Beacon Lights

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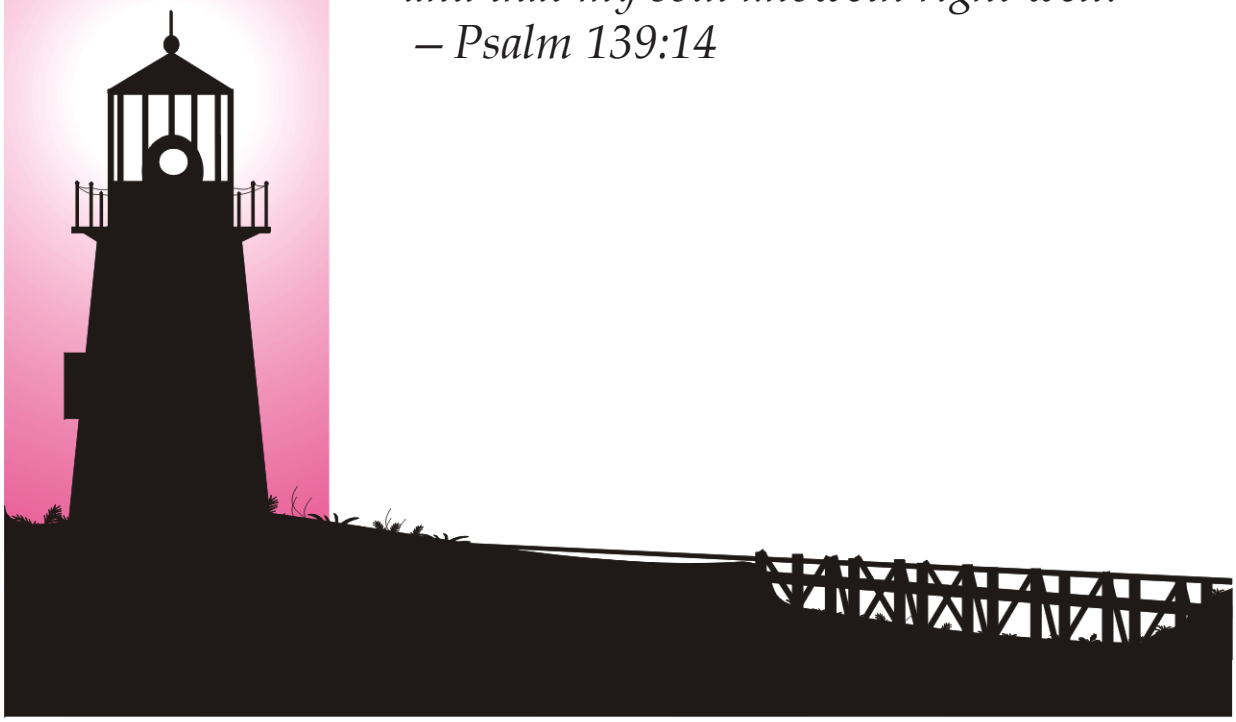
"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."
– Psalm 139:14



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Text Message from Our Covenant Friend

by John Huizenga

The bell rings for the end of class, and before the last tones are absorbed by the sounds of happy students free from the classroom, a number of students have made a beeline to their locker to check their phone for a text message or other form of communication from their network of friends or family. Seeing this lively activity of contact with others makes me think about our communication with God. Do we ever run to our Bible like we run to our phone to learn what our God has to say? Do we wait with eager anticipation for our next opportunity to read the text message of our covenant Friend? In my mind I tried to picture what it would be like to see students rush to their locker just to take a peek at their Bible to find another message from God. If we all were so eager to break away from our daily tasks and use our spare moments to read God's word and pray, what a joyful and lively spiritual life we would enjoy!

Communication is vital in developing our friendships and relationships. It's like the sap in a plant or the life-blood of a creature—when it stops flowing, the plant or creature eventually dies. Our closest friends are those with whom we are able to share our thoughts and enjoy fellowship together on a regular basis. The bond of marriage that unites two individuals into one life grows deep and profound through steady and lively communication.

Until the recent development of technology, such friendships were for the most part limited to someone who lived nearby. The technology available now has advanced to such a degree that even distant relationships can flourish. Now it's almost like having your friends with you all the time. Not only can we speak with them or send a text message, we can instantly share our experiences with pictures and video clips. Whether we are home, in our car, out for a walk, or on the beach, the network of cell-phone towers and orbiting satellites link us together whenever we want. Communication devices are wonderful inventions. No matter where we are or what time it is, we can talk to one another, share our thoughts and plans with pictures, voice, or text.

These amazing inventions, however, do not begin to compare with the wonderful system of communication that God has created for his people. God has created man in such a way that his life in all respects is dependent upon fellowship with his creator. Jesus answered Satan and said "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4, cf. Deut. 8:3). Apart from this communication with God, we are dead spiritually and our earthly life has no purpose but to make us more and more fit for the eternal death of hell. We get up in the morning and find purpose in our life because we know what God has created us to do.

God makes his presence and his will known to us by surrounding us in a world that displays his handiwork, by speaking and writing in human language, and (in connection with the written and spoken word) by the working of the Holy Spirit directly in our heart and soul. When we commit his word to memory, we have the most intimate words of God with us all the time. And wherever we find the Bible or the preaching, we are able to plumb as deeply as we can the depths of his word. God's word is a message that is so clear and delightful to the child of God, yet it is so deep that we can look at it over and over, and always find something new. As we read and listen to God's word, the Holy Spirit is there giving us understanding and causing us to grow in our fellowship and love for God.

Answering the call of God does not require any technology, but simply the attention and thoughts of our regenerated heart and mind. Even though he already knows our every thought, he delights in our con-

sciously bringing our thoughts, cares, and concerns to him in the way of prayer. He doesn't need us to tell him our needs and praise, but we need to do it because that is how we grow in our spiritual life with God. He requires that we pray, because he knows how much we need it for our life. He requires that we pray, because that is what he loves.

While our earthly limitations restrict our interaction with God, it is not so with God. At every moment, God knows us even to our every thought. Ever since God breathed into Adam the breath of life, our creator has always been near unto his creatures. The psalmist in Psalm 139 describes this wonderful intimacy between God and his child. There is no place in this creation where we can go and not have God near us. Nothing, really, can separate us from the love of God. Even when we in blind folly try to flee from the presence of God, he patiently seeks us out to deliver us from our foolishness and demonstrate his love and desire to bring us deeper into his own covenant fellowship.

Though it may seem like technology has the power to make our friends omnipresent, the technology is not omnipotent. Our phones get lost or destroyed. Satellites and transmission towers break down. Phones and other communication technology may be banned in school or other locations making us feel isolated, but our communion with God can continue no matter where we are or what we are doing. We only need to block our earthly senses to the point where our minds can turn to our God, and he is there, ready to listen and reply with his grace.

We live at a time of amazing inventions, and we grow to love our gadgets that connect us with friends and the world around us, but let us pray for the grace that they do not take the place of or diminish our fellowship with God. Sometimes I wonder if the final strategy of Satan in these last days for destroying the church is to so distract us that we forget God. This strategy worked well in the nation of Judah, and today our options for Baal worship have multiplied. Jeremiah cried out to the church, "O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee? Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer. 2:31-32). We know the minutes spent each month developing our earthly relationships; can we match it in minutes with our God? May an awareness of the time we spend with the social networks serve, by the grace of God, to spur on our time spent with God. ❖

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Introducing a Series: "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made"

by Mary Van Overloop

The Special Education Board has provided a room for special needs students in the West Michigan area at Heritage Christian School since Heritage opened its doors in 1985. This history began in the 1980's with the forming of the Special Education Society. The purpose and goal of the society was (and still is) summed up in their constitutional mandate: "The purpose of this society is to provide God-centered education for those who cannot at the present time receive instruction in our present schools because of mental and/or physical handicaps." These students have needs, and it does not matter what "label" they were given by the educational or medical community; their needs are great enough that they are not able to function in our general education classes independently. These are not students who need support in a few subjects, but they need total support. Through the years these students have had a variety of teachers, but the goal of including special education stu-

dents in the general education classes as much as possible is a priority. This is called inclusive education, and one of the main points of educating these students is to give them an opportunity to be a part of our covenant schools. Heritage has found that all parts of the body of Christ can benefit from inclusion, both special education and general education students. Inclusion gives the general education students opportunities to interact with students whose needs differ from the average student.

