't it matter?

Remember that mission work is the Church preaching Christ by means of a minister of the Word. Sending a team of optometrists to help poor people in the Amazon does not constitute a mission trip. But the eye doctors, dentists, carpenters, and zealous teenagers may not be excluded. These may be part of a mission trip. As long as the preaching remains central (just as it does in the congre-

gation back home), these helpers serve wonderfully to supplement a preacher's labors.

How does this supplement? It serves the *physical* needs on the field, in addition to the preacher serving the spiritual needs. These men and women are not missionary "substitutes" or "replacements". They are supplementary. But, good works can be done by these good Samaritans! (James 2:15-17) Clothing earthquake victims, vaccinating whole tribes, or constructing houses. As long as the needy within the home congregation are not forgotten (with benevolent funds *and* prayers), the church should send more than just a missionary to work on a field.

> For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matthew 25: 35, 36, 40)

So where can I start? What can I do this week as a doer of the Word?

A few basic things you could strive to do in your spare time is to send a letter to the missionary family. Let them know you care, and your prayers are with them. Send brotherly encouragement in Christ.

Place your portion of the mission fund in the collection plate. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (I Corinthians 16:2). "Your abundance may be a supply for their want" (II Corinthians 8:14). More importantly, pray to the God of all mercy (Psalm 130:7) for their health and safekeeping, D.V., and fruits upon their labors.

> Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perserverance and supplication for all saints. (Ephesians 6:18)

Do my prayers actually aid mission work? How?

Prayer bears fruit in all facets of the life of the church. Therefore, our prayers aid the labors on the current mission fields. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Will prayer change the infinite God of heaven and earth? No, but the Lord is pleased to *use* our prayers as a tool to keep us close to Him (Psalm 4). God uses the means of prayer to sustain those laboring for Christ abroad.

Aha! the importance of prayer dawns on us! What if we constantly fail? What if we never breathe a prayer for the church's mission work?

We must pray. Not to *assist* God, but pray that we may experience His friendship and favor, especially as a calling church, performing the work of the gospel.

Are we the result of mission work?

Yes, God revealed to Peter in his vision of the unclean animals (Acts 10) that the only hope of salvation must be preached to the Gentiles. Gentiles were those outside of the established (Jewish) church at the time. After Paul has his vision of the Macedonian man (Acts 16:9), he knew powerfully in his heart that God had called him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Of course, many of our own roots involve mission work at some point—calling our heathen ancestors to repentance. James summed up the church's position well with a reminder of the prophecy of Amos that we find in Amos 9:11:

> ...As it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord. (Acts 15: 15-17)

What made Paul a great missionary?

A bachelor (I Corinthians 7: 7-9), and not foreign to the hard work of a common laborer (Acts 18: 2, 3), Paul was a man of iron will, persistence (Acts 15:36), and sincerity. Paul's background as a Jew helped him to know the old Jewish laws extensively. He knew the mind of the Jewish leaders-how they would test him and question his preaching. His time as a Pharisee and citizenship as a Roman were also preparations of God. He had exposure to their ways and access to their gathering-places. Plus, by the time he went out on his four trips across the known world, Paul had the ability to write, and he knew how people of the day thought. Most importantly, God had prepared him with a solid grasp of his own corruption and sin. Paul knew the "Saul" of his human nature (Romans 7:15). So Paul was *called by God through the church of Christ.*

> The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. (Acts 13: 2-3)

How do we deal with cultural differences in foreign lands today?

The missionary works to learn the language and culture, while the church prays fervently that such tough barriers may be pushed aside to make way for the proclamation of the victory that is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15: 57). The severity of cultural differences (linguistic, ideological, and moral) can make the missionary's task very difficult. He adapts his own life the best he can to fit in his new world, while abiding by the all-encompassing stipulations of the Word of God. The language may be Mandarin or Swahili, but the message remains constant. The church may have to translate the Bible to native tongue, but the call of Christ is the same as the call of David as a picture of Christ. These messengers say, "David [Christ] sent us unto thee [lost sheep of Israel], to take thee to wife" (I Samuel 25: 40). It may not be in English, but this is the Word that is sent.

What is our attitude toward those of the mission field?

By nature, we all walk in the counsel of the ungodly (Psalm 1:1). Now, we are members of the body of Christ, "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3: 24). Paul writes, "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise, for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" (Romans 3:9). Is the calling church more righteous than those to whom they bring the gospel? No, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We are all terribly undeserving of that blessed salvation in Christ (Psalm 14:3, 53:3). Therefore, our attitude is a desire to see God's people saved and come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We use the psalms for worship, the KJV as the best available translation, meet twice every Sunday, and prohibit women officebearers. To what extent do we press these views on others in cross-cultural evangelism?

There is a distinction here we should not miss. On the one hand, whatever our particular culture mandates can be compromised and reshaped to fit into the work at a mission station. On the other hand, whatever the Word of God requires, the church must insist on and stand stubbornly on the truths of His Word. The church should recognize this distinction when it oversees the missionary's labors. By doing this same official business, it is again evident that the church is actively involved. It is *our* mission work.

God has a covenant; He has chosen His people from before time. So why do we insist on going out to call these unbelievers to repentance?

If God has already saved someone, we know that they will undoubtedly be saved, show it at some point in a Christian walk, and live with Him in heaven. Knowing this, can we leave it at that? God has chosen His church. Mission work won't change anything. Right?

No, God is pleased to use the preaching of the gospel (Mark 16: 15,16) as the means to bring His children to knowledge of deliverance from the bondage of sin (Exodus 20:2). Christ Himself commanded the established church to go out and preach (I Corinthians 1:17). The view that God often saves His people apart from the preaching is false.

Where does the church go out to preach?

God again uses means to let the church know which direction to take. It may be various contacts derived by magazine, newspaper, or radio. It may be a visit made by some to a particular area. Perhaps the one lost sheep (Luke 15: 4-7) may audibly bleat for a shepherd to rescue. Why Northern Ireland and not Peru? Why Singapore and not Nepal? Why Spokane, WA and not New Orleans, LA? All that can be said here is this: the Holy Spirit is our guide (Acts 16: 6-9).

Thus in active participation with the Spirit's guidance, church members pray for results, D.V. described by Paul:

> For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. (Acts 13: 47-49)

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

Renewed Day by Day

by Rev. John A. Heys

From a physical point of view, Young People, and from the day when we were born, we began to go through some wonderful changes. That day we were very, very helpless and weak, compared with what we are now, and can do today. For many months we could cry; but we could not talk. It took weeks before we could crawl; and could not yet walk. We could not read or write, and could not sing, or even with our mouths ask for that which we wanted.

Now, however, we can do so many of these things and many more. We do well, therefore, to bear in mind that, as children of God, who were born with a new spiritual life, we remain children, that is, children of God. Even though, in the physical sense, we can and do become men or women, we from a spiritual point of view remain children, all through this present physical life. That we are correctly taught in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 44, Question and Answer 114. There it is correctly stated that "The holiest of men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience." Get that truth. We now have only a small beginning of that new spiritual life which we receive, when born again by God's grace.

