BEACON LIGHTS

Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

Psalm 36:5-7

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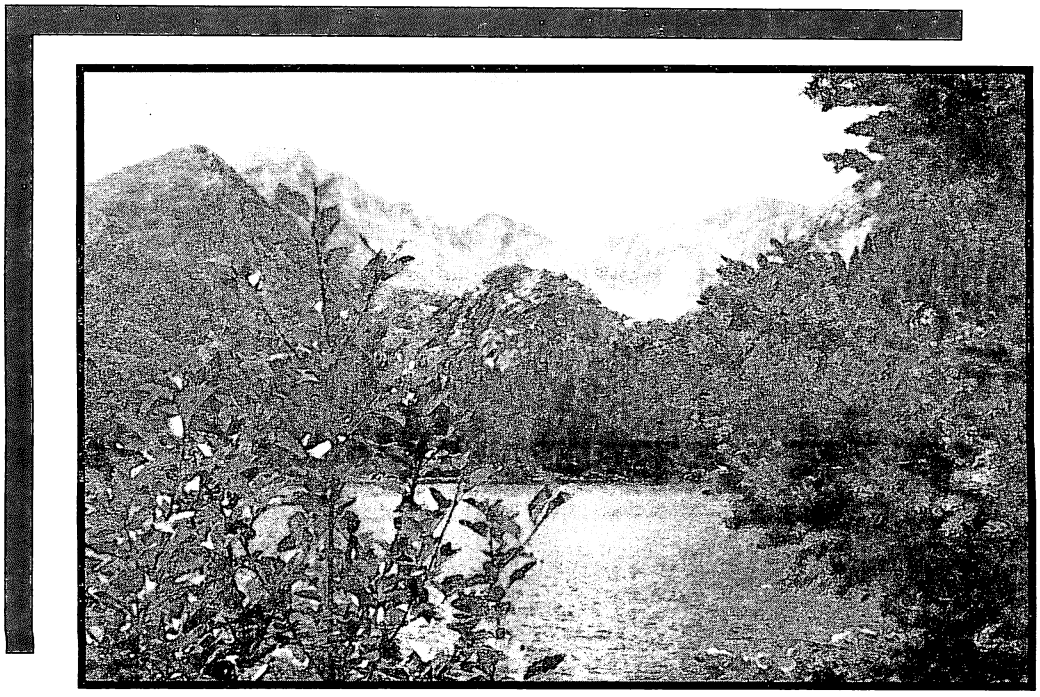

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Cover photo: *Long's Peak and Bear Lake near Loveland, Colorado.*

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES

Good News from Synod

by John Huizenga

In June delegates from our churches gathered for Synod. At Synod the ministers and elders take care of the matters which pertain to the work of our churches as a federation. One such matter is the examination of students who have completed the required training for the work of a minister. The church as a whole examines the students in order to determine whether they are sufficiently prepared for the work as ministers in the denomination.

This year two students, Doug Kuiper and Allen Brummel, were examined by Synod. On Tuesday each had to preach a sermon which they had prepared. The next day the professors, in the presence of Synod, questioned the students for about seven hours in the area of Reformed doctrine. Thursday they were examined in the same manner in the areas of Church Polity, Old Testament History, New Testament History, Church History, and Practica. After the period of examination was over, Synod decided on the basis of the answers given by the students that they had been well prepared during their four years of seminary training. Synod was therefore happy to declare that they are ready for the work of the ministry in our churches.

We can be sure that both students were relieved and happy as well. Both of them desired to preach the gospel even before they had finished high school. But before they could become ministers, they had to spend four years in college, and then another four years at seminary. At first the goal of preaching seems a long way off, but the time goes by quickly with so much to learn. The study is also difficult and there are times when the student wants to quit, but he rests assured that God will give His servants the strength to do the work required.

Now Doug and Allen are each eligible for a call from a congregation. When called, they must undergo another examination. When that exam is successfully completed, the candidate is ordained to the office of minister. Then their work as pastors will truly begin.

What a blessing this is from the Lord for the whole church! God never forsakes His people. He is a faithful God who continues to gather, defend and preserve His church.

At this time of joy, we must be very careful lest we be lifted up in pride. As we enjoy the blessing of faithful ministers as well as our peace and unity, it is easy for us to be like the Pharisee who thanked God that he was not like other men and in

doing so tried to justify himself before men. It is easy for us to be like the Pharisee in light of the news we have heard from the CRC Synod which met the same time as ours. We ought to be filled instead with sorrow and fear when we hear the decisions which were made in the CRC Synod. The CRC Synod decided that the offices of elder and minister are open to women so that if the particular classis or congregation desires to have a woman minister, they may have one. More sad news is that they decided to change the *Church Order* requirement that the churches worship twice on the Lord's Day.

The decision to allow women ministers and elders comes as no real surprise to those who have been paying attention to the developments in the past few years. It was only a matter of time until the Scriptures were mangled and softened to the point where Synod could agree that there is room for two contradicting interpretation of the Bible.

The desire of a church to reduce the minimum number of worship services is most striking to me. The church of Christ loves to worship God! This report saddens us because it indicates that the spiritual life of the CRC is quickly draining away. This is especially evident in the poor attendance at the evening worship services. Many no longer find it necessary to hear the preaching, and those who do hunger and thirst for the Word are finding that sound preaching is very scarce.

The young people also indicate that something is terribly wrong in the CRC. They are becoming estranged to the worship services which do remain in the CRC. They do not feel at home in the church. Synod is attempting to solve this problem by making confession of faith a simple matter of saying "I love Jesus." Synod is hoping that this will bring the children to the Lord's Supper at an early age so that they feel more a part of the church.

Let these developments be a warning to us and bring us to our knees in prayer. We ought to pray that God will lead His people in the CRC to churches where the life-giving Word is preached. We ought to pray that God would continue to guide His people in the paths of righteousness and obedience. We ought to pray that young men might be raised up who are willing and unashamed to preach the whole counsel of God: the sovereignty of God in salvation along with the demand that we live holy lives of thankfulness, the mercy of God along with His justice, the love of God as well as His wrath, and election along with reprobation. We need men who seek to please God and not men. We need preachers who are not afraid to make us squirm in the pew if need be. Only when the ministers are faithful in their preaching of the Word of God do the people of God grow in their knowledge and love for God, and in their desire to worship Him.

The work which produces ministers like this begins in the home where godly parents train up their children in the fear of the Lord and bring them to church to hear the Word. Good schools are also essential. We as young people must take this instruction very seriously. Finally we can be thankful that we have a seminary where those men who feel called to the work of pastor are carefully prepared for that work. Our churches rejoice when young men come forth willing to do the work of the ministry. There are never too many because the fields are ripe for harvest and the laborers are few. Yet not all who desire the work actually become ministers. Some who begin their training for the ministry are later directed by the providence of God to another labor in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God requires many different kinds of work and each is important.

Let us rejoice in the manifestation of the kingdom of God in our churches and pray that we have many more Synods to report the good news of more candidates for the ministry.

From The Editor

The *Beacon Lights*' staff and I would like to welcome Dave Moelker as our new treasurer. Dave is currently attending school to become an accountant, and his abilities and talents make him a welcome addition to the staff. We would also like to congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Jack Huizinga, who are expecting their first baby. Although Jack and Melissa have been mailing the *Beacon Lights* for years, they are now unable to do so. The collection, sorting, and mailing process takes one or two nights a month, and if anyone is willing to help us, please give me a call. Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

I would like to offer a warm welcome to some of our new subscribers. We have six new subscribers from Fayetteville, NC, one from Pickens, SC, and one from Tuscon, AZ. Every August our young people hold a convention, which has a good balance between Christian fellowship and spiritual strengthening. This year the convention is being held in Holland, MI, August 7-11, and I want to invite your young people, as well as all the young people, to attend.