> …all parts of the body of Christ can benefit from inclusion, both special education and general education students.

At Heritage, even though many students have the opportunity to work closely with the students in special education, not all the students have this chance. In addition, students are curious about differences and have many questions about the students with special needs and their disabilities. Through the years these questions have been addressed several times at Heritage with chapels and days devoted to teaching about special needs. However, with so many children seeing, working with, and helping students with special needs, the Discovery Center staff wanted to find a consistent way to address some of the questions and give the students an opportunity to "experience" certain disabilities. This led to the implementing of a school wide program named "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made," to educate and inform the students on a yearly basis.

"Fearfully and Wonderfully Made" is a volunteer based program that begins by planning with the volunteers for activities to present to students from kindergarten to ninth grade. It concludes with follow-up volunteers with various disabilities visiting the classrooms at some point. The actual day begins with chapel, which gives an opportunity to spiritually address how we all are truly fearfully and wonderfully made by God. These chapels have also been an opportunity for the student body to hear the talents of our special needs students, or former students, through special numbers. The students are always amazed when Ross Van Overloop names the Psalter numbers by memory. Singing is a favorite for many of our students, so it is wonderful to watch classmates volunteer to surround our special needs students to sing praises to God. Once chapel is over, each class spends approximately ninety minutes learning about different disabilities or topics with a group of volunteers. The goal is for every student to learn and also "experience" various disabilities, so that by the time they graduate from Heritage they will have been exposed to a variety of disabilities. Following is a summary of the disabilities covered for each grade along with a sampling of the simulations to help the children "experience" a disability.

Kindergarten begins with an overview of special needs to help them grow in their understanding that differences are the way God has designed his people. The kindergarteners learn some sign language and even learn to color shapes by "seeing" the lines with their fingers. They also experience the frustrations of a fine motor disability when they must pick up and eat small Cheerios with their hands covered with socks and plastic bags. They figure out very quickly how slow and frustrating even a simple task can be! Singing Psalm 139, "I will praise Thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made," is a wonderful ending for their day.

First grade focuses on understanding the experiences of people who are visually impaired and demonstrates how they cope with everyday life. The students get to experience blindness by walking blind-folded through an obstacle course with a cane and taking a trust walk with a volunteer. They also learn to pour water, guess objects and identify smells while wearing blindfolds. They even have a chance to learn about Braille using a Psalter written in Braille, and they have fun "trying on" a prosthetic eye.

Second graders participate in simulation exercises and discuss the causes of hearing impairments. They learn how God designed the ear with intricate parts, and then they each get to "become" a part of the ear. As they pass a coded message through their hands, they find that all parts must be working or the message is lost. They also learn all hearing impairments are not the same; some can not hear because the sound is not loud enough, while others do not hear the sounds clearly. Learning some sign language, trying to read lips and learning about hearing aides are also part of the second grade experience.

Third grade covers developmentally delayed or cognitive impairments where students learn about the different ranges of abilities. The simulation activities are designed to help the students experience fine motor impairments by buttoning a shirt and finding small objects in a bag with sock covered hands. Students also have the opportunity to experience the frustration of very difficult tasks and then being treated as a baby. An especially important message in understanding others'

feelings and helping all those in the body of Christ is emphasized in third grade.

Various forms of motor and orthopedic impairments are introduced in fourth grade to teach an understanding of and respect for the people who cope with these disabilities. Students use adaptive aids to dress themselves and do everyday tasks such as eating and opening cupboards. Walkers and wheelchairs are used to experience mobility difficulties. They also complete an art project that involves cutting with hands covered with socks to experience the trouble and time it takes to do simple tasks when hand muscles are weak. These students learn in their everyday life to empathize and help older adults and those with motor impairments.

In fifth grade students discover the causes and types of learning disabilities. Copying math problems with mirrors frustrates the students with a simulated visual motor integration disability. Reading a text that is mixed with nonsense words simulates a reading disability. Following directions and being forced to work quickly to the point of frustration is another simulation. Students end with a discussion of ways to help those with these difficulties and that fair does not always mean equal in the classroom. They discuss why some students have accommodations to help them with reading or writing difficulties, and how accommodations can help those with different learning styles. They learn God did not make all children's brains to work the same…. each child is God's unique design with differing strengths and weaknesses.

…each child is God's unique design with differing strengths and weaknesses.

Sixth grade covers developmental delays or cognitive impairments along with review of past sections. Students participate in a fine motor relay race that is set up to favor one team and are faced with the question, "What is fair?" Treatment of people with vision impairments using a Seeing Eye dog is also addressed. This grade finishes with Ross Van Overloop reading his book *How I Learned to Ride a Bike* and answering some of the sixth graders questions about his life as an adult with Down syndrome.

Seventh and eighth grade both have presentations by parents who have experienced personally or vicariously through their children either a serious illness or chronic condition. Tourette's syndrome, diabetes, hirshsprungs, anorexia/bulimia and treatment of peers with sicknesses are some of the topics covered. These topics give the students opportunities to have conversations about peer pressure and self esteem along with gaining some knowledge about medical conditions that some of their own classmates deal with every day.

The students are encouraged to volunteer in the Protestant Reformed special needs group that meets one time each month called "Special Needs Friendship Club."

Autism is the final session in ninth grade where students learn about the characteristics of autism and experience sensory overload. Tasting some surprises in the delicious chocolate treat or taking a test with sound and light distractions are just two sensory experiences in which the students participate. The students are encouraged to volunteer in the Protestant Reformed special needs group that meets one time each month called "Special Needs Friendship Club." This group combines two groups that do not have many opportunities to mix in fun, social outings. Getting our young people involved in a life long commitment to be a friend to those with disabilities would be a wonderful culmination of "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made."

A program such as "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made" can be implemented in any school, whether they have a special education classroom or not. The goal of the day is to educate and increase awareness of the different disabilities, so that the students are more comfortable interacting with all members of the body of Christ; not just at school, but also in the church and in the Protestant Reformed community. This program is only possible through the work and expertise of the volunteers who are willing to give their time and wisdom to the children. Heritage is always thankful for the individuals who come to help and share their experiences, and it is our prayer that addressing these topics will prepare our children to be active members in the body of Christ. ❖

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

Our Children's Education: A Covenant Necessity (2)

by Aaron Lim

II. The Nature of Education in Singapore

Although minute in land mass and population, Singapore has renowned acclaim for its education system. Countries worldwide have applauded the government's efforts in establishing a strong and effective system which has been the backbone of the nation's economic prosperity. The education system has been responsible for training productive citizens and developing them to drive the nation's progress.

In a land-scarce country like Singapore which is deprived of natural resources, the citizens are the main resource the government has. Because the government wisely recognizes this, extensive efforts have been made to develop them. Education is the key arm of the government to develop its citizens and to sustain the nation's progress. By regulating the education its citizens receive, the government ensures that the knowledge and skills they acquire can be directed to the appropriate sectors in society. Since the services sector occupies the bulk of Singapore's economy, education necessarily gears our students towards that sector.