That, however, will change the moment we die. Then our old man of sin has come to the end of his life; and our new man in Christ is separated from that old, sinful man. That new man in Christ now becomes very active and powerful in worshipping God and of glorifying Him in heaven. Although in this life we have only a small beginning of obedience, we through death are freed from our old man of sin. We are completely free from our sinful nature, the moment we die; and are with Christ in heavenly glory.

Being such children of God we, in this life, are fiercely attacked by Satan in several different ways. He strives to take away from us the love of God, which we received when, by God's grace, we were born again. Satan strives in many ways, and with many devices to make us hate God, even as he succeeded in doing so to Adam and Eve. Satan hates us because we love God. And Satan strives every day, and in many ways, to get us to be his devilish children, rather than God's holy children. And his actions will come more powerfully, when he has brought forth the Antichrist and his kingdom, which is not far away. More and more he is getting all the people of the world to be a godless nation, even as he got that to happen before the flood, which God sent to save Noah and his family.

But, Young People, come what may, all is well for everyone whom God eternally chose, and caused to be born with a new spiritual life. We are by that rebirth citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven. Not one of us shall be, or can be, led into spiritual death by Satan, as he got Adam and Eve. In II Corinthians 4:17 and 18 we read: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

What is more, our God is not only the creator of heaven and earth, and all that which they contain. Our God will realize everything that He eternally decreed, and promised those whom He chose in Christ. Everything that God wants, and all that which He promises, He will cause to be realized in every smallest detail.

Therefore there is absolutely no possibility, that any one of God's elect, who was eternally chosen in Christ, can by Satan be caused to die spiritually, as Satan got Adam and Eve to die. What is more, and extremely important, is the truth that God does NOT offer salvation. Young People, reject one hundred percent that Arminian lie that God, through the preaching of the gospel, offers salvation to all who hear it preached. God does not leave salvation up to man's decision. God does not depend upon man and what he does.

The name Jehovah means I AM. That truth is denied by Arminianism, which claims that God offers salvation, and that only those who accept it will be saved. The awesome truth however is that God, as the I AM, always commands what He eternally decreed would take place. As the I AM, God does completely, in every smallest detail, all that which He eternally decreed. There is absolutely nothing that He desires that does not take place at the exact time, and in the perfect way that He determined its coming to pass.

We are not saved because we want the salvation which God has made possible. As the almighty God, the I AM, God begins salvation in us by causing us to be born again, and by the life of this rebirth He causes us to want that salvation. That truth is presented in Ephesians 2:8 where Paul points out that we are saved by grace, through faith, "and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God." Paul even adds in verse 9, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Still more, Paul points out that: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before ordained that we should walk in them." We want salvation only after God has already begun it in us. Away then, from the Arminian teaching that God offers it to us, and if we let Him do so, He will be our Savior.

Still more, in John 3:3 we read: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And our calling is to maintain what God commands us to believe, not only making us, as already born again, to want it; but also to believe that this salvation is a gift of God's grace. Salvation realizes in us the thankfulness to God for a free gift, which we can enjoy only by His grace. We must not in our doctrine change God, the I AM, into an "I will be, if you let Me."

What we should hold on to tightly is what God through Paul presents to us in II Corinthians 4:15, namely, that "our inward man is renewed day by day." Having begun salvation in us, that salvation is never taken from us. We cannot change God. He does not stop realizing salvation in us. That He renews it day by day means that no day comes in between another day, when God has taken that salvation from us. We have a very striking and comforting evidence of God renewing our new man day by day.

Peter, when Christ Jesus was being tried after His capture, three times denied Christ, as we read in Luke 22:54-60. That same day he in his inward man was renewed. Then in verses 61 and 62 we read that he remembered the word of Christ. He remembered the word which He had spoken, namely that before the cock would crow, he, Peter, would deny Him three times. Peter heard that and went out weeping bitterly, revealing that he was renewed by God that day. His new man in Christ was hurt by that deviltry, which his old man of sin revealed. His new man in Christ was renewed that day.

We can then be absolutely sure that when the Antichrist does come, and is used by Satan, we as born again children of God will reveal that we by God's grace are renewed day by day in our attitude toward Satan.

It will be hard for our flesh. Our old man of sin will strongly want the mark on his right hand or forehead that the Antichrist will demand; and we will not be allowed to buy or sell, if we refuse; and thus we will starve to death. But our new man in Christ will by God's grace be renewed day by day.

How about it, Young People? Do you have God-given evidence that you have a heart that is renewed day by day? The temptations, that comfort our flesh today, are far more subtle, and tempting to our flesh, than they were in the past. When sins are revealed to you in the preaching of a sermon, or by what you read in God's Word, does it make you, like Peter, weep in your soul? Does it move you to pray to God that He keep you from doing that sin again? Do sins bother you? Does it in your life reveal that God is renewing you day by day?

This is extremely important, so that we find in our lives that God did renew us, when we have fallen into a sin. It reveals that we have been born again, and are the objects of God's love, and grace in Christ. Be thankful then, and let the songs of Zion, not those of the world, move you, and express your thankfulness that God is renewing you day by day.

Rev. Heys is a retired minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches. He is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church.

Dordt College

by Gary Eriks

In the middle of the cows, pigs, corn, and manure of northwest Iowa lies the beauti ful 45-acre campus of Dordt College. Dordt is located in Sioux Center, Iowa, a growing city of about 5000. Dordt has approximately 1100 students, some of whom have come from many different countries, such as Nigeria, The Netherlands, Canada, Honduras, and many other places. The more than seventy faculty members give Dordt about a 16:1 student to faculty ratio. Dordt's faculty cares for the students by making themselves available for personal help. Dordt also has more than 40 majors (not including MRS) ranging from agriculture to engineering to business. Dordt was founded to train teachers and today education is still a strong program as well as a very popular major.

As enrollment increases, Dordt continues updating and improving the campus for the students. One of the dorms has recently been renovated and a new apartment building is under construction to be ready in 1994. A sports complex is also in the plans for the future. Most of the students live on campus making Dordt a close knit body. Walking down the sidewalk on campus, students greet each other with a friendly hello, something not seen on many other college campuses. Dordt also provides activities for students to get involved and acquainted with one another. Dordt provides intramurals, a fall retreat, Sunday night cookies and weekend concerts and activities. I will not lie and say that there are activities and things to do all the time. Sometimes the most fun is had by using your imagination to come up with something unique.

Although I like Dordt for its atmosphere, Dordt's philosophy and purpose are rooted on different principles from what is usually known as Reformed. Most of the professors at Dordt stress the "reformational worldview" of developing and caring for this earth in obedience to the creational mandate. Because we were created to be on this earth and because heaven will someday be this earth, sin excepted, they want to go out reforming this world. This philosophy has permeated all the disciplines of the school. Most of the professors do not force this philosophy on the students, but they want to challenge you to have beliefs that are rooted in Scripture. This has been a good experience for me because it has made my beliefs stronger.