This month's magazine has some great articles. John Huizenga's editorial briefs us on synod and its implications; Mike Feenstra begins his series on dating and marriage, and encourages us to "Fear God." Dr. Kreuzer, my former junior high teacher who taught me algebra, gives us an article for conservation in light of Christianity, and Cornelius Jonker adds an absolutely admirable addition—an "A"ugust application. Sandra Kooiman reminds us to evince our love to our children, and Tom Bergman relates a story from the life of David. Last, but certainly not least, Connie Meyer brightens all of our lives with her "Little Lights."

One final comment is that my e-mail account number has been changed. It is IN%"km220598@hope.edu". I apologize for any inconvenience. May the Lord be near you in the following month.

Guest Article

This Is Our Father's World

by Roderick Kreuzer, Ph.D.

Our present-day American society possesses a great awareness of and concern for our natural environment. Various organizations such as the Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society energetically promote the cause of the preservation and improvement of the earthly environment. Americans recycle various items such as paper, glass, cans, and plastic as a way to conserve our natural resources. Many manufacturers on the packaging of their products indicate their concern for the environment. The packaging, I noticed, on one product had a statement entitled "Our Environmental Commitment." Some supermarkets indicate their concern by statements regarding the environment on the bags they use. Various individuals show their concern for conservation and the physical environment by displaying bumper stickers on their cars. One such sticker reads "Think globally, act locally." On a national scale each year April 22 is promoted as Earth Day. The founder of

Earth Day, Gaylord Nelson, former governor of Wisconsin and United States Senator, in calling attention to the preservation of the environment speaks of mankind's "war against the planet." The United States government safeguards the environment in various ways, one of them being by means of the Environmental Protection Agency. Thus it goes. One could continue citing one example after another of ways in which our society is environmentally-minded.

Specifically what are some of the concerns which are receiving attention in the great environmental movement of today? Among the main concerns is the fact that the ozone layer is being destroyed by man's use of various chemicals. Another major concern is that the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is increasing year by year. Then also there is the concern over the depletion of our natural resources with which is associated the push for energy conservation. The problems of mercury pollution in lakes and streams, contamination of ground water by various chemicals, acid rain, lead poisoning, and littering are all receiving much attention by environmentalists.

Certainly there are many environmental problems that our present-day society faces. What is the root cause of all of these problems? What should our position toward the physical creation be? Also how should we as Christians view all of this concern for the environment and current environmental movements and efforts to preserve it? Obviously the answer to these questions must be based on the Scriptures.

Whose world is this? Genesis 1:1 states "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Psalm 24:1 teaches us "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein." In addition, in Colossians 1:16 we read with reference to Christ: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." As Christians then we know and confess, based on the instruction of God's Word, that this is our Father's world.

Furthermore with respect to God's creative work, Genesis 1:31 instructs us "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good..." This world then as made by God was perfect. All was beautiful and harmonious. Obviously the physical environment was without blemish or problems and was perfectly suitable for all living creatures.

In addition to this world being created by God and being good, it is important that we remember that it was created for a purpose. That purpose is stated in Revelation 4:11 where we read "Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." The physical world then being created by God belongs to Him and exists for His pleasure.

Man then is living in God's world not his own. God has created man and placed him on earth to

Conference on Reformed Church Government

September 21 & 22, 1995

----------*Thursday, September 21*----------

8:00 PM ***The Biblical Basis of Reformed Church Government***

address by Prof. Robert D. Decker

Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches

----------*Friday, September 22*----------

10:00 AM ***The Autonomy of the Local Church***

address by Prof. Herman C. Hanko

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1:30 PM ***The Hodge-Thornwell Debate Over Church Polity in the 1800s***

address by Dr. Morton H. Smith

Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

8:00 PM ***The Authority of the Major Assemblies***

address by Prof. David J. Engelsma

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have dominion over it and its creatures and to subdue it. Of this we read in Genesis 1:26 and 28. Thus man is God's servant placed in the earthly creation to be God's steward and caretaker over that creation all with a view to the honor and glory of the Creator.

Man, however, did not remain in his original state of righteousness. He fell into sin and because he did so the world is under the curse. (See Genesis 3:17-19.) This then explains all of the environmental problems which we find in the world today. The root cause is sin. Man is now totally depraved by nature. Being totally depraved he is not motivated to use and preserve this creation out of a concern that it belongs to God. Instead man seeks himself. If in one way or another it is to his advantage to pollute or destroy the earth, he will do so. Man, walking in his ways of sin, misuses and abuses God's world and in doing so brings numerous environmental problems upon himself. Man in his greed has wantonly cut over the forests and mined the earth destroying the beauty of the earth and bringing about problems of erosion. In his unconcern for the health of human beings and in his carelessness he has polluted the atmosphere and contaminated lakes and streams. Thoughtlessly and carelessly and in his laziness he litters the streets and highways with old tires, bags filled with trash, McDonald's bags and cups, cans, gum and candy wrappers, cigarette butts, only to name a few items.

As Christians we must ever be mindful of the truth that this is our Father's world. We have the calling that was cited previously in Genesis 1:26 and 28. We are to exercise ourselves day by day as stewards over God's creation. Being stewards over that which is not ours, we may not squander, abuse, litter, or destroy our physical environment. This means we must not be wasteful with or destructive of our natural resources. We must use wisdom and care in the use of chemicals and in the disposing of them so as not to contaminate groundwater, lakes, and streams with them. We may not litter our city streets and the countryside with our trash and debris.

In addition to acting as wise stewards of God's creation, the Christian must take seriously his calling to be a responsible citizen of his country. We must obey the laws and regulations which have been enacted regarding pollution and littering.

Suppose our neighbor decides to dump his trash on our property or to ruin that which belongs to us. Don't we become irritated or angry? We ask what right has he to do this to our property. Furthermore since there are laws prohibiting this type of behavior, we may contact the authorities regarding such matters. What right have we then to litter, waste, or destroy that which belongs to the King of all heaven and earth, the Creator and true Owner of all things?

How should we as Christians then view all of this concern for the environment and current environmental movements and efforts designed to preserve the earth which are being put forth by unregenerated men? The problem with all of this concern and with these efforts is that the underlying motivation is wrong. Do you hear them speak of the physical creation as belonging to God? Do they speak of being wise stewards of God's creation? The answer emphatically is "NO." The unbelieving world does NOT recognize God as the Creator of all things. Therefore it does NOT recognize the earth as belonging to Him and of our being stewards in God's world. Unbelievers rather are concerned about matters pertaining to the environment for man-centered reasons. They want the physical environment preserved so that man's earthly existence may continue and that it may be as enjoyable an existence as possible. They want an existence upon this earth as free as possible from environmental woes and problems for themselves and for their children after them. They give no thought to their responsibility to use this world and its resources to the honor and glory of God.

It should also be pointed out that in addition to having the wrong motivation, there are those who use unlawful means in their efforts to promote the cause of the environment. Protestors forming blockades in front of nuclear power facilities is one example. The breaking of the law can never be condoned as a means of achieving the goal of preserving the environment.

May we as Christians live day by day in the realization that our world belongs to our heavenly Father. We must take our responsibility seriously as God's children that we are His servants in a position of stewardship in His creation. May He give us grace and wisdom to care properly for that which rightfully belongs to Him. The next time you are tempted to litter by dumping McDonald's bags or cups, by tossing a pop can out of a car window, by throwing gum or candy wrappers on the ground, or to waste paper or any of our natural resources in any way, remember. . . . . THIS IS OUR FATHER'S WORLD.