Supervised by the Ministry of Education (MOE), all the public schools are stringently regulated. From the teaching faculty to the curriculum, the ministry makes the final decision. Regulation is necessary not only to streamline the instruction students receive but also to siphon them according to their academic abilities. At the end of primary, secondary and junior college standards, students have to sit for national examinations to test their academic proficiency. Their academic grades will determine what kind of schools and courses they can move on to.

Students in polytechnic and the institutions of technical education receive a diploma at the end of their course. Those in junior college have the fastest access to university if they qualify for it in the national exams.

To qualify as teacher in a government school, one has to graduate from the National Institute of Education (NIE) after completing a basic degree in a recognized local or overseas university. Upon graduation from NIE, he is subsequently posted to a government school according to his field of discipline and place of residence.

Academic rigor has not only been characteristic of the Singaporean education system but also the lifestyle of Singaporeans.

Academic rigor has not only been characteristic of the Singaporean education system but also the lifestyle of Singaporeans. From the first day a child enters into a public school in Singapore, his life is subjected to grueling academic drilling. Almost every teacher he meets expects him to excel academically because it is critical to moving on to better schools and university courses. A teacher's performance in school is also primarily assessed by the grades his students achieve.

On a larger scale, a student's academic performance also affects the overall performance of his school. To encourage improvement and competition amongst schools, the ministry of education has a ranking system in which each public school is annually rated for its performance. Aside from its academic achievements, other factors like its sports and musical achievements are also taken into consideration. The better a school is ranked, the better the appraisal it receives from the ministry and the public.

Aside from academics, students in the public schools have to participate in co-curricular activities (CCA). These range from sports to musical ensembles and clubs of various activities. They are part of the ministry's initiative to establish a well-rounded education. Competitions are held every year for these CCA groups so that schools which perform well are recognized for their achievements.

Interestingly, many of the public schools in Singapore are Christian by name. They were founded by Christian missionaries during the formative years of the nation. For six years I attended two Roman Catholic schools and two years in an Anglican junior college. The Roman Catholic schools held their mass every now and then on special occasions, although non-Catholics

were only required to observe. Covenant parents may not be deceived into thinking that there is any spiritual instruction from these schools. There is nothing religious, nothing Christian about them. Rather than a Christian institute, the Anglican junior college I attended resembled a synagogue of Satan.

Rather than a Christian institute, the Anglican junior college I attended resembled a synagogue of Satan.

Every Singaporean parent knows that competition is the driving principle behind our education system. It is a system based solidly on merit, where the best students with the best academic grades get into the best schools and best courses. Competition to enter the best schools is extremely fierce, because these schools are famous for churning out top students. With top grades, one has better opportunities to choose the more prospective courses in university. Job opportunities are also usually better for those who come from the top schools.

Being a meritocratic society, rewards are naturally in place for those who perform well. The government, along with many business corporations, offers hundreds of scholarships to those who excel academically. These scholarships range in value and prestige. Some of the most prestigious scholarships include the President's scholarship and the Public Service Commission scholarship. These are awarded by the government to top students who wish to serve as civil servants. These prestigious scholarships allow and pay for them to study in the world's top universities. Upon the completion of their studies, these scholars return home to serve in various sectors of the government. In many ways their career paths are tightly secured, along with promotion opportunities and well-paying salaries.

Placing the brains at the high positions in government and business corporations has worked well for Singapore. Elaborate planning and wise policies have transformed Singapore into one of the finest cities in the world. That Singaporeans today enjoy high standards of living and technological advancements is beyond doubt due to the wise leadership of their government.

My purpose is to demonstrate the spiritual devastation this system has caused to our covenant children…

It is not my purpose to examine the benefits and advantages of our public education system. Our children are fine products of this system. The system has made doctors, lawyers, engineers and other kinds of professionals out of our covenant children. My purpose is to demonstrate the spiritual devastation this system has caused to our covenant children, in the hope that we as covenant parents will realize the absolute necessity of giving them a covenant education. The future of the church depends heavily on this. ❖

Aaron is a member of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore.

Gem of the Month

The World

The world
Always moving
Totally unaware
Hearing but are not listening
Looking but not seeing
The world

A Haiku by Brandi Oostra, a Junior at Trinity Christian High School in Hull, Iowa.

We're Studying Jonah at Hudsonville

by Jordan Scholten

As children we have all learned the story of Jonah, and were all amazed by the fact that a big fish swallowed him and he was able to live in the belly of this fish for three days. Now in our Young People's at Hudsonville PRC we are taking a closer look at this story, and seeing how it can be a great lesson to us.

The city of Nineveh was the capital in Assyria, and it also became the center of power for Assyria. To get across the whole city was a three days' journey, and the walls were so thick you could drive at least three chariots across them. This had to have been very intimidating for Jonah when he found out that he was called to go and preach to them. For Jonah to go into the city of Nineveh and preach their destruction would be like us going to into a very big and sinful city like Las Vegas or New Orleans. Not only would we be mocked for what we were saying, our message would not even be taken seriously. Part of the reason Jonah fled to Tarshish was because he did not believe that the preaching should go to the Ninevites. Israel was struggling at this time religiously, and Jonah believed that he could have been used better in Israel. This was not God's will though, and God never fails to carry out his will. Nothing we will ever do can change God's will. While it may not seem like it at the time, God directs everything for our good and his glory. This is of great comfort to us with all the situations of life that we face.

Jonah tried to flee the presence of God when he got on a boat and sailed to Tarshish. At times we are like Jonah and we try to flee from the presence of God. Although we probably don't physically try and flee, spiritually we do. When we are walking in sin and refuse to leave this sin, we are in a way "fleeing the presence of God." We become so caught up in our sins that we forget about God, and soon our sin becomes the focus of our lives.

God used the big fish to save Jonah when he was drowning in the ocean so that Jonah could continue on to Nineveh to preach to the people there. God, again, shows that his will is always carried out no matter what man tries to do to prevent it. The fact that God saved Jonah also shows that he still loves his people even when they are walking in terrible sin. Jonah tried to flee the presence of God, and God showed Jonah that he is everywhere and that no one can hide from him. This is a comfort for us as well because we know that God is with his people at all times and will care for us even if we walk in sin.

In looking at just these few aspects it is clear that the book of Jonah is more than just a Bible story we learn when we are younger. Jonah teaches us many things about God and his will. It also shows us the dangers of sin, and the seriousness of trying to flee from God. Not only is it a terrible sin to try to flee from God, but it is also very scary. Without God we have no peace or sense of security and safety in this life. Without God we feel helpless and alone, and that is a very scary thing especially with the type of world around us. As little kids we thought the most amazing thing about the book of Jonah was the big fish, but now as young people we see the amazing truths about God which make the miracle of the big fish swallowing Jonah seem little. ❖

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

We're Studying Job at Hope (Redlands)

by Lynnae Van Voorthuysen

Why do we, the chosen children of God, have to suffer? When one is afflicted, this question can seem overwhelming. In our young adults society, we are currently studying the book of Job. This book gives a sound example of a man who God brought very low through a multitude of trials and afflictions. Job especially struggled to understand why he had to suffer. From a human perspective Job was known as a good man, one who feared God and eschewed evil, not one who "deserved" to be afflicted. As the story of Job unfolds, it becomes clear that God used these trials and afflictions to teach Job, and us, to endure these sufferings patiently in faith. "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11).

Trials benefit the believer in many ways. In Psalm 119:71, David writes, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." It is easy for believers to fail to keep God's commandments when they become caught up in the busyness of their educational goals, desires for entertainment, or focus on business. When we lose our focus on God, he may then use various trials or afflictions to turn us back to him and his statutes. The importance of living a sanctified life is then evoked in our hearts.