I would recommend Dordt college because it challenges students in their faith, in their studies, and in their Christian walk. What impressed me about Dordt is the friendliness and caring attitude of the whole college. If you would like more information about Dordt College, the phone number is (712)722-3771, and the address is: Dordt College, 498 4th Ave. NE, Sioux Center, IA 51250.

Gary is a member of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois. He is currently taking college courses with a view to studying for the ministry.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Sharon Kleyn

April 1

Read Deuteronomy 4:25-29.
When things are going well for us, we are often tempted to turn from God and to trust in ourselves. If we are walking in this way of sin, we cannot expect God to hear our prayers for help when trouble comes upon us. By God's grace turn from your sin every day and seek God, for "thou shalt find him" now and also in the day of trouble.

April 2

Read Deuteronomy 4:30,31.
These verses make me think of the end of time when all God's people will be in tribulation. It may be that many of us alive now will be alive in those "latter days." But our merciful God will remember the covenant He made with our fathers. He will preserve us even through all the terrible persecution with which the world will try to destroy us. Those who are truly God's people will be kept by Him and will be obedient to His voice. Take this comfort with you and do not be afraid of the latter days.

April 3

Read Deuteronomy 4:32-38.
In verse 32 we are told to look into past history at all the great events of the world. Certainly many great things have been accomplished. We see that, too, when we look around at the great, technological advancements of men in our own day. When we consider even the greatest work of man, however, it is nothing in comparison to the works of God. The mighty works of God are seldom remembered and are seldom mentioned in history books, for the world writes about and extols what man has done. But what the world writes about are not the "great things" that are spoken of in our text. God has showed us these great things in His Word. And He has performed the greatest work of all within us—salvation. There is nothing that man has done which compares with that great work. Live as one for whom this great work was done.

April 4

Read Deuteronomy 4:39,40.
Our verses yesterday talked about all that God has done for us. Because of all the things that God has accomplished for us we know that He is our Lord and there is none else. If we consider this truth in our hearts, we *will* keep His statutes and commandments. And in this way God will shower all His blessings upon us forever.

April 5

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.
God is the only Lord and He is our God. We have to know and believe this before we can do what the next verses say. They tell that we must do what God commands us with all of our being. We have to love God with all our *heart, soul,* and *might.* God's words have to be *in* our *heart.* And we must *talk* of God's words all the time. We have to teach them to our children. We have to talk of God's words when we sit in our house, when we are at work or anywhere else, when we go to bed at night, and when we get up in the morning. We have to have God's words as a constant reminder to us—before our eyes, on our hands, and in our house. Pray that God will reveal Himself to you so that you know Him. And then pray that He will give you grace to study His Word every day so that you can talk about it in whatever you do and wherever you go.

April 6

Read Deuteronomy 7:6-11.
We are holy people. We wonder how this can be true. And yet God's Word says it. And these verses explain that we are holy because *God* has chosen us to be a special people unto Himself. That's beautiful. We are special to God and He has taken us to Himself. God, Who is everything, has taken us, who are less than nothing, into His own life of fellowship and love. And He is faithful to the end of the world. What an incentive to show our love and thankfulness to Him by keeping His commandments. Go forth today, therefore, rejoicing in this truth, and you will show yourself to be part of a holy, special people.

April 7

Read Deuteronomy 8, especially verse 3.
God sometimes brings us low - he humbles us and makes us hungry. He does this so that He may feed us with His food and so that we may know that we don't live by the food of this world, but that true life is only by His Word - His food. So often when we are discouraged or disappointed with situations in life we can only see our problems and we worry about them and think about them for days. But God uses even the little discouragements and embarrassments to remind us that this world is only a pilgrimage and we must seek another country, the Kingdom of Heaven, even while we live on the earth.

April 8

Read Deuteronomy 23:14.
God, Jehovah walks among us! He is with us as the everywhere present God, and He is also with us by His Holy Spirit. Does He see any "unclean thing" in you? Is your "camp" holy? Flee to Jesus Christ in repentance and pray that your sins may be covered in His blood, that His cross may deliver you and that He may "give up," (conquer) your enemies (sins) before you.

April 9

Read Deuteronomy 29, especially verse 29.
In this chapter Moses tells Israel about how God will establish His covenant with them. The chapter ends with the beautiful words of verse 29. God out of mere grace and love (He didn't have to do it!) has revealed to us the wonders of His covenant which He establishes with us and our children. All the way from Adam, through Abraham, Noah and David, throughout the New Testament, and throughout history, God has been faithful and has kept the promise He made thousands of years ago. That covenant still belongs to us today. But... He has revealed these things to us "that we may do all the words of this law" and therefore glorify Him. Show in your life today that this covenant was established with you.

April 10

Read Deuteronomy 30, especially verses 11-14.
God doesn't keep His Word far from us, as if it is some abstract, complicated truth that we have to search for, and try to understand. But He brings it "nigh" to us by the preaching every week and by the work of His Spirit. He puts it in our hearts that we may know it and do it. Treasure this Word and go to church eagerly each week that you may hear the Word and do it.

April 11

Read Deuteronomy 33:26-29 and Psalm 42.
Sometimes we look around at the suffering of God's people in this world and at the suffering in our own lives and we are overwhelmed. Loved ones are taken in death, and sin sometimes has terrible consequences in our lives. Sometimes it may seem as though God has forgotten us and we may ask: "Where is my God?" The sorrows of this life are sometimes as "waves and billows" rolling over us. But, we need not fear or despair, for the God Who is eternally in the heavens is our refuge, and He spreads His everlasting arms underneath us and bears us up. When we believe this then we can say that we are a "happy people," and then we can praise Him who is the "health of our countenance and our God."

April 12

Read Joshua 11:1-14.
Even such a huge multitude as described in verse 4 is not too much for our God to defeat. He tells Joshua: "Be not afraid because of them." Sometimes the things in our lives with which we do battle may seem too many and too strong for us. The sins of our flesh, the temptations in the world, our love of material things, and even the devil and all his host. But our sovereign God says to us: "Be not afraid." And He gives us grace and strength, so that our enemies are "delivered up slain."

April 13

Read Joshua 11:15.
Joshua leaves nothing undone which God commanded him, through Moses, to do. This makes me think of a phrase you probably have heard before; "sins of omission." Sometimes we may not be doing a sinful act, but if we are leaving even one small part of our calling undone, we are not obeying God's commands. Sometimes we stand by and say nothing when others sin, or we may see someone who needs our help and support and do nothing (like the priest and Levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan). If we ever become proud because we do not commit the terrible outward acts of sin that we see others commit (for example, adultery or murder), all we have to remember are the things we *should be* doing and we will be humbled. May God give us grace to do *all* of His will today.

April 14

Read Joshua 11:23.
"And the land rested from war." Think how the Israelites must have felt after all those bloody battles were done and they could have peace and build their homes and care for their families. And yet it was only a picture of the true heavenly rest which God has in store for us. Now we must fight, but we can look ahead to that day when the battle with sin is over and we can rest in communion with our God and His saints forever.