Dr. Kreuzer is a teacher at Heritage Christian School. He is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Bible Quiz

1. Who was the father of David?
   a.) Saul
   b.) Jesse
   c.) Eliab
   d.) Abinadab

2. By which type of bird was Elijah fed at the brook Cherith?
   a.) dove
   b.) eagle
   c.) hawk
   d.) raven

3. What relation was Rahab to Ruth?
   a.) mother
   b.) mother-in-law
   c.) great grandmother
   d.) no relation

4. Which Old Testament figure is mentioned most in the New Testament?
   a.) Abraham
   b.) Adam
   c.) David
   d.) Moses

5. Which of the following angels interpreted Daniel's visions?
   a.) Michael
   b.) Raphael
   c.) Gabriel
   d.) Uriel

6. The following can be found in the Bible (True/False):
   The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.

7. According to the book of Judges, a tree conference was held. Which of the following trees were present?
   a.) olive, fig, vine, bramble
   b.) olive, oak, holly, fig
   c.) holm oak, olive, vine, fig
   d.) walnut, oak, holly, fig

8. A sabbatical year was once in how many years?
   a.) three
   b.) seven
   c.) forty
   d.) seventy

9. Proverbs states that seven things are an abomination to the Lord. They are (check seven):
   ___slanderous mouth
   ___knees which bow to other gods
   ___wicked heart
   ___lying tongue
   ___proud look
   ___hands that steal a neighbor's property
   ___slothful back
   ___sower of discord
   ___boastful lips
   ___feet which run to mischief
   ___deceitful eyes
   ___false witness
   ___hands that shed innocent blood

10. Which of the following is acrostic?
    a.) Psalm 9
    b.) Psalm 37
    c.) Proverbs 31:10-31
    d.) Lamentations 2

Answers on page 21

Call Me Abigail

by Tom Bergman

The Word of God is the means placed before us to nourish our faith. The story of David and Abigail is a good example of the incredibly rich nourishment to be had through faith. When a believer digs in—really studies the Word of God—Jehovah-jireh (Provider) continually opens up that wealth of riches. Centrally, when it comes to stories and pictures of Christ's work, the Word of God is saturated like a dripping-wet sponge. Abounding with the gospel message . . . bursting, *crammed*, jammed, `loaded`, *overflowing*, ***packed***, **STUFFED**!

This becomes clear as crystal in the commentary/biography *The Life of David* by Arthur W. Pink. He explains how that richness is evident in I & I Samuel. Woven into the heart of each story like fine scarlet threads (Joshua 2) are revelations of the beauty of our salvation. The *gospel* is tightly fastened with a scarlet cord into passages that I might never have discovered on my own. Whether it is in the familiar stories or in passages of minor impact—the Old Testament is crawling with the gospel of salvation. I highly recommend this little book (only 800 pages or so), placing it above most other books. Recommending *The Life of David* above even *Pilgrim's Progress*, my previous super-all time-best-favorite is no small thing.

The story of David and Abigail is quite familiar. As a young shepherd boy, David was anointed by Samuel to be king of Israel. Evil Saul still reigned over the land and hunted David like a predator, hoping to snatch the life of his prey, his successor. Strangely, David was the one with the opportunity to kill Saul. But, he spared Saul's life in the cave since it was not the Lord's direct command. It was at this time that David retreated with his soldiers into the wilderness of Paran, about 100 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Living there was a wealthy sheep farmer by the name of Nabal (literally, "a fool"). Nabal was not around at the time, yet David restrained his warriors from molesting the flocks of Nabal. In fact, David served as protector of the sheep from the rustlers (I Samuel 25:7, 14-17). Bandits and rustlers were prowling the grounds, so David's band stood guard. Rather than demanding any sort of retribution, David merely asked a favor. Nabal was not too willing to comply. Rudely, he refused to let David's hungry band have any of his bread and water (v. 10-11). This stinging rejection was more than David could handle. He immediately ordered his troops to seek out and kill the evil Nabal. He was a-l-m-o-s-t r-e-a-d-y to carry out this ungodly revenge when Nabal's wife Abigail checked him on the way. Here are the blessed mercies of salvation in this passage (I Samuel 25:23-35):

> And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be . . . And it shall come to pass when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid. And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me . . . Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened unto thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

Arthur Pink points out the picture of the elect soul being drawn to Christ.

(1) Abigail was the wife of Nabal. By marriage, she was bound to the evil "fool." By human nature, mankind is yoked in the same way to the bondage of sin and death.

(2) The news of imminent destruction caused her to plead with David. Knowledge of the eternal destruction that we deserve is likewise important.

(3) She bowed herself to the dust before his face, acknowledging his lordship (v. 23), confessing iniquity (v. 24), imploring his mercy (v. 28).

The believer humbles himself before God and confesses His Name. Knowing well his own sin and misery, he looks to Jesus Christ for the only hope of deliverance.

(4) Abigail begged to be remembered in the day of David's ascension to the throne (v. 30). So often in the Old Testament, we find pictures of Christ. David's ascension here is a clear picture of Christ's exultation. Remember the thief on the cross? "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Christ *will* remember. He will remember Abigail. He will remember the thief on the cross. He will remember all that the Father has given to Him (John 6:37). His ascension is our guarantee that since He (as *head* of us the *body*) is in heaven, we will be too.

> "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19: 25-26).

(5) Finally, David said to Abigail, "Go in peace." Once again he typifies his Lord Jesus Christ Who speaks a word of Comfort to the contrite heart . . . "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague" (Mark 5:34, to the woman who touched the hem of His garment). "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11, to the harlot, after none of her accusers would cast the first stone).

Conclusion? It reminds me of my own spiritual self. That's *me*. And that is my Jesus—at no small price.

Tom is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Poem

Somebody's Mother

The woman was old and ragged and gray
And bent with the chill of the Winter's day.

The street was wet with a recent snow
And the woman's feet were aged and slow.

She stood at the crossing and waited long,
Alone, uncared for, amid the throng

Of human beings who passed her by
Nor heeded the glance of her anxious eye.

Down the street, with laughter and shout,
Glad in the freedom of "school let out,"

Came the boys like a flock of sheep,
Hailing the snow piled white and deep.

Past the woman so old and gray
Hastened the children on their way.

Nor offered a helping hand to her—
So meek, so timid, afraid to stir

Lest the carriage wheels or the horses' feet
Should crowd her down in the slippery street.

At last came one of the merry troop,
The gayest laddie of all the group;

He paused beside her and whispered low,
"I'll help you cross, if you wish to go."

Her aged hand on his strong young arm
She placed, and so, without hurt or harm,

He guided the trembling feet along,
Proud that his own were firm and strong.

Then back again to his friends he went,
His young heart happy and well content.

"She's somebody's mother, boys, you know,
For all she's aged and poor and slow,

"And I hope some fellow will lend a hand
To help my mother, you understand,

"If ever she's poor and old and gray,
When her own dear boy is far away."

And "somebody's mother" bowed low her head
In her home that night, and the prayer she said

Was, "God be kind to the noble boy,
Who is somebody's son, and pride and joy!"

Mary Dow Brine

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Cornelius Yonker

Since the month of August begins with the letter 'A,' we have chosen Biblical words beginning with the same letter for our daily meditations.