Righteousness is another benefit that may come from affliction. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11). Affliction fosters a stronger righteousness which results in peace; for the fruit of righteousness is peace. We see this emphasized in Isaiah 32:17, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." The children of God when brought low through trials and afflictions find their resolve to live righteously strengthened, and through living for God, their hearts enjoy peace and rest.

Throughout our earthly lives, we will undoubtedly experience affliction. Therefore we should take care to study Job's words in answer to the Lord: "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not" (Job 42:2-3). Job acknowledged God's limitless power in every dimension of his life. Yes, Job already knew of this, but now his knowledge was strengthened through experience. When Job said, "I have uttered that I understood not," he is referring to his efforts to prove his own godliness before his three friends, and in the midst of that effort, he judged God's providence. Looking around, each of us sees God's works, but we do not always understand them. At times, God's ways will be too wonderful for our feeble minds to understand. Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Through every trial and affliction, we must follow the example given to us in the life of Job and endure our sufferings patiently in faith. ❖

Lynnae is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

April 7 Read Psalm 74:1-11

Israel of old went through many periods of attack and ruin from enemies. Many of these were in response to sins that they had committed both nationally and personally. The church of this day can be under attack as well. Most of the time it is not a physical attack though in some areas of the world it most definitely is. This attack is subtle. It is economic or social. Again God brings this form of chastisement upon us because of the church's sin. We must do as Asaph does in this Psalm. We must bring our cares to the Lord in prayer. We can do this on the basis of the covenant that God has made with us. Let this be part of our daily prayers both public and private. Sing Psalter 205:1-6.

April 8 Read Psalm 74:12-23

I remember a funeral message on verse 12. It was the funeral message of an aged grandmother in Israel. Is this our confession? Do we confess that God is our king? Do we confess the implications that follow from this statement? By confessing that God is sovereign then we confess that all that happens to us happens by his hand. Look at the rest of this chapter. Notice verse 20. On the basis of that beautiful covenant of grace, we can pray for deliverance from the enemies of God and his church. We may and must do this. Satan will war against God and his church until the end of time. Let us pray for deliverance for now and for eternity. Sing Psalter 205:7-13

April 9 Read Psalm 75

What is our relationship to the world? Do we embrace it and its inhabitants as our eternal home and family? Asaph did not. He saw that in the world are fools. These fools will be judged by God and found wanting. Our relationship with these people must not be one of brotherhood. We must look to the congregation of the most high for our trusted friends and companions. We must praise God for all his great works in creation and with his people. Then we will see that the earth is only a temporary dwelling and our home is in heaven. Sing Psalter 206.

April 10 Read Psalm 76

Here we have a Psalm that was composed as a song of praise to Jehovah. While it is true that God is known throughout the whole world by his deeds, he is more intimately known in his church indicated by Judah or Salem. God's people can and must look at his works throughout the world, and they must see his sovereignty over the whole world. They must see that God's judgment over the world is their means of redemption. Our response is to pay those vows that we have made unto him. We must keep all of our promises. Some of those vows and promises are baptism, marriage, confession of faith, and others. Do we treat those vows solemnly? Let us praise the God that deserves our fear. Sing Psalter 207.

April 11 Read Psalm 77

Here we have another Psalm in which Asaph chronicles his descent into trouble. He does the right thing and goes to God as he struggles with the difficulty into which he has fallen. We must remember to do this as well. It does not matter what the trouble is; our first response must be right prayer to a righteous God. Asaph's initial foray into prayer was full of complaining about the strait in which he found himself. Look at some of the phrases he uses in verses 2-4 and 7-9. He looks back at what he has done and not at what God has done for him. As we pray in our distresses, let us remember that we do have a gracious God who will deliver his children out of trouble. Sing Psalter 209.

April 12 Read Psalm 78

Parents have an awesome and solemn duty before Jehovah God. They must instruct the children, whom God has pleased to give them, in his law and his way. This is not just something they might do in their spare time or because the state requires it. This is part of the vow that they have taken at baptism. Children must see that Word carried out by their parents and grandparents every day. Children must be taught God's Word so that they might hope in God as the way of their salvation. There is also a negative reason why this must be done. That is found in verse 8. Let us contemplate this section of Scripture, and let us carry out our duty before God. Sing Psalter 213.

April 13 Read Psalm 79

Once again we come to an imprecatory Psalm. The Psalmist mourns the damage done to the church of God.

He also notes that the sins of the people are the cause for this destruction, and he prays for deliverance from Almighty God. We, too, must realize that our help is only from the God of our salvation. We, too, must live in a way that those around us, both godly and ungodly, can tell that we walk in the way of the Lord. Is this our desire? Do we wish to serve him and give him thanks? Is it our joy to show his praise to the children of the covenant? Let us seek God while he may be found, and call upon him to help us glorify him alone in all of our lives. Sing Psalter 216.

April 14 Read Psalm 80:1-7

This seems to be a continuation of the last Psalm. Asaph calls upon God for deliverance. He does this on the basis of the covenant promises that God has given to his church. Notice, Asaph does not say, "Turn God." He says, "Turn us, O God." This must be our prayer throughout our lives here on this earth. We must ask for repentance in the way of God turning us to the right way. This may be painful at times. We must seek the God of our salvation, and ask him to make his face to shine upon us. In this way we will have the blessed assurance of our salvation through Christ alone. Sing Psalter 218.

April 15 Read Psalm 80:8-19

In the second part of this Psalm we see that Asaph is using the history of Israel to illustrate the goodness God has show to his people. He calls to God on the basis of that goodness and asked for deliverance from the wicked who are oppressing them. We are called to go to God in prayer. Our prayers must have substance to them. This substance is from God's Word and promises. A prayer that is trite and full of man's wishes and desires will not be assuring for us. Let us copy Asaph's example and pray calling upon God and asking on the basis of his promises for deliverance from all sin and temptation. Sing Psalter 221.

April 16 Read Psalm 81:1-7

Israel had several God-ordained feast days. On these days they were to call to remembrance the works of God in giving to them their freedom from Egypt and other works of God's deliverance for them. We see in verses 6 and 7 the depths of this deliverance. He delivered them from a burden and from trouble. He has delivered us from the burden of sin. He has given to us a day in which to remember this deliverance. Once a week we are called to God's house. Do we see this as a great privilege? Do we use the day in thanksgiving to God? The next time we are tempted to miss church for our convenience, let us think of the God who has given to us deliverance from a great burden. Sing Psalter 222:1-5

April 17 Read Psalm 81:8-16

In a short summary the Psalmist recounts some of the wonderful works God performed for Israel as they went through the wilderness from the picture of hell, Egypt, to the picture of heaven, Canaan. We fall into the same sins of rebellion today. Not only do we have the testimony of Scripture about those wonderful works, but we also have the testimony of Scripture of the fulfillment of those works, our Savior Christ Jesus. Is our response to that great work one of thankfulness or rebellion? We may enjoy the blessings showered down upon us now, but let us earnestly desire the greater blessings in heaven. Let us pray that we be kept from the sin of rebellion against our most gracious God. Sing Psalter 222:6-9.

April 18 Read Psalm 82

How often do we defend the poor and fatherless? That is our calling according to this Psalm. This is, according to James, the meaning of pure religion. We are called to be judges of their cause as God has made us those judges. How do we handle this responsibility? Do we go out of our way to avoid the plight of those in distress, or do we delve into their needs and help them? In the end we all die and will face the final judge. What verdict will he pass upon us? Sing Psalter 223.

April 19 Read Psalm 83:1-8

Asaph continues in the thoughts of previous Psalms by asking God for vengeance against God's enemies and those of his church. This is not a popular theme today, but yet is one that we must become adept in as we head into those days when Satan will stir up that type of enemy once more. Satan's hatred of God will be transformed into a fierce hatred of God's beloved people on earth. While Satan is bound, he still can work that hatred among the people of God. Let us learn to pray for deliverance for God's sake and his glory. Sing Psalter 224.