April 15

Read Joshua 17:17, 18.
When God is with us we are a "great people" and have "great power" to flee and conquer sin, the devil and the wicked world, even though they are very strong. If only we would trust this promise of God and not doubt! God is the sovereign and all powerful God and He is on our side. Let us fight the battle today in all confidence of victory.

April 16

Read Joshua 21:44, 45.
God has given us rest. We have no persecution, famine, poverty or war. We are free to go to His house each week to feed on His Word and to fellowship with Him and with His people. We have faithful ministers and elders who, by God's grace love the truth, uphold it and teach it. We have a seminary that is faithful in training ministers for our churches. We have catechism, societies, choirs, and schools for our spiritual edification and good. What are we doing with these good things? Pray for grace to love the truth and to seek the things of God's kingdom today. And pray for forgiveness when you fail.

April 17

Read Joshua 23:10.
God gives us the strength to "chase a thousand." He fights for us. Sometimes our sins seem so many and so great we want to give up. But we can, and we must, rest in God's promise to us that He not only gives us strength, but He *is* our strength. He is our strength to fight against and drive out the sins that attack on every side. Rely on Him, then, for what He has promised to do for us.

April 18

Read Joshua 23:16.
Read this verse and pray that God keep us as His Church and as individuals from transgressing His covenant! Pray that God will uphold His work in us and cause us to live in accordance with His will. And pray that when we do fail, He will turn us back to Himself that we do not "perish quickly from off the land."

April 19

Read Joshua 24:14-28.
What a wonderful confession we find in verse 15. May we each day choose to serve the Lord, as Joshua, and all Israel, did. We may well say, as did Joshua in verse 19: We cannot, as wretched sinners, serve the holy, jealous God. For how can God forgive all our sins? Only because God sees us in Christ can He forgive us and enable us to serve Him. Pray for God's forgiveness in the cross. Pray for His grace, and as He gives you that grace, then, yes, you *will* choose to serve Him this day and every day.

April 20

Read Ruth 1, especially verses 16,17.
Ruth was willing to leave her people, her land, her gods, and everything that was familiar to her. She was also willing to leave behind all possibilities of marriage. She was willing to sacrifice all of this to go to a strange land, a strange people, with the very real possibility that she would not be accepted, but looked down upon as a Moabite. Why did she do this? Because, as she confessed, Naomi's God was her God. Would we be so willing to give up everything we have and know for the sake of following the true God? Pray that God would prepare you to do that if necessary.

April 21

Read Ruth 2:1-17.
Make a list from this chapter of all the ways in which Boaz showed kindness to Ruth. Think what these things must have meant to a lonely, poor woman who had lost her husband and was in a strange land, among strange people. Is there someone you will meet today to whom you can show such kindness? God places such people on our paths that we may show to them the same love Christ shows to us—who are lowly, despicable sinners on this earth. Look for these people (sometimes they are hard to find because they are not always the popular, well-liked confident people, but are on the fringes, are often over-looked or disliked), that you may show to them the love of Christ.

April 22

Read Ruth 2:1-17.
Read Ruth 2 again today; this time from the perspective of how Ruth responded to the kindness of Boaz. So often, when others help us, we want to turn away in pride and say that we do not need help but can take care of ourselves. Or, we may go to the other extreme and greedily expect everyone to help us. Ruth, acknowledging that she was a stranger, expected nothing. And she also humbly and thankfully accepted the kindnesses which Boaz offered her. Pray for this attitude when you are in need.

April 23

Read Ruth 2:3, 18-23.
Do you ever doubt that God is watching over you? Do you ever worry about your future and about how things are going to work out? Look at God's gracious care over Ruth and Naomi. When Ruth went out to glean God brought her to the field of Boaz, who was a kinsman who would care for Ruth and Naomi. This may seem to be an insignificant thing that happened by chance. We might ask: "What did it matter where Ruth gleaned, as long as she got food for Naomi and herself?" But God had His purpose in it. Naomi saw His gracious hand in this and praised God for it. Trust God, then, as the sovereign God who directs all things (big and small) for our good.

April 24

Read Ruth 3:10,11 and I Peter 3:2-5.
What a reputation Ruth had! She was known by all as kind and modest, for she cared for her mother-in-law and did not follow after young men. The whole community of Bethlehem knew she was a virtuous woman. Are these the traits we seek to develop in ourselves, and is this the sort of reputation we desire to have as women, young or old? And as men, is this the kind of woman we seek to have as a wife? And do we show honor to this kind of woman as Boaz did to Ruth? The world holds before us another image—that of the bold, vain woman, who seeks herself first. May we strive day by day, not to follow the world's heroes, but to model our lives after these heroes of faith.

April 25

Read the whole book of Ruth
(it will only take a few minutes!) and trace God's providential care and purpose through the book. God directs each person's actions (Elimelech, Naomi, Ruth, the unnamed kinsman, Boaz) so that Ruth is brought into the church as a picture of the gospel going to the Gentiles and so that Ruth and Boaz are married and bring forth the grandfather of David. From all of this comes Christ! Way back in the Old Testament God was already working out and directing events for your salvation and the salvation of the whole church. What an amazing and wonderful God we have.

April 26

Read I Samuel 2:1 and 2.
Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice! Paul's exultant cry in Philippians 4 echoes Hannah's song in these verses. What a cause we have to rejoice in our God and in His salvation. He exalts us and He gives us the victory over all of our enemies (the devil, the world and our own sinful nature). The God Who is holy, and Who is the only God, is our God. We can each say that this God is *my* God—just as He was the God of Hannah, of Paul, and of all the saints from the beginning of the world.

April 27

Read I Samuel 2:2.
What comes to mind when you think of a rock? Something solid, immovable, a firm foundation. Apply this to God. He is the unchangeable, dependable, almighty God. When others fail you or disappoint you, or when you feel yourself to be a failure, look to the Rock. Depend on Him today and always for your very life and breath, both physical and spiritual. For there is no rock like our God.

April 28

Read I Samuel 2:3.
Let us guard our tongues today and not become arrogant and boastful. For God sees us every minute of the day. He is the God of all knowledge—He knows our hearts. And He is the judge of all of our actions. Today, rather than talking proudly or arrogantly, flee to the cross and pray the prayer of the Psalmist in Psalm 139:23,24—"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

April 29

Read I Samuel 2:4.
Do you ever feel surrounded by an army of mighty men? Sin surrounds us on every side and always seeks to attack us. Often, while we are fighting against one sin and thinking that we are gaining a little over the enemy, suddenly and unexpectedly we are attacked from behind by another sin, so that we stumble and almost fall. Don't despair! God breaks the bows of mighty men, and He girds up with strength those who stumble in the battle. Flee, then, to this God for the strength to continue to fight the enemy that surrounds you.

April 30

Read I Samuel 2:6-8.
We who are dead in sin are as "the poor in the dust" and "the beggar in the dunghill." We sin daily so that when we stand before the holy God, Who hates sin, we are nothing more than sinners dressed in rags and covered in dung. But God has given His Son for us. He makes us alive and lifts us up. He cleanses us and gives us riches so that we sit in the palaces of princes and inherit the throne of glory. How do we know God is great enough to do such an amazing work? The pillars of the earth belong to Him, and He has created the world. Surely, then, He can make the dead alive and the poor rich! Conduct yourself today as a prince of God.