August 1

Abide This means to dwell or continue. The travelers to Emmaus constrained Jesus to abide with them, and when He did so, their eyes were opened and they knew Him. Jesus, in John chapter 15, declares that He is the true vine and that He purgeth every branch that bears fruit, that it may bring forth more fruit. He goes on to say "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Pray that Christ will dwell within us that we may be fruitbearers to His glory. **Read I John 2:24-28.**

August 2

Ability This is a certain power or strength that God gives in varying degrees to His children. Do not murmur if you think that another has more ability than you do. Jesus tells us in Luke 12:48 "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Strive by God's grace to use and develop the talents which He has given you, so that one day you may hear Him say "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." **Read I Peter 4:7-11.**

August 3

Abound Abound means to have great plenty. Negatively, regarding the signs of the final judgment, we are told, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). Positively, Paul commends the Thessalonian church with these words: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth" (II Thessalonians 1:3). Pray that we too may abound in faith, hope, and love. **Read II Peter 1:1-8.**

August 4

Acceptable This is a term which means well pleasing. It often is used in Scripture regarding the sacrifices offered to God. The Lord instructed the Israelites through Moses that any animal with a blemish might not be offered, for it was not acceptable. We do well to heed this admonition in Romans 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Strive by God's grace to so live our lives, that we may be truly acceptable to Him. **Read Psalm 19.**

August 5

Acknowledge This is a term which most of us understand, and it means to own or to confess. We must daily confess our wrongdoings to God as David did in Psalm 51, "For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me." We are also called to acknowledge the greatness and majesty of God, for He speaks in Isaiah 33:13, "Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might." May we, as recipients of such a great salvation, constantly acknowledge this by giving wholehearted thanksgiving to Him. **Read Proverbs 3:1-6.**

August 6

Accord Today is the Lord's Day. What a privilege to gather with fellow saints. A Psalter number comes to mind: "How pleasant and how good it is, When brethren in the Lord, In one another's joy delight, And dwell in sweet accord." We do well to follow the example of the early New Testament church as described in Acts 2:1, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." It is indeed a blessing when the whole congregation comes together from all walks of life, and are in mutual agreement with the preaching of the gospel, and the calling it requires of us, namely to live holy lives. **Read Philippians 2:1-4.**

August 7

Admonish This is a word that perhaps many of us do not like. But it is a good word, found several times in Scripture, and it means to reprove for a fault. Because we are all sinners, we all need to be admonished constantly. And that is one of the purposes of the preaching of the Word. We are also called to admonish one another. This must be done in a spirit of meekness and love in order to gain the brother. The elders of the church also have a calling to admonish those who walk disorderly. Let us thank God for this means of friendly correction which He has instituted in His church. **Read Romans 15:13-14.**

August 8

Adoption How many of us are adopted? Let me assure you that if we belong to Christ, we all are adopted. When earthly parents adopt a child, they give it their name, their love, and a legal right to all the benefits that a rightful heir can expect. So it is in the spiritual realm. We, who by nature are sons of the evil one, God has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:5). And because of that redemption, we can call God our Father and look forward to dwelling in His house forever. Thanks be to Him! **Read Romans 8:12-18.**

August 9

Adorn Most of the time this word is used in the Bible, it means to make something or someone more beautiful or comely to look upon. For example, we read in Luke 21:5 that the temple was adorned with goodly stones and gifts. And in Revelation 21:2, the holy city, new Jerusalem, was seen in John's vision as a bride adorned for her husband. We do well to listen to the apostle Paul who counsels that women do adorn themselves in modest apparel, instead of dressing lavishly, thereby to gain the attention of others. But all of us should strive as we are encouraged in Titus, chapter 2, to be obedient servants, showing all good fidelity that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. **Read Titus 2:6-14.**

August 10

Adversity None of us really likes adversity, but all of us have experienced it. Adversity means calamity or affliction. Ever since the Fall, adversity has been our lot, and we experience it in many different forms. How do you handle adversity when it strikes you? Do you become angry and rebellious, or do you believe that God works all things together for good to them that love God? Can you truly sing these words from the Psalter, "Affliction has been for my profit, that I to thy statutes might hold?" David mentions more than once in the Old Testament that God redeemed his soul out of all adversity. What a comfort for the child of God that he can bring all his cares and troubles to his Heavenly Father. **Read Psalm 119:49-56.**

August 11

Advice This is something that many of us are very willing to give, but quite reluctant to receive. Advice means suggestion or counsel. King Rehoboam forsook the good advice of the old wise men and chose instead the advice of the young men, which resulted in his kingdom being divided. God used the advice of Hushai to defeat that of Ahithophel, in order to preserve the life and kingdom of David. We all need advice because of our weak sinful nature. Beware lest we follow the counsel of the world. Seek advice from godly saints, find your answers in Scripture, and pray to God for wisdom and enlightenment. **Read Psalm 33:1-11.**

August 12

Advocate Perhaps not all of us are familiar with this word. It means someone who pleads for, or in behalf of another. If we are ever the subject of litigation in a court of law, we must have an advocate or an attorney who will plead our case much better than we can. So also, we need an advocate when we must stand defenseless in ourselves before the tribunal of God. We are guilty as charged, and no earthly lawyer can help vindicate us. But thanks to the everlasting mercies of God, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. By His perfect sacrifice, we are justified in God's sight, and His righteousness becomes ours. Thank Him today and every day for that wonderful Saviour. **Read I John 2:1-5.**

August 13

Affection Let's each ask ourselves this question, "On what do we set our affection?" Is it on sports, entertainment, our families, or our business? Do we become so absorbed in these things that we lose sight of our spiritual calling to "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2)? Certainly, as faithful stewards, we can and may use all these things in a proper manner, but do so to God's glory. As you gather together in the Lord's house to worship Him today, be mindful also of the important exhortation in Romans 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." **Read Colossians 3:1-4.**

August 14

Afraid It is interesting to learn that the first instance of someone becoming afraid was the reaction of Adam in the Garden of Eden right after he sinned. Being afraid implies an inner apprehensive disquiet or terror. It is quite the opposite of being at peace or at ease, and came about because of sin. We have all experienced fright to some degree in our lives, and it is a very unpleasant experience. Almost invariably in Scripture, when man came face to face with an emissary of God, he trembled with fright. And rightly so, because man is sinful, and God is Holy. But God beholds His people in Christ, and always says to them, "Fear not." What a comfort for us now, and also at the Judgment Day when we may hear Christ say, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." **Read Isaiah 43:1-7.**

August 15

Agree This is such a pleasant word, and as you know, it means to be of one mind, to live in concord without contention. How pleasant it would be in our homes and churches, and in our daily lives, if we could live without discord. This does not mean of course, that we sacrifice our righteous principles merely for the sake of outward harmony. We always must fight for the right, but in so many

instances, we want our own selfish desires to prevail. And as a result, bickering and arguments take place. Strive, as Paul instructs us in I Thessalonians 5:13, "And be at peace among yourselves." Young people, you who are seeking a mate, listen to the Word of God in Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Spiritual agreement and harmony in doctrine and walk of life is of the utmost importance in marriage. May God grant you eyes to see and hearts to follow this path of wisdom. **Read John 5:1-8.**

August 16

Alive What a precious gift it is to be alive! Our bodies, which are fearfully and wonderfully made, are alive because God says in Deuteronomy 32:39 "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal." Each intricate part functions as God directs it. When we are alive, we are active and conscious of our surroundings. Men strive with all their power and technology to keep their bodies from dying. But because of sin, all men died a spiritual death, as Romans 5:12 states, "and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." As a result, man is physically alive, but spiritually dead. But God in His infinite mercy bestows on His children an even more precious gift than physical life, and that is the new life, or regeneration. Thank God for this unspeakable gift and live lives of gratitude and obedience to Him daily. **Read Romans 6:1-11.**

August 17

Alone Most of us do not like to be left alone for any extended period of time. We are created a sociable people, fond of company. In fact, when God created Adam, he said "It is not good that the man should be alone." And He made Adam an help meet for him. And yet there are times when it is good for us to be alone. Alone with our thoughts, alone with our communion in prayer with our Heavenly Father. Our Saviour trod the bitter path of suffering alone. No one else but He could possibly be the Redeemer of His people. As the well-known hymn expresses it, "Alone upon the cross He hung, that others He might save; Forsaken then by God and man, alone His life He gave." Thanks be to God for providing that perfect sacrificial Lamb! **Read Luke 22:41-46.**