April 20 Read Psalm 83:9-18

Here we have the end of Asaph's imprecatory prayers. We must not stop with verse 17. We must make sure we move on and understand verse 18. The reason for such prayers is not so we get revenge or even safety from such men. The reason is only that God may be glorified. This is not easy for us to swallow in this world of "me first." But yet, this must be our goal and our desire. God must be glorified, and all must know that he is the sovereign God of all creation. Sing Psalter 224.

April 21 Read Psalm 84:1-7

Notice the exclamation mark at the end of verse 1. While they may not have had such devices when this

Psalm was written, we do well to give the thoughts of this Psalm such feeling. When we are in distress, no matter what the reason, if we flee to the courts of God, we will find refuge. We will find refuge first, and most importantly, in the preaching of the Word. That Word will give to us refuge from all the cares of this world. We will also find refuge in the prayers that are uttered and in the praises expressed in the songs that we sing there. Let us seek that refuge and do that in confidence that God will give to us that refuge. Sing Psalter 225.

April 22 Read Psalm 84:8-12

We do well to read and pray these words often in our lives. We quite often will look for other places of refuge. We need to know that the only place of true refuge is in the courts of worship, God's house. We need to utter these words often trusting in God to provide us with that refuge from any care on this earth. Is this our experience? Is this our desire? If it is, we can say with the Psalmist, "blessed-happy- is the man that trusteth in thee." Let us seek to be one of those happy ones. Sing Psalter 226.

April 23 Read Psalm 85:1-7

The grammar of this portion of Scripture is very interesting. First of all, you have the facts of verses 1-3. Then on the basis of those facts, you have the imperative pleading of verse 4. Then there are the questions of verses 5 and 6. Finally, one more pleading found in verse 7. This is a form of prayer that we can use. Using our beliefs about God and his care for us, we can plead for deliverance from sin and the troubles that sin brings to us. Nothing of our own worth can save us from his wrath. Only his mercy can turn us from the ways of the old man within us, and put us on the path of the new man that leads to glory. Sing Psalter 231.

April 24 Read Psalm 85:8-13

After the pleadings in the first part of this Psalm, we come to the truth that God is good and will take care of his people. He will do this in the way of peace. This is not the worldly peace, sought after by so many, but rather the inner peace that comes from his mercy, truth, and righteousness. In that righteousness we will find true happiness because on the basis of Christ's righteousness, we are righteous. The reason for all of this is found in verse 9. He gives to us salvation for his own glory. This is a wonderful truth and fact. May we live out of it now and in the days to come. Sing Psalter 232.

April 25 Read Psalm 86:1-7

There are many times in the life of the child of God that prayer is the means of comfort to which we must turn. Here we see one of those times for David. While the title indicates no particular time in David's life in which he would utter such a prayer, it seems as if he is in distress such as when he was fleeing from Saul. He calls upon God on the strength of God's mercies. He knows that Jehovah is a good God and ready to forgive his sins. He also knows that God will help him. Is this our experience? Do we feel the goodness of God surrounding us at all times? If we take honest stock of our lives, we, too, will see God's goodness. Let us pray in time of need, knowing that our God will answer us. Sing Psalter 233.

April 26 Read Psalm 86:8-17

The prayer of David continues with more expressions of the greatness of God. Reread verse 15 to see some of his comforting attributes. We should take time to muse on each one, especially as we have experienced them in our lives. Our God, who is our teacher, is like no other teacher that we have had on this earth. He will never forsake us. He has given to us his Word that has strengthening words to help us in every situation. Let us seek him all day and every day of our lives. Sing Psalter 234.

April 27 Read Psalm 87

There are many phrases in this Psalm to which we could draw our attention. Let us look at verse 5. "This and that man was born in her;" What a glorious blessing to be a child of the covenant born within the confines of Christ's body, the church! Are those of us, who by providence can claim that distinction, thankful for such a situation? Do we thank our God for birth into that glorious body? Sometimes there are those who come into the church from outside. They are puzzled by our lack of thankfulness and zeal for what we have been graciously given. Let us consider our situation, and thank God for what he has done for us. Sing Psalter 237.

April 28 Read Psalm 88:1-9

Do we pray like this Psalmist prayed? Do we call daily and even hourly if need be to our God for help in time of need? Prayer is the chief means of thankfulness to our sovereign God. Even prayers for help and forgiveness for sins committed are prayers of thankfulness. We must acknowledge that God brings all things on us, and that all things are for our good. When we pray, we acknowledge our weaknesses and seek help from our strength, Jehovah. Sing Psalter 240.

April 29 Read Psalm 88:10-18

Here we have the second part of this prayer of Heman. He continues with his lamentation of troubles. Even in these lamentations he confesses that it is only God to whom he can go in trouble. It is his confession that God will help him when the wicked come up against him.

Is this our prayer? Do we confess that only the living can praise God, and then do we praise him even when in trouble? Let us make this our prayer today and every day. Sing Psalter 240.

April 30 Read Psalm 89:1-14

A relative of the previous Psalm's writer probably penned this Psalm as they are both designated as Ezrahites. Verse 1 gives the theme of this Psalm. The Psalmist and we must sing of the faithfulness of Jehovah that endures to all generations and for all generations. In any trouble we can rely on God's faithfulness and mercy to sustain us and bring us deliverance. Jehovah is a strong God. He rules even the oceans and all the peoples of the earth. Because all things are his, he can use them for the good of his people no matter what circumstances befall them. Let us be glad for our sovereign Lord and let us glorify him forever. Sing Psalter 241.

May 1 Read Psalm 89:15-37

There are two thoughts in this section of Scripture from which we can gain comfort and instruction. First of all we see the blessedness of the chosen. God has chosen to himself a people. His voice to them is a joyful sound. Do we hear his voice in our lives? Do we not only hear it but also listen to it? Do we glory in his name? Secondly, we see the promise of the Savior. David was a type of Christ. His children were pictures of Christ's children the church. Do we keep his Word and walk in his covenant? This is what we must do to enjoy the happiness promised to those who hear the joyful sound. This is what we must seek after today and every day of our lives. Sing Psalter 242.

May 2 Read Psalm 89:38-52

The Psalmist finishes this Psalm by lamenting the destruction brought upon Israel. He has recognized earlier that Israel's problems had been brought about by its sins. But he calls upon God's lovingkindnessess, sworn to David, as a basis for Israel's being brought back to favor with God. We, too, must confess our daily sins. We, too, must call upon God's mercies especially based on the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. No matter where we are led in this life, we, too, must say, "Blessed be Jehovah for evermore." Is that our prayer? Sing Psalter 243.

May 3 Read Psalm 90:1-4

Here we have another non-Davidic Psalm. This might be the best known of all of those types of Psalms. What a blessed thought we find in verse 1. A dwelling place or home is a place of refuge. Saints of all ages can find, not just a sense of refuge in God, but a sure refuge in the Most High. God is sovereign, and his sovereignty extends over all things. It is a great comfort to know that no situation in this life is too big for our God. He will help us and in a way that is good for us. May we give to him all glory and honor. Sing Psalter 245.

May 4 Read Psalm 90:5-12

We see in this portion of the beloved Psalm an expression of the brevity of life. While we might think that life is ours to live and will be long, there are two thoughts that we must consider. First, compared to God's existence our lives are short. He is timeless; we are time bound. He is from eternity to eternity; our lives on this earth have a beginning and an end. Secondly, our lives are fleeting. We do not know when they will end. Our end can come quickly and unexpectedly. We must have the thought of verse 12 firmly entrenched in our heads. We must use our days wisely so that we honor and glorify our God with our lives. May these be our thoughts now and always. Sing Psalter 246.