Contentment...

...and Anxiety

by Pastor Mitchell Dick

This speech was presented at the Young People's Convention this past year in Lynden, Washington.

In preparing me to give this speech on contentment God used content people. One was a grandmother in Israel. When asked what she thought "contentment" was she pondered a minute and then said, "Contentment is the key to life." Then there was my son David. He is only two years old. He is always going around saying, "Happy, happy, happy." I think he knows what contentment is. But the question we must consider is: Young people, do *you* know what it is to be content? Are *you* content?

What is Contentment?

Contentment may be defined as "an inward state of satisfaction and calm with respect to outward circumstances." Note with me the elements of this definition.

By defining contentment as a state of satisfaction I mean that it is a state in which one knows that all his needs are met. For the Christian this contentment is spiritual: the Christian is content when he knows that God has, does, and shall meet all his needs. It is a "fulness." It is the knowledge, as well, that nothing that happens can take away from this fulness.

Then there is the aspect of calmness. The content person is calm. That is, he has peace. He is tranquil. Calmness is the opposite of care, anxiety. The title of this speech is really "Contentment *or* Anxiety"—for one can not be content and anxious at the same time.

Further, contentment is an "inward" state of being. It is not something just enjoyed on the surface, like a lake—only calm when there is no wind. But biblical, Christian contentment is deep. If you are content you are content in your soul—no matter what wind is blowing on your lake! There may be grief, turmoil in your life, or simply the winds of change. But if you are content, bearing that blessed fruit of the Spirit of God, then inside, in the midst even of storm, is calm. Being content, your spirit need not be rippled, ruffled, riled, or rocked by anything!

Finally, contentment, according to our definition, has to do with the soul's satisfaction and calmness with respect to outward circumstances. Now by these "outward circumstances" I do not mean that the Christian is ever to be content, to be satisfied, and calm and complacent about *sin*. No! With respect to our sin we ought never to be satisfied! We must be angry about it, repent of it, and stop doing it. Nor do I mean that we are to be content about anything we can and must change in our lives. Thus, we should not be content about getting a "D" grade if we are a "B" student.

But by those outward circumstances about which we are to be content I mean the things, the circumstances God has given us in His infinite wisdom, and which we can not change. I refer to your body—after you have done all to take care of it; your health—after you have used all the means to restore it; your talents; your position in life; your possessions; your parents; siblings; your fellow-Christian peers. To be content is to be satisfied and at peace about who your are, what you have, relationships in which God has placed you...and also to be satisfied with what God in His great wisdom has *not* given...

Not many people are truly content. Contentment is not to be found anywhere in the unbelieving world. The wicked world in which we live is a discontented wicked world! The Bible says that the

wicked are like the troubled sea. They may be satisfied in a certain way or outwardly calm. They may discipline themselves in their trials and not let themselves get upset. But they are never content in the soul. The things they go after and get do not satisfy their deepest need.

Only true children of God can be content. Think of the examples of contented saints in Scripture. There was Moses: content to be a shepherd in the wilderness for forty years, and then to be the shepherd of a most unruly flock of Israelites for another forty years. There was Job: so content with God's will that he could praise the Lord while acknowledging His hand in taking everything away. Then there was a teenager, like you. I am speaking of Daniel. He was content in God, though torn away from parents and home to live in a strange land. All these are examples of contentment. Sinful, indeed, but content, these persons, by the grace of God.

But then there is Jesus Christ, the only natural and eternal Son of God. He is the example of One perfectly content: perfectly satisfied and at peace with respect to His outward circumstances! The Rich One, the Infinite One, very God, participating in the glory of heaven, was content to become poor, and to take on a limited, finite, weak human nature, and dwell among sinners in a sin-cursed earth!

All these examples we have of contentedness! But now, are you really content? In all your life? With all you have, and do not have? I think we all would be less than honest if we said we were content always and with regard to everything. We would be less than honest if we said we never grumbled or complained or simply "pretended" to be happy. In fact, I think we must all admit: to be truly content is a struggle. Why? Our faith is so little. And besides, some of our outward circumstances can be difficult to deal with indeed! Hard enough to be content if we "have it all," but how much more difficult if we have little. Difficult enough if we are healthy, but how much more difficult if we have a disease or a handicap. Hard to be content and not envious of the smartest person of your class when you are only "average," but how much more difficult if you are the worst student in your class. And it's one thing if you are not the most popular and only have a few friends—but what if you have hardly any friends? Its one thing to be content if you have sinful parents, but what if they are divorced, or if when you were little they put you up for adoption? One thing to have had only a few dates in high school years, but what if you go through high school and have no date, no one of the opposite sex who takes an interest in you...?

Oh, difficult indeed to be content...but serious indeed is the sin of being discontent! Terrible the sin! How ungrateful is the discontented believer! But discontentment can grab hold of any of us, even a young person, and have terrible bitter consequences for the rest of one's life...

How is Contentment Attained?

Contentment is a free gift of God. It is a fruit of the peace He makes with sinners. That the wicked have not contentment and not peace is exactly because they have no peace with God. But God has established peace with us. We are satisfied because God's justice is satisfied and atonement made by our Mediator, Jesus Christ. We are calm, knowing we belong to Christ. We are content with all we receive, knowing God's hand is behind everything and in all He works for our good. In a word, content we are knowing God is for us in Christ!

And we experience this gift through learning. All of us experience the blessedness of contentment, and learn to be content, through attending a life-long school. Paul would say: "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11). He wrote this in a Roman prison. He was content there. God teaches us to be content anywhere, and whatever the circumstances.

Consider three particular lessons God teaches us in the school of contentment.

First, God teaches us to appreciate the value of what we have in Christ. We must learn that in Christ God has given us Himself! We must learn that having God, we really need nothing else. We are to learn that having God and His salvation we have been freely given all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). We must learn how rich our God is, and how valuable His blessings. God will teach us not to choose what is a trinket or that which fades away over God's gold!

Second, we are to learn the lesson about the things and circumstances we have and are put into. You are to learn, young people, that all the things given you, and which you are to be content with, are given you not to hurt you, but to help you in your spiritual walk with God. They are as so many servants, designed to help you grow in God. Daily bread, your earthly necessities—these are given to teach you of the God Who provides. Even what we call "bad things"—these we must see as gifts, and receive them from God with peace. Paul had one of these bad things. He calls it a thorn in the flesh. We do not know what is was. And that is good. For God would teach us through Paul's learning to live

with his problem, that we must also live with our problems, relying on God all the more because of them. God said to Paul, when Paul had asked three times to be relieve of this thorn, "My grace is sufficient for thee." He says the same to us.

Oh, how we must not let earthly thorns unsettle us and disturb us! We must remember: this is to teach us of God's grace, of His strength, of His wisdom, and to rely more on Him alone!