August 18

Alms This is a word which is not in common usage today, but it is mentioned several times in the Bible, and only in the New Testament. It means that which is given to those in need, or anything given as charity. Jesus stated in Matthew 26:11, "For ye have the poor always with you." And He also laid down the principle of giving alms, that is, that we do not do so to be seen of men. God gives us many opportunities to minister to those in need, whether it be each Lord's Day for the Benevolent Fund, or helping a fellow saint or neighbor with a meal or an act of kindness. **Read Acts 10:1-8.**

August 19

Altar The church in the old dispensation worshipped God by offering sacrifices on the altar of burnt offering, or burning incense on the altar of incense. These altars were structures usually made of earth, or stones, or wood overlaid with gold. These altars pointed to the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God and to the prayers of God's saints. They belonged to the age of types and shadows. Today we worship God in His house of prayer, not with a literal altar, but with a symbolic one. We often sing these words from the Psalter, "Lay upon God's altar, good and loving deeds." No more do we offer burnt offerings, but we heed these words from Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." **Read Psalm 4.**

August 20

Ambassador An ambassador is a messenger. But even more important, it is a messenger who is an official agent of a king or government, and he may speak only as he is carefully instructed. Today, as you attend divine worship services, you will hear an ambassador speak. Your minister is an ambassador of Christ, the King of His Church, and he may speak only as that King reveals Himself in His Holy Word. He may never present his own philosophy, but must be faithful to his King. We do well to heed this preaching, for it is the chief means of grace, and a power of God unto salvation. Pray that our ministers may be faithful ambassadors of God. **Read Proverbs 13:13-17.**

August 21

Amen In a Christian home, this is one of the very first words that a tiny little child will learn to say. And it is a word that should be on his lips many times a day until his dying breath. Amen means "verily," or "so be it," and we conclude our prayers with this word. We often hastily say this word to end our prayers and give no thought as to its real significance. Pray sincere prayers so that you may be able to say a fervent "Amen" at its conclusion. The last question and answer of our Heidelberg Catechism states this very beautifully, "What doth the word 'Amen' signify? 'Amen' signifies, it shall truly and certainly be: for my prayer is more assuredly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of Him." **Read Psalm 41.**

August 22

Anchor How many of you have ever had the opportunity to go fishing from a boat? If so, then you have seen the captain find a certain place on the lake where he believes the fish are located, and he drops a heavy weight attached to a line, which in turn he secures to the boat. This weight or anchor holds fast, and the boat stays right in place even though the winds blow and the waves roll. In Hebrews 6:19, we are encouraged "to lay hold upon the hope which is set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast." How wonderful it is to know that no winds or waves of doubt or trial in this life can ever cause us to lose that hope. **Read Hebrews 6:11-20.**

August 23

Angels Angels are mentioned in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. This is a fascinating subject to study, and many books have been written about them. But we must be very brief in our meditation today and ask the basic question, "What are angels?" The Bible says that they are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister (do service, CJ) for them who shall be heirs of salvation." That makes it quite personal, doesn't it? Angels were present at special revelations of God

and appeared at crucial points in the history of redemption. And they rejoice in the salvation of God, for we read in Luke 15:10, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." May we by God's grace look forward to the last day when the Son of Man shall return in all His glory accompanied by His holy angels. **Read Psalm 91.**

August 24

Anger This is not a pleasant subject to talk about. Anger means indignation or fury, and most of the time is destructive and sinful—but not in every case. Righteous anger or wrath can be justified on occasion. Ephesians 4:26 tells us, "Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath." How many of us can vent our anger without sinning? I'm a bit ashamed to admit it, but on more than one occasion in my youth, after losing my temper, my mother made me memorize and recite Proverbs 16:32, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Ask God to keep you from sinful anger. **Read Ephesians 4:29-32.**

August 25

Answer We are called to give answers every day. An answer is a reply or a response to a question. Some questions are routine and commonplace, and answers roll easily and glibly from our tongues. Sometimes, however, we are called to answer under oath in a court of law, for example. There may be other times when we are called to give an answer in the form of a vow, such as at profession of faith, or at our marriage, or when we present our infant children to be baptized. But whatever the circumstance, let our answers be clear and truthful; let our yea be yea, and our nay, nay, or as Colossians 4:6 reads, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." **Read I Peter 3:10-15.**

August 26

Appearance This word can refer either to how others may view us when they see us, or it can mean a coming into focus. We will look at the former for a moment. What impression do you make on those around you? Can they see what kind of person you are by your appearance? Oh, I know, God's Word says in John 7:24, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." But God's Word also says in I Thessalonians 5:22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." As God's people who are called to live antithetically over against the world with their outlandish dress, bodily appearance, and mode of living, we are to live chastely, dress moderately, and respect our bodies as God's image bearers. **Read I Corinthians 6:14-18.**

August 27

Ask Today we have a very short word which means to inquire or seek counsel. All of us by nature are foolish and needy creatures, so we are called to ask God for wisdom each day and also for whatever God in His wisdom deems necessary for us to have. When you come in God's house today, be sure to ask God to bless your pastor and your fellow saints who gather with you. Ask God to make your heart receptive to His Word. Ask Him to forgive your sins and claim His promise in Matthew 7:7, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." **Read James 1:1-5.**

August 28

Assurance What a beautiful and comforting word is this one for our meditation today. Assurance means full conviction, and we as God's children need that assurance, don't we? We want to be assured that God loves us, that our sins are forgiven, and that we are the recipients of His grace and salvation. We need not doubt, for it is God's work, and therefore sure and certain. Because God beholds us in Christ, our entire debt or sin is washed away. Let us confess with the writer of Hebrews 10:21-22a, "And having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." **Read Isaiah 32:15-17.**

August 29

Astray Perhaps most of us have at one time or another made a wrong turn in a strange city, or were lost when tramping through the woods. Even if that has never been your experience, spiritually we constantly wander off the right path. The Bible says in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." This is not a very pleasant picture, is it? Every day we sin, every day we miss the mark, and so we wander from the paths of righteousness. But our Lord and Saviour, Who is the Good Shepherd, seeks us and finds us, and brings us back into His fold. Pray earnestly for forgiveness and guidance to walk in the straight and narrow way which leads to life eternal. **Read I Peter 2:19-25.**

August 30

Atonement This is a very important word and doctrine found in Scripture, and means reconciliation. We all know that because of Adam's transgression, sin entered the world; and therefore we not only are conceived and born in sin, but also sin every day against the most High God. To satisfy God's justice, atonement must be made. God, from all eternity, determined that Jesus, Who is very God and very man, would be the Mediator Who would reconcile us to God through His suffering and death. He did not taste death for every man, but for His elect people alone, who were ordained to everlasting life from all eternity. How thankful we should be for that great salvation made possible by Christ's atonement. **Read Romans 5:6-11.**

August 31

Authority This word signifies the right to govern or command. It is a power established by God Who is the Supreme Authority. There are many authorities in the world, such as presidents, governments, and police officers. In the church there are the ruling elders, and in the schools, there are the teachers and principal. In the home, the Lord has given authority to the parents. And He very clearly spells this out in His Word that we must obey authorities. In our day and age, society rebels against authority, and it is sadly reaping the results. Solomon in his wisdom tells us in Proverbs 29:2, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Let us obey those whom God has placed in authority over us, for that is pleasing to Him. **Read Romans 13:1-7.**

Dating and Marrying in the LORD

Introduction to Dating and Marriage Rubric

by Mike Feenstra

There is no question that dating and marriage take up much thought in a young person's mind. There are so many questions to be asked in this area that the many books and articles written in the past can only scratch the surface of this complicated subject. Nevertheless, we must increase our knowledge of this subject if we are to date and marry according to the Word of God. We must do this because if we desire to have, God willing, a marriage that reflects Christ's marriage to His church then we must understand what the Scriptures instruct concerning marriage and dating. The articles in this rubric will attempt to strengthen our knowledge of dating and marriage according to Scripture.