May 5 Read Psalm 91:1-8

It does not matter what distress may fall upon us. Our covenant, sovereign God will protect us. He will be our fortress and refuge. Notice the various figures shown in these verses. The enemy, Satan, has many tricks and wiles to deceive us and to draw us into his traps. Our God has ample room under his wings to protect all of his people from those wiles of Satan. He truly can deliver us from the evil one as we are taught to pray in the Lord's Prayer. Let us not despair, people of God. Let us place our trust in Jehovah, God of our salvation. Sing Psalter 248.

May 6 Read Psalm 91:9-16

The hope and trust of the first section of this Psalm becomes the salvation in this section. Notice how the section begins with the word "because." This does not become our work, however; this is the work of faith which draws us unto God. Notice also the words that Satan used when he tempted Christ. He quoted the first part of verse 11. He left out the second part. Christ's way was the way of the cross. We do have the promise of angels' help. They do watch over us. The final section has a change of speaker. The faith given to us by the way of Christ on the cross is rewarded by the blessing of salvation from God. Let us call upon him knowing that he will answer us. Sing Psalter 249.

Women in the Book of Proverbs

1. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to _____ and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.
   - nothing
   - dung
   - a piece of bread
   - poverty
2. But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it…
   - doth not know his left hand from his right.
   - destroyeth his own soul.
   - doeth it to his peril.
   - provoketh her husband to wrath.
3. Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith…
   - I have done no wickedness.
   - What is dessert?
   - Now is your wife my aversary.
   - Stolen waters taste sweet.
4. A gracious woman retaineth _____ and strong men retain riches.
   - her substance
   - her inheritance
   - beauty
   - honour
5. As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without…
   - discretion.
   - knowledge.
   - loyalty to her husband.
   - fair raiment.
6. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as…
   - shoes with which he shall walk on dung.
   - a tree that bringeth forth no fruit.
   - rottenness in his bones.
   - a whore.
7. Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish...
   - buildeth it not.
   - will not lift her hand to help.
   - burneth it with fire.
   - plucketh it down with her hands.
8. _____ and a contentious woman are alike.
   - A stubborn mule
   - A continual dropping in a very rainy day
   - A cause that is totally lost
   - A pain in the neck
9. It is better to dwell _____, than with a contentious and an angry woman.
   - in the cellar of the house
   - in the wilderness
   - with an enemy
   - on the threshing floor
10. Who can find a _____ woman? for her price is far above rubies.
    - beautiful
    - submissive
    - virtuous
    - wise
11. For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat. For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that…
    - taketh counsel with fools.
    - is killed in the performance of her duties.
    - murders her mistress.
    - is heir to her mistress.
12. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, _____
    - will have a memorial forever.
    - she shall be praised.
    - shall receive the inheritance of the righteous.
    - shall be blessed in all that she does. ❖

(answers on page 19)

Video Game Violence (2)

by Rev. Rodney Miersma

Last month we ended with the words, "players need to stop trifling with salvation, sin and hell; there are eternal consequences involved." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (I Sam. 15:23a).

Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31b, 32). Perseverance in obedience to Scripture is the fruit or evidence of genuine faith. Real disciples are both learners and faithful followers."

Stephen Kline of Simon Fraser University media research is concerned about the desensitization to violence. He says, "Interactivity increases identification. Identification increases stress levels and the level of addiction." Children surveyed were aware of their surrender to the game and almost every child interviewed admitted video games are addictive. "It's fun to kill everyone around—it's especially fun with 'god mode' on," says a seven-year-old boy who is a fan of DOOM, and took part in Kline's study. DOOM is an incredibly violent and evil game. They are being taught that violence is a way of problem-solving.

Virtual reality has taken video games into a real life-like experience. The player places a wrap-around screen on his head that puts him right in the middle of all the action. It's like looking at the real world with no obstruction, even if people walk in front of you.

Video-games are murder simulators—just like the simulators used to train soldiers for Vietnam. Kids spend hours every night, firing tens of thousands of shots at thousands of human targets. Satan knows sin hardens the heart and conscience and will gladly help one to go deeper and deeper into sin, addiction and bondage. "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8). Make no mistake, while they are involved in this violence and evil, whatever they strive to do in the way of Christian ministry will be done in the flesh. They will not be empowered and led by the Holy Spirit while they are serving Satan and their flesh. "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24a). Satan wants control of our minds, but God says, "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:23, 24).

Remember the frog that we started out talking about? Bit by bit it became acclimatized to the temperature of the water, until it was too late. Well, this is what is happening to players! They are gradually being acclimatized and desensitized to violence and evil. Sin is dampening their desire to read and study God's Word, and is destroying their service to God in holiness and righteousness.

It is impossible to fill one's mind with this diabolical garbage, be an active participant in it, and expect to have a walk with the Lord—it won't happen!

It is impossible to fill one's mind with this diabolical garbage, be an active participant in it, and expect to have a walk with the Lord—it won't happen! "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

Stop for a minute, and think how they spend their free time. Suppose they can't get to sleep at night, and get up for a while. What do they do? Go to God's Word or a good book and read for a while to be encouraged and strengthened in the Lord until they feel ready to go back to bed? More likely than not, they go and fire up the old computer and have some fun! With their latest blood and guts, kill-everything game that they've grown to love so much. Satan, the great deceiver, smiles again in victory!

Players need to take "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17b). "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31b, 32). "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:12, 13).

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

It also becomes harder and harder to spend time in prayer and communion with God, because they try to come to him with all their unrepented sin, but God says, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (I Tim. 2:8). They can't "lift up holy hands" or "walk with the Lord" when they continue doing that which is an absolute abomination to God. "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (I Tim. 6:11, 12a). "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:15-17). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17). "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:3-6). "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3).

God didn't say to us, "Hang onto me with one hand, and onto the world's entertainment and vices with the other." Players need to think about the hours and hours they spend willfully sinning against God by actively participating in this, and filling their minds with violent and diabolical garbage! It is not innocent entertainment. STOP IT, and REPENT!

It is not innocent entertainment. STOP IT, and REPENT!

Repentance is not only being sorry and feeling remorse for our sinful lives, but it is to make a radical turn around, a complete change of the basic motivation and direction of one's life, and to accept total dependence on God. "But, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3b). "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8). The main sign of a regenerate life is a hatred of sin and evil. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

If players refuse to STOP IT! and REPENT! they must not comfort themselves with the lie that a person can continue his life in sin as a carnal Christian. God tells us, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:5-8). "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. 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" (Rom. 12:1, 2). That kind of transformation can occur only as the Holy Spirit changes our thinking through consistent study and meditation of the Scriptures (Psa. 119:11, Col. 1:28; 3:10, 16; Phil. 4:8). The renewed mind is one saturated with and controlled by the word of God. (Read all of Psalm 119) "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph.

4:22-24).

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7, 8). "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14). "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Tim. 2:19b).

Players need to take responsibility for their sin and deal with it—STOP IT! and REPENT! "A man may hate sin just as a murderer hates the gallows, but this does not prove repentance. If I hate sin because of punishment, I have not repented of sin. I merely regret that God is just. But if I can see sin as an offence against Jesus Christ, and loathe myself because I have wounded him, then I have a true brokenness of heart" (Charles H. Spurgeon).

We all need to humble ourselves before God and ask him to give us a hunger and thirst for holiness and righteousness, and for a hunger and thirst to read and study his Word. May our hearts desire be to live lives pleasing and honoring to the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ❖

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Hot Topics

What is Wrong with Drama?

by Craig Ferguson

Perhaps you have heard that drama is wrong. Perhaps you have heard your minister refer to it as something sinful. Perhaps you have grandparents who shake their heads at this form of "entertainment." Perhaps you have friends who will not watch shows or movies with acting in them. If the school you go to is Protestant Reformed, it does not have a drama class or club like almost every other school in North America.