And really, it is an absurd thing, a silly thing for Christians to let a thorn ruin, or even mar one bit, their satisfaction and calm in life. Have you ever heard the story of a man, the richest man in all the earth...whose heart was broken by a dandelion? I'm sure you haven't. For I just made it up. Once upon a time, there was a very rich man. He was the richest man in all the earth. He had a mansion with 320 rooms. He had 57 maids. And there were 12 butlers to serve breakfast and lunch, and 24 for dinner. These served him food and drink flown in every morning from around the world on his private jets. People were allowed to tour the rich man's mansion for $1000. On the tour they could sit on the veranda overlooking the gardens, the pool, the tennis courts and golf course, sipping tea... One day this rich man with the mansion with 320 rooms, 57 maids, 12 butlers to serve breakfast and lunch, 24 for dinner...this man became very sad. And the next day he was worse, until after a week the servants feared for his health. Then one maid had the courage to ask why he was so sad and disturbed, seeing as he was the richest man in all the earth. Then he told here. He had been out on the grounds surrounding the mansion, walking his llama. And as he was looking at the petunias which graced the row of shrubbery along the driveway he stooped and saw it. There between the petunias was a dandelion. And the sight of it melted the man. In the garden of the richest man in the world was something not wanted! And this fact brought the rich man face to face with reality: he could never buy happiness and peace or prevent unhappiness and sadness with money. And thinking over his own life this was indeed the case. With everything bought, there were always things like dandelions.

Why this story? To get you to see the folly of Christians being disturbed about *anything*! We are richer by far than the richest man in the earth, or all of them put together! God and His salvation are our wealth! And we would be disturbed, even in the slightest, as we survey the things we have or do not have? How foolish! So what if we have a dandelion on our lawn? Or a lawn full of dandelions!

Finally, in the school of contentment God will teach you to appreciate who you are. That is, you are to appreciate how valuable you are. Not in yourselves, of course. In ourselves we are filthy, guilty sinners. But in Christ—we are very valuable. And God thinks so! He spent His Son to buy us. And that, at no market place, but on a hill on a cross. We, whoever we are, wherever we are in the class standings, whatever we look like, whether we can dribble a ball or not, are to learn what God thinks of us blood-bought ones. Yes, the lesson of life is learning God loves us. God loves us to give us His Son, and make us in His image. God loves us....life is learning to be content with that. Just that.

The Blessed Result

There are blessed results of this instruction. The first is this: we actually learn contentment! God's teaching is powerful. It grips us. Children, teenagers, older people of God learn the lesson of contentment one way or another.

And, learning contentment, we learn by the grace of God what it is to lead the victorious Christian life. That is the second result. Contentment spells victory. The contented person gains the victory over the strangle-hold of anxiety, over the destroying fire of covetousness, over the bitter poison of a complaining spirit. Contentment means victory over pressures of the world to sin. The contented child of God can resist the pressure even of well-meaning peers to do anything to conform and be liked and brought into slavery to their will.

Contentment so learned will then be contentment enjoyed. Life enjoyed. There will be one, two, countless happy Christians—even happy young Christians. True happiness. Not silliness. But peace, and joy, in God. Happy: Happy. Happy. The contented Christian.

Young people: contentment is for you, and you, for it. Learn this from God through His Word, and in your life lived out of that Word. Learn it now. Learn from the little, content, happy child. Learn from the old mother in Israel who had that key to life...

Then the God of our life and victory is praised! And which of us is not content with that?

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The Importance of Family Time

by Rodney Kleyn

The family is under attack from the devil and from the world. The devil knows that the heartbeat of the Church is the covenant family. The devil knows that if he can abolish the family unit from off the earth, he has also rid the world of the Church. He is working hard at it. His attacks on the family unit within the church are real and vicious, and that is why an article such as this, stressing *The Importance of Family Time*, is necessary and good. So, young people, take some time to read what I, as a fellow young person, have to say about *The Importance of Family Time.*

What is family time? This question must first be answered. A general definition is, quite simply, time spent together as a family. But, let's be more specific in our definition. More particularly, family time is time spent together, as a family, doing things which are constructive, and doing things which are conducive to spiritual unity in the family. It is not just the being together as a family and doing things together that is important, but also what we do when we are together is important. Family time is not time spent together as a family sitting around the television, and family time is not just being in the house and sitting in your bedroom reading a book. It is important what we do together as a family. Therefore, the most important aspect of family time is time which is spent reading, studying, discussing and singing from God's Word. There must be a spiritual bond in a family, or all the time spent together as a family is wasted. In order that this spiritual bond may be real, each member of the family must realize his or her God-given place and calling in the family, and each must willingly fulfill that calling.

Young People, we all also have a place and a calling in the covenant home and family, and we must fulfill it willingly. The place of parents, husbands and wives, and the place of young children in the home are clear to us. We often hear from the pulpit and are taught clearly from the Scriptures what place these family members have in the family, but, where do we fit in, and what is our place and calling as young people?

As unmarried young people we still have an important role to fulfill in the family unit. This is indisputably clear from the examples and lessons of Scripture. Isaac was an active member of Abraham's family until he was married at 40 years of age. Rachel and Leah were under their father's roof and chaperoned until the day they were married. David and his brothers all played active roles in Jesse's family and fulfilled their duties and callings in the running of their father's affairs. Our Saviour is also often referred to as "Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, Joseph's son." This can only mean that he also was an active member of that family. So, we can see from the examples of Scripture that we remain under our parents' supervision as young people, and they are responsible to God for us. This means we don't leave home when we are 18 or 19 because we are supposedly "grown up." This means that our parents know who our friends are, and where we go, and what we do with them. This means our parents know who our date is, and where we went, and it also means that we are home before our curfew. We are called to obey our parents. There is also a word here for parents. Parents must know what their children are doing. God holds parents responsible for this. I dare say, that if some parents would just tighten the reins on their adolescent children, they would relieve themselves of much heartache later on, and the children would also learn to appreciate this as they grow and mature in their faith.

Family time, as I have said, is time spent together as a family in a spiritual bond. This implies unity. As each family member realizes and fulfills

his God-given place in the family, this bond and unity becomes real and evident. Home and the family provide a haven of rest and fun. Family members love to be at home. Husbands look forward all day to being home with their wife and family. Wives gladly fulfill their duties in the home during the day, so that in the evening and at night they can spend time with the family. Children are eager to be home from school to share their experiences of the day. Young people are not always wanting to go out with their peers, but are happy to be at home with the family, and their peers are also happy to visit with them at home. Also when the family is together and they read God's Word and sing His praises, the truths of the Scriptures are taught to the children, and the children receive real impressions of, and real interests in the things of God. All the family together in this way creates a strong spiritual family bond which always keeps the family close. Memories that last a lifetime, and which are often the fondest memories of the aged, are created right here in your youth in the family.

The time spent together as a family must be and is an intergral part of the covenant home. The family should not just gather together like this on special occasions, such as birthdays or other celebrations, but, covenant parents must insist on all members of the family taking part in the life of the family on a day to day basis. Only then is the real unity and bonding of covenant family life realized. When we read Psalms 127 and 128 we realize the blessedness of the God-fearing man and his family.