This ambition is certainly worthwhile considering that the world has subtly perverted marriage to such an extreme that the people of God can fall into their sins. We only have to think about how the world views divorce and remarriage and we see that there is no regard for the mandate in Scripture that marriage is for life. The people of this world are so preoccupied with their own personal pleasure that the purpose of marriage and dating becomes twisted into the pursuit of pleasure instead of the pursuit of a godly marriage. We pray that God will use this rubric to build up our young people so that they will desire a marriage founded on God's Word. To do this, we plan to publish articles on topics dealing with the life of a covenant marriage.

Because godly marriages are necessary for the church of God to grow, the dating of the young people must be in the Lord. Because most of the people of God live the majority of their years in marriage, dating is of crucial importance. If two young people would just get together and get married without even knowing each other, the marriage will probably be tumultuous. Dating solves this problem by allowing a couple to see whether they will be able to live in married life. For example, if a dating couple's beliefs about God are different, the couple can separate before getting married. Of course, if the couple is indifferent or ignorant of the Bible's mandate to marry in the Lord then they will marry against God's will. It is our prayer that God will use this rubric to strengthen the faith of our young people so that they will marry in the Lord. We hope to do this by printing articles that deal with issues and general topics in dating from a Biblical perspective.

Realizing that the mere words of a magazine are nothing without the work of the Holy Spirit, we again pray that God will apply His truth to our hearts so that we date and marry according to His will. We hope that you will enjoy these articles in the coming months.

Mike is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, MI.

Fear God

By Mike Feenstra

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." Proverbs 9:10a

Pride! It is an attitude that can not show fear for God, yet it characterizes our life constantly. It fills our thoughts with the feeling that we are superior to anything that comes on our path. It is a false confidence that leads us to destruction because God in heaven will judge any creature that attempts to rob Him of His glory. To Him belongs all the glory because He is the Almighty God, the Omnipotent One who rules the whole universe. Before Him we must humble ourselves in awe and reverence. We must fear God for then and only then will we be able to begin to understand His ways and apply them to our lives.

Over against this instruction from Proverbs, the wicked boast in their foolishness that they do not have to understand God's ways. They are as "The fool [who] hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1a). They would rather do what is right in their own eyes. At times it seems to us as if they are so confident that they will escape judgement, but according to Word of God we know that they will receive severe punishment for all their sins in Hell.

This apparent confidence of the unbeliever is sheer blasphemy against God before Whom everyone should fear and tremble. The confidence that they show is false because all their life they are in fear of death (Heb 2:15). They fear death because they know it is the judgement of God against sin. In fact in Psalm 14:5 we read that the workers of iniquity are, "in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous." God is on our side, what a great comfort to us as Christians! All the audacious words of the wicked that trouble us at times are not because the wicked are actually fearless before God in their soul, but on the contrary they speak these words out of complete terror because they know that the God of just judgement is in the generation of the righteous.

An example of when the wicked show their pride in themselves is the popular T-shirt with a slogan that reads "No Fear." We must point out to these people that these T-shirts are sinful, which means that we must not wear them ourselves. They are sinful because "No Fear" is a symbol that is rooted in a philosophy that is blatant blasphemy against God. Some of the statements that are written on these shirts are so terrible that I don't dare even to write them in my article.

The philosophy proclaimed on these T-shirts is that you must win at all costs even if it means that you stare death face to face in an attempt to conquer the fear of death. The thought of this is complete folly for death is the just judgement of God upon the sin in the garden of Eden. This pursuit of the wicked to escape death is nothing new, they are always trying to elude punishment without turning from their sins. They do this by denying that God will judge them as in Psalm 10:5 which states this about a wicked man: "His ways are always grievous; Thy judgements are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them." When the wicked do this they only show that they do not fear God; for God they have "no fear."

In addition to disregarding all their adversaries in their sinful pride, the wicked sometimes attempt to escape judgement by being members of the church in an outward way. They are as the man without a wedding garment in Matthew 22:11. Prof. H. Hanko in Mysteries of the Kingdom describes him in this way: "The man who tried to come in to the feast without a wedding garment was therefore a man who tried to get in only by his own works" (p. 296). This man tried to enter into the kingdom by his own strength and power, he thought he could conquer death all by himself without the redeeming work of Christ. The reward for this man is outer darkness because he is a symbol of the reprobate in the church.

Outer darkness or the second death is the reward for all the wicked. Not one of them will es-

cape the final judgement where ". . . every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof" (Matt. 12:36). In anticipation of this terrible judgement the wicked in Luke 23:30, "shall begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us." Indeed, the wicked greatly fear their end for they know that they do not fear God, but the righteous do not fear because they do fear God. The righteous are fearless for they know the teaching of John 5:28-29 which says: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

The righteous, fearless? The wicked would scoff at such a notion because they are blind to the fact that you must fear God before you will receive everlasting life. Fear? In what way? To answer this question it would be helpful for us to define what fear is. The most common use of the word "fear" as described by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary is: "the unpleasant often strong emotion caused by the expectation or awareness of danger." This emotion and feeling is what characterizes the wicked for they know that they are in danger of death and the judgement.

On the other hand, the righteous possess a different kind of "fear" that is described as having a reverent awe of the majesty and glory of God. This is the thought of Psalm 89:7 where we read: "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him." This is the definition of "fear" that Proverbs 9:10a uses to instruct us that we must humble ourselves before the Almighty God. But remember, the fear for God that must be evident in our lives is not terror but awe inspired confidence in the omnipotent God who will deliver us from all our enemies, one of which is death.

The only way we can show this type of "fear" before God is through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Without His humbling work in us we would be exactly like the wicked that boast in their pride.

It is through this humility that the Holy Spirit works the confidence of faith in our hearts by His grace. We can see this from I Peter 5:5c which states: "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." We have this confidence because Christ our Head conquered death and the Devil for us as we read in Hebrews 2:14-15:

> Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Although we were in fear of death just as the wicked still are, we are delivered from that fear through Christ's death! What a comfort! Christ has, "abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Timothy 1:10).

Christ has not only conquered death but, as we read above, He has brought immortality to light! That is, He, the resurrected Saviour, has opened the door to heaven so that our death is not an enemy but a passageway to eternal life (Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 42). "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (I Thessalonians 4:14). Yes, Christ's resurrection is a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection (Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 45).

This sure pledge is a confidence that whatever befalls us in this life can't possibly make us afraid for through our death we are given a completely new life. So, when ever we witness or experience a terrorizing event, we are fearless for we know death can't prevail over us. As many of you know, such an event occurred at this year's Spring Retreat in Loveland, Colorado. I am speaking of the accident that took place while we were returning from snowshoeing in Rocky Mountain National Park. Because the roads were icy that day from the wintry conditions, a van carrying thirteen of our young people slid off the side of a twisting mountain road. Due to the guiding hand of the Lord no one was killed, but the shock of the event will stay with all those who witnessed or experienced it. During such events it is a wonderful comfort to know that Christ has conquered the power of death. Indeed, we speak as Paul speaks in Philippians 1:23 where he says: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

This fearlessness that Paul speaks of comes only through humility of heart and soul before the face of God. It is humility not pride that gives us the assurance that we will not be overcome by death and the grave. The fear of God is the beginning of this confidence. Therefore, let us fear God for then we will be fearless before all our enemies, even death.