Maybe you wonder… Why?

In the Bible, we read about Jesus Christ. He can be found in each and every page, a beacon shining brilliantly, granting infinite mercies to his covenant people while also pouring out his just wrath reserved for the reprobate. He is called Wonderful, Counselor, the Almighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. He is called Wisdom, the Sun of Righteousness, and Emmanuel.

But more to the point of this article, throughout Scripture Christ is called the Truth. John 1:14 says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and *truth*." This reality is made even plainer in John 14:6 where Jesus states, "I am the way, and the *truth*, and the life."

Christians are exhorted to "buy the *truth* and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23).

In that light, we must consider drama.

First of all, the purpose behind drama and acting is to convince the viewer that what he is watching is real. An actor strives to convince his spectators that, even though his real name is Adam Smith, he is Indiana Jones…or Bruce Wayne…or Jack Sparrow.

Is he really these characters? No.

But he will do his best to make you believe so.

A young man in the Bible attempted such a thing as well. With a weak faith in God's promise, Jacob deceived his father Isaac, by acting like his brother Esau. This was the sin of a weak faith, but it was also the sin of deception and lying.

It ought also to remind us of the first sin, the first deception and the lisping lies of the Serpent in paradise, when he tempted Eve.

Often actors speak about *being* their character. "You must think like him," they say. "You must get into his mind and understand how it works; what makes this character click? You must consider his heart and every part of him, even the darkest recesses of his soul. And then

you must, with this knowledge, *become* your character."

Many of us have heard them say that. But do we see the trickery and intent to deceive here? We must put it in very basic terms: to be the best liar, that is the desire of an actor or actress; even to the extent that they would seek to take on the individuality of another, rejecting their own in the process.

This is horribly wrong. Even William Shakespeare admitted so, in a hypocritical excerpt from "Hamlet," one of his plays: "God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another."

Drama, like so many other facets of entertainment

today, celebrates sin. It celebrates and honors those who are most skilled in the sins of deception and lying. On top of that, the movies even celebrate drunkenness, fornication, and violence. The crowds of the world rush to revel in the latest abominations that their flesh-molded idols have released and to partake, by captivated observance, of the sins therein.

It is no surprise that they delight in this falsehood. In Jeremiah 9:5 we are told about the world and how "they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies and weary themselves to commit iniquity." It is the way of the world to love falsehood (Psalm 7, Psalm 12).

However, it ought not to be the way of Christians. It is a surprise then, when Christians also swarm these movie houses, interested in and eager to watch the latest films. With sorrow one sees that often young people who struggle to find an hour here or there to do devotions, learn their catechism, or simply study the Word of God, can be found at the cinema, soaking in the deceitful entertainment of this world.

We receive a warning of joining the world in their sinful ways when we read of God's attitude towards the ungodly. "Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD… Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jer. 9:6, 8).

This shall not be the end of believers. Our God does not leave us in our sin. We are redeemed by Christ and sanctified by the Spirit. But we must walk and delight in the works of the Spirit, not the ways of the flesh. We must be the Christians that David speaks of in Psalm 1; the Christians of the Antithesis.

Drama is deception; drama is a progressed form of the lie. And the lie is the primary tool of Satan. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).

But what has the truth to do with the lie?

And what have we Christians to do with the world and its revelry in the sin of drama? ❖

Craig is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Answers to Bible Quiz: Women

(from page 15)

1. a piece of bread. (Proverbs 6:26)
2. destroyeth his own soul. (Proverbs 6:32)
3. I have done no wickedness. (Proverbs 30:20)
4. honour (Proverbs 11:16)
5. discretion. (Proverbs 11:22)
6. rottenness in his bones. (Proverbs 12:4)
7. plucketh it down with her hands. (Proverbs 14:1)
8. A continual dropping in a very rainy day. (Proverbs 27:15)
9. in the wilderness. (Proverbs 21:19)
10. virtuous (Proverbs 31:10)
11. is heir to her mistress. (Proverbs 30:21-23)
12. she shall be praised. (Proverbs 31:30)

Letter from the Fed Board

by Joshua Engelsma

Dear Young People's Societies (and supporters):

I just wanted to give you a quick update on some of the things that your Federation Board is up to right now.

One of the most important (and most enjoyable) aspects of the Fed Board's work is the oversight of our magazine, *Beacon Lights*. I am happy to report that the Beacon Lights Staff is to a point where they need monthly meetings. Our editor-in-chief and the newly organized Staff are making good progress and the work they are doing is very encouraging. One thing worth mentioning is that the Staff just launched a Facebook page. Assuming that most of you young people have Facebook (a safe assumption, I believe), I would encourage you to check out their page so that you can receive updates on the *Beacon Lights* as well as post any questions or suggestions that you might have for the Staff.

There has been one Staff change in the last few months. After many years of faithful service, Mrs. Jeanine Huizenga has decided to step down as the business and subscription manager of the *Beacon Lights*. If my information is correct, these two positions were essentially thrust upon her many years ago, and since then she has capably carried out this work. We express our hearty thanks to Jeanine for her devotion to the *Beacon Lights* and for her years of faithful labor. Thanks also to Ms. Laura Kaptein for agreeing to take up this position. Any questions about finances or subscriptions should now be directed to her.

Recently the Fed Board began the annual process of nominating new members to serve on the Fed Board. Letters should be winging their way out to prospective nominees right now, and, if they agree to be put up for nomination, you will vote for the next members at the convention this summer.

The convention this year will be hosted by our Randolph PRC. It will be held from August 8-12 at Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake, WI, which is only a half-hour drive north of Randolph. The speakers this year are Revs. Brummel, Holstege, and Key, and they will be speaking on the theme "Lessons from the Life of Joseph." If you want more information on Green Lake Conference Center, check out their website www.glcc.org.

One quick note about upcoming conventions: Hope (Walker) PRC is making plans to host the 2012 convention, and we have just received word that South Holland PRC has agreed to host the convention in 2013.

By the time you read this you will be close to the end of your society season. I hope that your discussion this year was profitable and pray for God's blessings on the remainder of the season. We'll see you this summer at convention!

In Christ,

Joshua Engelsma, Federation Board President ❖

Joshua is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker Michigan.

Book Review

Robinson Crusoe's Spiritual Journey

by Rebecca Gritters

Robison Crusoe was written by Daniel Defoe in 1719. It tells the story of the life of Robinson Crusoe, a man born to middle-life society. He forsook this way of life and sought to gain riches by becoming a sailor, exploring the seas by boat. He ended up shipwrecked on an island near the Mouth of the

Oroonoque. The book follows not only his life on the island, but also the spiritual journey that brought him out of his rebellious life, toward a life focused on God and the glorifying of his name.

In his early life, Robinson Crusoe's spiritual life was pretty much nonexistent. He refused to listen to his parents or the guidance repeatedly given to him by his father. His father quoted passages like Proverbs 30:8, "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches." Crusoe turned from his father. He set off into the world with his own agenda, working to gain earthly wealth and glory. He ended up going on different voyages, each teaching him something about sailing and the sea. However, his travels were often met with storms and struggles. Crusoe would say that he had realized his wrong and then promised to turn from them, but when all was said and done he would turn again to the sinful life of seeking his earthly lusts.

When Crusoe was first stranded on the island, he saw it as the worst punishment ever given. Nothing worse had happened to anyone in the whole world. His life was about to end right there on the beach where he lay. He didn't think about that fact that he was alive; saved from the fate of all others that had been on that ship. Instead, "After I got to Shore and had escap'd drowning, instead of being thankful to God for my Deliverance…I ran about the Shore, wringing my Hands and beating my Head and Face, exclaiming at my Misery, and crying out, I was undone, undone." He had thought that he knew all there was to living, and without what he thought was necessary for living, he was "dead."