There are also many evils which haunt and plague the Christian family. These are evident in the world. The world does not want the family unit. The world wants equality between marriage partners. The world mocks God's holy institution of marriage and the family with its divorce and its defacto relationships. The world mocks God's creation of man and woman in its sodomy and homosexual marriages. But, all these evils seem distant from and abstract to the church, or at least our churches. But, are they? I believe they are not. We are all, of ourselves, also inclined to all evil. So, we must be aware that sin starts with the little things in our hearts, and grows and creeps into our lives.

Therefore, we as young people must realize our present calling in the home and family, but we must also realize what our place and calling will be in our own families in a few years time, if the Lord wills that we marry. Career minded and independent minded young women are not realizing God's calling for them in the family unit. Young men who waste their time and money on cars, alcohol and parties, are not realizing God's calling for them in the home and family. It starts right here with these things in our youth.

We are the up and coming generations of the Church. Will we be taking the Church along with the world, or are we willing to walk in the old paths and follow God and His Word?

The importance of family time does not only concern our own salvation, but the salvation of the whole church and its future generations. May God grant that we willingly fulfill our God-given place in the home, and may He help us, each one, to realize the importance of the family and family time.

Rodney is from Burnie, Tasmania, Australia. He is a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

The News from Randolph

by Dirk Westra

"How is that new school getting on out there in Randolph?" We've heard that question many times. For those whom we've not been able to answer personally, here's a short accounting of how we're "getting on."

"That new School" is Faith Christian School (Protestant Reformed). We're at 240 East Cambria, on the north edge of Randolph, Wisconsin. We occupy one corner of a building owned by a member of our congregation here. The rest of the building houses a factory. The fathers of several of our students work in the factory, so there is a bit of traffic back and forth before and after school, but during the school day we don't see much of each other.

Through chiefly volunteer labor, members of the school society gutted and refurbished "our" corner of the building. We have two classrooms, restrooms, a supply room, an office, a coat room, and a library. We think it's a first-rate facility, epecially considering this is our first year of operation.

Our playground is on land owned by the school society. (We hope eventually to build on this parcel.) This land adjoins the factory property, as well as the Protestant Reformed Church property. We have the usual playground equipment, and plenty of wide open space for soccer, softball, football, etc. Our students came from three different schools, and our teachers came from two more, so we keep coming up with new games to try.

We have twenty students in grades one through eight. There are students in every grade; our smallest class has one (second grade), and our largest has four (seventh grade). Mr. Dan Hanko teaches grades five through eight and is also the administrator; Mr. Dirk Westra teaches grades one through four. The board hopes to add a kindergarten next year; this will mean hiring a part-time kindergarten teacher.

The teachers make ample use of volunteer help. So far this year, we've had the regular help of ten volunteers; some of them help once a week; one lady (who also works in the factory) helps out with reading class every day in the lower room. These volunteers help with academic subjects, teach choir, gym, and art classes, and are busy setting up the library. The Mothers' Club puts on regular hot lunches, which the students and teachers especially appreciate.

Our school calendar looks pretty much like any other school's: parent-teacher conferences, Iowa Basics, vision screening, field trips, chapels, an all-school program, and so on. We hope to graduate our first three eighth-graders on May 23.

We hope to grow. Our projected enrollment looks steady, but we don't foresee significant growth. We trust God to provide students and the means to run the school. The board did not casually name the school Faith Christian. Looking at the past, we see God's covenant faithfulness in bringing Protestant Reformed education to Randolph. Looking to the future, we trust Him.

Dirk is a teacher in Faith Christian School in Randolph, Wisconsin.

A Christian Perspective on Play and Sports

by Rev. Bruce Davis

This is the second of a four-article series. The full title which the author gave to his articles was: "On Developing and Implementing a Christian Perspective on Play and Sports." Last time the author introduced his topic and stated the problem that we face as Christians in our involvement in play and sports. In this article the author discusses the Essence of, Purpose of, and Key to, Christian Play and Sports.

The Essence of Christian Play and Sports

What is the essence of play and sports for those made in the image of God and recreated in the image of Jesus Christ? It is expressing oneself in creative and playful ways with all joy and thanksgiving before the Lord. It is the celebration of God's goodness to us with hearts filled with love, praise, and gratitude. In our play, which is a gift from heaven, we are called to have fun in the presence of our God as we rejoice in Him. Christian play is imaginative and creative fun in God's world which is expressed in a God-centered and God-honoring way. Christian play, which is done according to God's Word and through the enablement of the Holy

Spirit, is a vital part of our fulfilling the chief end of man, which is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. The Christian life of gratitude to God for the redemption which is in Christ Jesus includes thankful and joyful play. In Christian play we experience celebrative and thankful fun before the Lord as we use our minds and bodies, which are not our own but belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ, in ways which glorify our good and gracious Father in heaven.

God's law requires that we love Him with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength and that we love our neighbor as ourselves. This includes loving God and others in our play and sports. Because of our sin and misery we do not love God and our neighbors as we should; in fact we cannot do so because we are totally corrupt people, by nature wholly inclined to all evil and incapable of doing any good. As children of Adam we sin against God and our fellow man in every area of life, including our play, in thought, word, and deed. We know this as we see ourselves and our play in the mirror of God's holy law; but God is pleased to use His law as our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ that we might be forgiven in His Name, on the basis of His substitutionary and sacrificial work on our behalf, and justified by grace through faith. As God's redeemed people we are called to live lives of gratitude to our Lord in new obedience to His commandments through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Our grateful devotion to our God is to be expressed in every aspect of our lives, including our play and sports.

The Bible is filled with illustrations of God's people expressing their playful natures, in joyful and celebrative ways, in thanksgiving to God for His abounding lovingkindness. Note Zechariah 8:3-5; Jeremiah 31:10-14; Exodus 15:20; 23:14-17; Leviticus 23:39-41; Luke 15:25-32; I Samuel 18:7; and I Chronicles 15:29. Saints in Christ Jesus testify of the blessedness of the kingdom of God's grace through Christian playfulness. The richness of God's kingdom is seen in part through the play of His subjects. Play characterized by sanctified joy is an offering of praise and thanksgiving to our God. Our play should be antithetical to the wicked and perverse play of the world, for in our play we are called by God to express the redemption which is ours in Christ Jesus. As we express our redemption in our play we will expose the darkness of the world's play and live out a distinctively Christian testimony, for our play will be imaginative, joyful, and creative expressions of thanksgiving to our heavenly Father.

The Purpose of Christian Play and Sports

The divinely-given purpose for Christian play and sports is having fun to the glory of God. The chief end of play and sports is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. The Lord calls us to frolicsome and joyful play in His presence. The God-given essence of Christian play is lost if play is used as a tool to serve other purposes. The purpose of play is not usefulness in learning desirable character traits, in gaining physical skills, in growing socially, in developing mentally, or in preparing for life as an adult in God's world. These are secondary benefits that are ours through play and sports, but they do not constitute the biblical purpose for Christian play and sports. Many theories about play start from the assumption that play must serve something which is not play; but a Christian perspective declares that the purpose of play is not utilitarian. Christians should play for one reason and for one reason only, to have celebrative and thankful fun before the Lord to His glory and honor; and while we play with this purpose we should humbly look to the Lord to bless us in various ways in and through our play so that we are better equipped to live for Him in His world.