Mike is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Through the Guidance of the Father

by Mindy Steenholdt

As I search through the years of my life, I realize the importance of the Lord and His unfailing guidance. I journey through the memories, each containing the presence of the Lord within them. Not a day of my life has ever gone by without the Lord in it to lead me and protect me each step of the way.

I am steadily traveling through my teenage years. Supposedly, these are the hardest years of my life. During these years, I will face many more problems and decisions which I can add to the list of the ones I have already confronted. I do not face these situations alone. No matter what the problem or how hard the decision, my heavenly Father is always beside me leading me in the right direction, the direction He feels is best for me.

Through sickness and health, the Lord is near unto me. He will not leave me or abandon me. He provides me with the strength I need to make it through. When I am tired and weak, He is there beside me, cradling my hand gently within His own.

As my fingers glide lightly over the pictures held within our photo album, I begin to search for the ones when I was like a newly planted tree, not yet fully grown. So much was uncertain. So much was yet to be learned. The path that lay before me was misty and unknown. How tall would I become? What would I look like? Which road would I travel? These questions would all be answered as I grew, but God knew. He knew where my feet would walk and on what ground I would stand, but no one else did. I'm sure my parents prayed that I would travel down the right path, but they could not determine the result. God did, and although I have grown, I am yet to grow some more, not necessarily physically but spiritually.

My favorite and most cherished Bible verse is Psalm 28:7, "*The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.*" I look at this verse and realize I have nothing to fear, for the Lord is with me and through the guidance of the Father my feet will travel down the straight and narrow pathway. There may be bumps and road blocks but I will make it through. Each unexpected curve I stumble upon will become a bearable obstacle, for in all things, the Lord has provided me with His guidance, His strength, and His protection.

I will continually pray for the Lord to lead me and help me, and through faith and trust in Him I will make it through anything I may face. Also, through faith in Him I have grown and will continue to grow into a strong tree, one that will blossom and flourish. My leaves will not wither.

As I look toward the future, my eyes are unable to focus on what lies ahead because the fog is too thick. I do not know what the days to come will bring, but I do know that through the guidance of the Father my feet will continue to carry me down the straight and narrow pathway which leads to eternal glory with Him.

Mindy is a member of Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church.

Remember Your Creator

Remember in your youthful days
The Lord your God alone;
He formed you long before your birth
And chose you for His own.

He shaped your body and your mind,
He gave you talents too,
That you might render thanks to Him
In everything you do.

The time allotted you on earth
Is not your own to use –
It's His; and only for His praise
And glory must you choose.

And when, because of sinful lust,
You follow evil ways,
Repent; resolve to do the right
In all succeeding days.

He hears the prayers of those who seek
Forgiveness for their sin.
In fact, contrite you come to Him
Because He works within.

Assurance of His love and grace
He gives with lib'ral hand.
His strength upholds you in your need
And causes you to stand.

You cannot face the onslaughts of
The devil and his host,
For there is nothing of yourself
On which your soul can boast.

But he who comes, in sorrow clothed,
Shall not be put to shame.
The cross of Christ erases guilt.
All glory to His Name!

Thelma Westra

Discipline: An AWESOME Responsibility

by Sandra Kooiman

Finally . . . . the long-awaited for cry of a newborn infant pierces the air!!! In amazement, the new mother and father stare at the miracle produced by their love. God, in His infinite wisdom, has bestowed upon them the blessing of a covenant child. Even as their grateful hearts and mouths praise the Lord for this precious and wonderful gift, their souls are overwhelmed by the *awesome* responsibility that coincides with the bestowal of this treasure. They are now covenant parents entrusted with the care and upbringing of one of God's precious jewels! How can they, mere mortal, sinful human beings, provide the covenant instruction and discipline required by their Heavenly Father?!? Again, what an *awesome* responsibility!

Soon after, the jubilant new parents arrive home with their newest blessing from God. This covenant home, first established when the young man and woman exchanged their marriage vows,now includes a child whom they had already been admonished (in the marriage form) to bring up ". . . in the fear of the Lord, to the honor of thy holy name to the edification of thy Church and to the extension of the holy gospel." During the first few weeks of the infant's life, the young parents already see the signs of total depravity. Very soon they learn to distinguish the genuine cries of hunger, discomfort, or distress from the cries of displeasure, discontent, or anger. Although discipline at this point cannot consist of much more than a stern tone of voice, discipline *has* begun.

After four weeks or so, the young father requests permission to present their child for the sacrament of holy baptism. When the Sunday for this notable event arrives, the proud parents stand before the minister with the child in the father's arms and proclaim before the entire congregation their promise and intention "to see (this child), when come to the years of discretion (whereof you are parents 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?" (Third question of the Form for Baptism.) This "bringing up" and instruction includes discipline. Once again these covenant parents are faced with the *awesome* responsibility God has given them.

As the months go by, the young parents watch as their progeny begins to smile, to coo, to sit, to crawl, and eventually to walk and run. In conjunction with the child's developing independence, his curiosity about the world around him also is growing. Thus, only a few months after his birth, this child begins to reach out and towards the "new" and interesting objects and places of his environment. Needless to say, many of these objects and places are not only "off limits" to the child, they are also dangerous. So begins instruction and discipline through the simple words of "no, no" and if necessary, the slapping of hands and bottom.

At this point we should discuss the "choices" that these young covenant parents are faced with regarding the discipline of their child in the world today. They have been bombarded, not only through the media, but also with the advice of the medical profession, friends, neighbors, and maybe even family as to how their child should be raised. Most of these views are based on the premises that the child is innately good, and that any type of

corporal punishment is to be seen as barbaric and contrary to the human laws of "decency" and "parental" love. They have been told that the "old-fashioned" and "biblical" means of discipline are, in fact, harmful and detrimental to the child; that no parent who "loves" his/her child could possibly expect to show this love by the use of the biblical rod. However, this young couple, through prayer and the grace of God, has determined to follow the biblical mandate given in Proverbs 14:23, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes," as had their parents before them. Although the rest of the world may look on them with dismay and shout accusations of cruelty and abuse, these covenant parents know that true parental love involves both the rod and reproof: "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." (Proverbs 29:15. Also read the pamphlet *The Rod and Reproof: The Loving Discipline of Covenant Children* by Rev. Steven Key.) Just as our Father in heaven chastises us, His children, in love, so must these covenant parents chastise their child. Only through such discipline is true parental love expressed, that love that shows a boundless concern for the child's eternal soul.

Throughout the preschool years, the discipline of their child is primarily administered by the parents. When the child sins, he is reproved and, if necessary, spanked. Day after day the young parents pray for guidance and patience concerning his upbringing. Too soon the child is old enough to be sent to school. The parents again adhere to their promise made at the child's baptism to bring up and instruct this child in the doctrine of the Church, that is, in the fear of the Lord, by sending him to a school where that same doctrine is taught. And since the school is an extension of the home, they acknowledge that necessary discipline will be carried out for the same purpose as they themselves administer it.

As their child enters the teenage years, the need for discipline by these parents does not diminish. Just as when he was a toddler, the emerging young adult continues to strive for independence and in so doing reaches out to encounter new and interesting experiences. However, many of these experiences are "off limits," dangerous, and totally against the commandments of God for a true child of the covenant. Again, these parents are impressed with the *awesome* responsibility God has given them in being there to discipline, in love, their erring teenager with reproof and the rod. More than ever they realize the need for prayer and grace from God to be able to carry out this task according to His will.