The Key to Christian Play and Sports

The only way Christians will play in a Christian way is through God's renewing their minds by His Spirit according to His Word. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). As new creatures in Jesus Christ, by God's grace recreated in righteousness, true holiness, and true knowledge, we are to seek God's renewal in the spirit of our minds (Ephesians 4:23) that we might bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5). Apart from this renewal Christians will not be all that they should be in play and sports (or in any other area of life for that matter). Right acting comes from right thinking, and right thinking is biblical thinking which opposes worldly thinking. The chief reason why many professing Christians do not exemplify biblical standards in their play is because of unbiblical and worldly thinking which leads to unbiblical and worldly acting. Flee from this ugly reality by seeking from God the mind of Christ Jesus so that you develop and grow in a thoroughly Christian way.

Rev. Bruce Davis is the minister of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church of Standale, Michigan.

Fill in the answers to the clues by using all the syllables in the Syllabox. The number of syllables to be used in each answer is shown in parentheses. The number of letters in each answer word is indicated by the blank spaces. Each syllable will be used once. When the words are correctly filled in their first and last letters, reading down, will reveal a Bible text.

SYLLABOX

A AC AGE AH ANCE BA ~~BE~~ BER BIDE CA CES CLE COMP DER DER DI E E EL ER HA HAB HEA ~~HOLD~~ I I IM KETH LA LAS LISH LO MENT MENT NA NI NUM O OINT PER POT PRIN RE SA STANDS TA TA TAB TEM TER THAN THES THROW TING TION UN UT VEN VER VIL WARD WASH YON ZA

1. LO AND ____ (2) **B E H O L D**
2. COMPREHENDS (3) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
3. SEIZETH (2) _ _ _ _ _ _
4. CITY IN GREECE (5) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
5. KING OF SYRIA AFTER BENHADAD (3) _ _ _ _ _ _
6. WICKED (2) _ _ _ _
7. OVER THERE (2) _ _ _ _ _ _
8. TEMPLE (4) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
9. DWELLING PLACE (4) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
10. STAY (2) _ _ _ _ _
11. CAST (1) _ _ _ _ _
12. BASIN (2) _ _ _ _ _ _ _
13. DO (3) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
14. IDOL (2) _ _ _ _ _
15. ROCK THAT IS HIGHER ____ (2 words) (2) _ _ _ _ _
16. SPEAK (2) _ _ _ _ _
17. RULERS (2) _ _ _ _ _ _ _
18. PERFUME (3) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
19. COUNT (2) _ _ _ _ _ _
20. SELF-RESTRAINT (3) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
21. PLACE WHERE GOD DWELLS (2) _ _ _ _ _ _
22. FOREVER (4) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
23. WEEP (2) _ _ _ _ _ _
24. MINOR PROPHET (4) _ _ _ _ _ _ _
25. BONUS (2) _ _ _ _ _ _

Find where this verse is in the Bible. _____

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . LET IT SHINE!

A Springtime Story

by Connie Meyer

The air smelled fresh and new, the way it does only on the first warm days of early spring. The grass was starting to turn green, and the leaves were beginning to pop out on the tree in our yard. In the flower bed I could see some thick green points poking up through the soil, soon they would grow into big yellow daffodils. I liked spring!

I just stood there, thinking about the newness of everything, and wondered why God made the seasons come and go each year. I wondered why it couldn't be spring all the time.

Suddenly out of the corner of my eye I saw someone on the porch watching me. Then he said, "Looks like you're pondering a deep subject." Dad always seemed to know when I was thinking hard about something.

"I'm just wondering why it can't always be spring," I said.

Dad smiled as he stepped next to me, "Hmm, you sure come up with some good ones! But a good question deserves a good answer."

Now it was his turn to look like he was thinking hard about something. Then he said, "I think some day it *will* be spring forever. Winter is a picture of death—and of us. We're spiritually dead. But spring is a picture of new life—and of how God will make all things new, even us."

We watched a butterfly hover near us and then flutter away.

"I wouldn't be surprised if that butterfly just came out of its cocoon today," Dad continued. "And just think, last summer he was a caterpillar! Jesus arose from the dead like that, with a new heavenly body. It's because of Jesus' resurrection that spring can be forever. He lives forever. He'll make us live forever too."

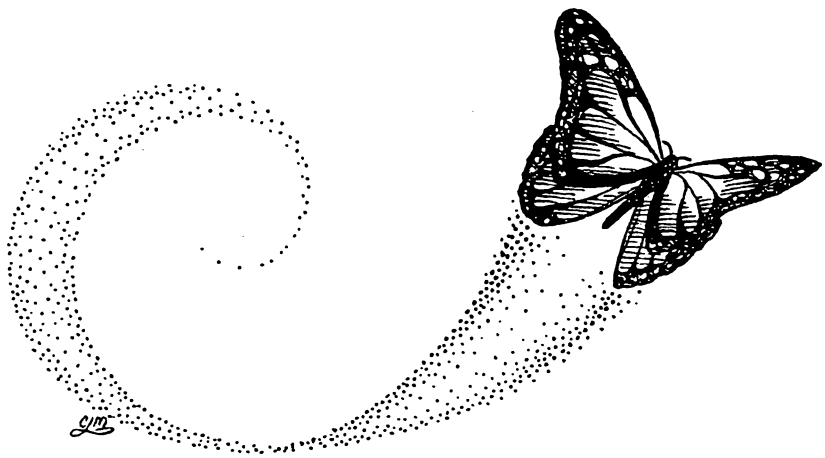
The sun shone warmly on us both. It made me feel warm inside.

"C'mon, let's check out the garden and see what's up," Dad suggested.

"Okay!" I said.

I think I like spring even more.

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



Find every underlined word in the puzzle below:

"But God...Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) And hath raised us up together..." Ephesians 2:4-6.

Y	S	S	Q	A	H	E	W	S
B	A	T	U	N	O	E	N	D
S	C	O	I	K	R	A	R	E
N	B	G	C	E	I	S	T	A
I	A	E	K	S	A	V	E	D
S	W	T	E	V	P	I	C	E
D	A	H	N	D	H	T	A	H
Y	P	E	E	V	E	N	R	Y
E	Q	R	D	N	R	S	G	O

1995 Protestant Reformed Young People's Conven tion

hosted by
Grandville Protestant Reformed Church
August 7-11
at
Hope College
Holland, Michigan

Convention Theme:

Courageous Christian Youth

Speakers:

Rev. Mahtani	*"Daniel—A Faithful Prayer Life"*
Rev. Terpstra	*"Daniel—A Bold Witness"*
Mr. Kalsbeek	*"Daniel—Godly Choices"*

Discussion Group Topics:
Devotions—Private and Public
Respecting Authority
Choosing Friends