Finally . . . . these same parents, the Lord willing, sit in the congregation and witness their child, now a young adult, stand before the Church of Christ to profess his faith as a member of that Body of Christ. As they watch, their hearts, minds, and souls sing with praise and thanksgiving to God for His wonderful grace and mercy in helping them instruct and train this child in the way that he should go, in guiding them with this *awesome* responsibility.

Dear young people, the next time you receive instruction and discipline from your parents, please take a moment to reflect on this responsibility that God has placed on them. However, you may not fully understand the *awesomeness* of this task, as I did not, until the circle is complete and one day *you*, D.V., hold your own precious jewel from God in your arms.

Sandra is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church and works part-time in Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School's resource room.

Answers to the Bible Quiz on page 8:

1. *b Eliab and Abinadab were David's brothers (I Samuel 17:12-14), and Saul was his nemesis.*
2. *d I Kings 17: 4-6*
3. *b (Matthew 1:5) Rahab was the mother of Boaz, who was the husband of Ruth.*
4. *d Moses is mentioned 79 times, Abraham 70, David 58, and Adam 9.*
5. *c (Daniel 8:16 and 9:21) Although the Apocrypha names all of these as being part of the seven archangels (e.g., the book of Enoch), the canonical books of scripture name only two angels: Michael and Gabriel. Gabriel is the angel who interpreted Daniel's dreams and brought the news of John's and Jesus' births (Luke 1).*
6. *True. Ezekiel 18:20*
7. *a I know that technically the vine and bramble are not trees, but this is the word the KJV uses (Judges 9:8). This is a parable (the first parable of the Bible) which Jotham, son of Gideon, uses to portray Israel's selection of Abimelech for king. The good trees, picturing the household of Jerebbaal (Gideon), were past over in favor of the bramble, which pictured Abimelech (dissident son of Gideon). You might have gotten the answer through elimination--the holm oak, holly, and walnut trees are not indigenous to the Middle East.*

8. b *Once every seven years the children of Israel were instructed to let their fields lie fallow (Leviticus 25:1-7).*

9. *wicked heart, lying tongue, proud look, sower of discord, feet which run to mischief, false witness, hands that shed innocent blood (Proverbs 6:16-19).*

10. *Although at first glance this looks like a difficult question, in fact it is the easiest question, because no matter which answer you chose, you were right! An acrostic text arranges the words of a text so that the first letters of the words or phrases form a pattern. The translation of the Bible by Ronald Knox (1955) is the only English version I know which attempts to preserve this acrostic characteristic. Following is the translation of Proverbs 31:10-31, which can be thought of as the virtues of a woman, from A-Z (If you have ever played Scrabble, you will understand why he eliminated the letters Q,X,Y, and Z).*

Correction for July's Bible Quiz:

The answer to question 6 should have been d. Jesus was not Elizabeth's nephew, but her first cousin once removed.

The Virtuous Woman

See question 10 of the Bible Quiz

"**A** man who has found a vigorous wife has found a rare treasure, brought from distant shores. **B**ound to her in loving confidence, he will have no need of spoil. **C**ontent, not sorrow, she will bring him as long as life lasts. **D**oes she not busy herself with wool and thread, plying her hands with ready skill? **E**ver she steers her course like some merchant ship, bringing provision from far away. **F**rom early dawn she is up, assigning food to the household, so that each waiting-woman has her share. **G**round must be examined, and bought, and planted out as a vineyard, with the earnings of her toil. **H**ow briskly she girds herself to the task, how tireless are her arms! **I**ndustry she knows, is well rewarded, and all night long her lamp does not go out. **J**ealously she sets her hands to work, her fingers clutch the spindle. **K**indly is her welcome to the poor, her purse ever open to those in need. **L**et the snow lie cold if it will, she has no fears for her household; no servant of hers but is warmly clad. **M**ade by her own hands was the coverlet on her bed, the clothes of lawn and purple that she wears. **N**one so honoured at the city gate as that husband of hers, when he sits in council with the elders of the land. **O**ften she will sell linen of her own weaving, or make a girdle for the travelling merchant to buy. **P**rotected by her own industry and good repute, she greets the morrow with a smile. **R**ipe wisdom governs her speech, but it is kindly instruction she gives. **S**he keeps watch over all that goes on in her house, not content to go through life eating and sleeping. **T**hat is why her children are the first to call her blessed, her husband is loud in her praise: **U**nrivalled art thou among all the women that have enriched their homes. **V**ain are the winning ways, beauty is a snare; it is the woman who fears the Lord that will achieve renown. **W**ork such as hers claims its reward; let her life be spoken of with praise at the city gates."

Proverbs 31:10-31

(Note: This is from the translation of the Bible by Ronald Knox [1955]. We have used this translation merely to demonstrate the acrostic.)

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . LET IT SHINE!

by Connie Meyer

Love (Part 2)

"Oh, look at those two poor children over there. I'm so glad *we* can afford clothes that are in style. C'mon, I don't want to play here by them. Let's go over there." Then the two well-dressed girls walked to the far end of the park and began to play with their frisbee.

Julie and her little brother Jason sat on the park bench and stared at each other with wide eyes.

"Did you hear *that*?" exclaimed Julie. "They were talking about us!" And with that Julie and Jason looked down at their clothes.

"Yea," replied Jason, "I didn't think we looked *that* bad."

Indignation welled up within Julie and she let the anger spill over as she said, "Well we *don't* look that bad, our clothes are just fine. Who do they think they are?"

"Yea, who do they think they are," repeated Jason as he crossed his arms in confirmation.

Julie and Jason tried to play on the swings awhile, but after the incident with the snobbish girls, their heart wasn't in it.

"We might as well go home," suggested Julie. ason agreed.

They walked through the park and were crossing the first street when they heard a scream up ahead. Quickly they ran to see what had happened.

"She's one of those girls!" whispered Jason as they came closer to a girl moaning by the sidewalk. A bike lay beside her.

"I don't know what happened," the girl sobbed. "All of a sudden I fell."

"Are you badly hurt?" asked Julie.

"I-I don't think so. My knee and elbow are pretty skinned up though."

"Here, let me help you up. There, I think you'll be okay. Looks like your bike is okay, too," Julie said.

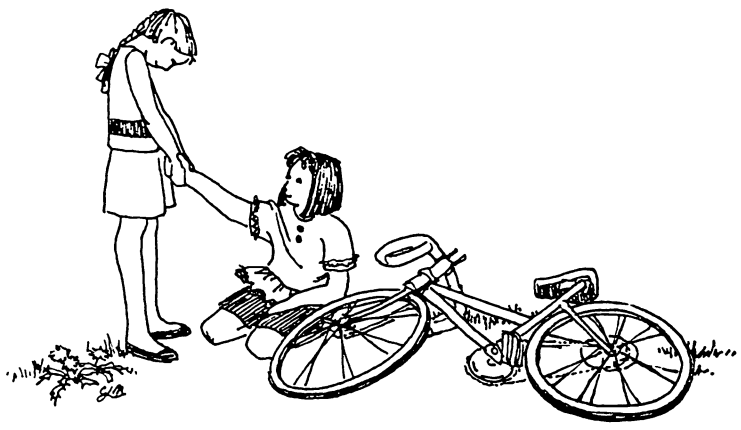
"Thank you," the girl managed to reply. Slowly she mounted her bike and rode away.

"Why did you help her?" Jason asked Julie in amazement.

Julie shrugged, "I didn't really want to, but I knew I should." Then she said more cheerfully than she had sounded all afternoon, "Let's go home." As they continued to walk she even forgot to stay angry at the two well-dressed girls.

Love had won.

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



Find the underlined words from these verses in the puzzle below:

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:8

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."

John 15:12

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

I Corinthians 13:1

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

1995 Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention

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