The way Crusoe lived his life during the early days showed his lack of spiritual life. His journal entries portrayed his feelings. His first journal entry read, "I poor miserable Robinson Crusoe, being shipwreck'd, during a dreadful Storm, in the offing, came on Shore on this dismal unfortunate Island, which I call'd the Island of Despair,… and myself almost dead." He was a defeatist; having been separated from all things he knew and trusted. These things were of this earth; they had no lasting gain in which he could place his trust. Crusoe had an outward spiritual life. When put on the island where no one could see him, his spirituality faded fast. He began to neglect the Sabbath, seeing them as days like any other. He didn't see the importance of these days in which we are to set aside our earthly labors. We also see the weakness of Crusoe's spiritual life when he encounters the "miracle" of the growing of barley. When this growth of barley appeared to be a miracle, he cried and gave thanks to God. However, when he found a rational explanation, he again began to deny the Providence of God.

However, God used this trial of Crusoe to strengthen his spiritual life and faith. Crusoe begins to doubt the way he lives his life when he is suffering from an ague. He feels as though he is about to die, and then in the midst of his fevers he has a dream. He is told that since he has not been brought to repentance he will die. He begins to realize his sin and his need to be delivered from these sins. Through his own reflections, Crusoe views the way he lives his live, "I do not remember that I had in all that Time (while forsaking his father) one Thought that so much as tended either to looking upwards toward God, or inwards Soul, without Desire of Good, or Conscience of Evil, had entirely overwhelm'd me, and I was all that the more hardened, unthinking, wicked Creature among our common Sailors, can be supposed to be, not having the least Sense, either of the Fear of God in Danger, or of Thankfulness to God in Deliverances."

Crusoe realized that he had lived in all disregard to the will of God. He realized that he was living a life of sin. When he was delivered fully from his sickness, Crusoe fell on his knees and gave thanks to God. "God had deliver'd me, but I had not glorify'd him." This is the thought that had crossed Crusoe's mind. He began to put God first in his life. The very next day he took his Bible and began to seriously read and search the Scriptures. Crusoe's life became centered on his faith. He would study Scriptures for hours, and continually gave God thanks.

His newly strengthened faith changed how Crusoe viewed his life on the island. Crusoe no longer viewed the island as the worst thing that could ever have happened to him. Instead he took time to be thankful for all that he did have. He spent the day that marked his coming to the island in prayer. He spent the whole day acknowledging the mercies God had bestowed upon him. He looked at passages like Joshua 1:5, "…I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." He realized that God was in control of all, and that God worked everything for his good. He accepted the fact that God would deliver him if it was His will. He found comfort in Psalm 50:15, "And call on me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." He realized that his deliverance would come from God alone, and no other. Only through the strength of God could he be delivered.

Crusoe realized that he was happier here on this deserted island than he had been during his whole life. He wrote in his journal, "It was now that I began sensibly to feel how much more happy this Life I now led was, with all its miserable Circumstances, than the wicked,

cursed, abominable Life I led all the Past of my Days…." Crusoe accepted the fact that he was under the will of God. He no longer sat around and longed for rescue, but he began to build a home on the island. He began to use what God had given him with thankfulness to glorify the name of God.

It is easy for us to sit here, in our nice heated homes where we know we will always have the next meal, and criticize Crusoe and the way he lived his life. We can easily say that if we were put in the same position as him that we would surely never turn from God, but that we would be thankful for all we were given and would realize the providence of God. However, we must use this story, not to judge others, but to look at ourselves.

In our lives, it is doubtful that many of us will be put into the same position as Crusoe. However, we are all put onto our own individual "islands." Some islands are more desolate and deserted than others, but each is given by God. An "island" I was put on was the start of Trinity. When I first heard I was going to a new high school, I couldn't believe it. There was no building, no sports, and barely any people. I looked at all the earthly things that I was losing, instead of being thankful for getting the chance to grow in a true Christian school. When I got to Trinity, I saw that I had been wrong. I had been feeling sorry for myself, when I should have been thankful and joyful. Going to Trinity everyday reminds me that the things of this earth are only temporary things in which we can place none of our trust. Instead, we must turn towards God to supply us with everything necessary. Every struggle we face in this life time causes us to grow spiritually. They bring us closer to God, strengthening our faith. We must be giving thanks to God for these trials, knowing that they are for our good, and are preparing us for when we will be brought to our heavenly Father. ❖

Rebecca is a Junior at Trinity Christian High school in Hull Iowa.

Church News

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Act 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Katelyn Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Philip Hall—Ballymena, N Ireland

Paige Noel, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Noorman—Crete, IL

Morgan Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David VanderMeulen—Crete, IL

Kiera Dawn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brandon Wassink—Faith, MI

Kate Jessalyn, daughter of Sem. & Mrs. Nathan Decker—Faith, MI

Aubrey Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Rutgers—Hope, MI

Chase Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan DeVries—Hope, MI

Karissa Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Heystek—Lynden, WA

Sawyer Mason, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Poortinga—Peace, IL

Thomas Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Hopkins—Redlands, CA

Finley Reegan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Kuiper—Southwest, MI

Katelyn Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel DeVries—Southwest, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." Proverbs 4:26

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

Lydia Koole—Hope, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine !

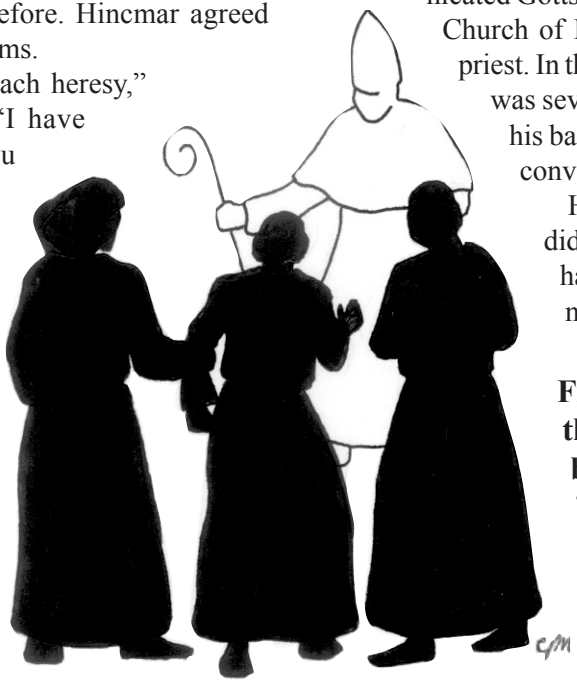
by Connie Meyer

Gottschalk:
Lone Voice in the Night (7)

...We send to you this vagabond monk, in order that you may shut him up in his convent, and prevent him from spreading his false, heretical, and scandalous doctrine.
Rabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mainz

Hincmar, the bishop of Rheims, read the letter that came along with the heretic standing before him. Guards stood on either side of the monk. Hincmar had heard of Gottschalk and his teachings before. Hincmar agreed with Rabanus. He crossed his arms.

"It is a serious matter to teach heresy," Hincmar said to Gottschalk. "I have heard of your horrible lies. If you continue in them, there will be severe consequences." Hincmar narrowed his eyes and lowered his voice. "But I will give you another chance, Gottschalk. Deny what you have spoken at Mainz. Recant. If you recant, terrible things will not happen to you."



As weary as Gottschalk was from the journey, he stood firm before the bishop. "I will not recant. What I have said is the truth of Scripture. I will not deny the Word of God."

"Lock this monk up in his room," Hincmar ordered. "We shall yet see if he will recant."

Hincmar called for another synod to be held, this time in Chiersy, in 849. Gottschalk would not give in, and neither would he. Maybe another synod would make this stubborn monk recant.

Yet Gottschalk stood firm against these things once more. "I will not deny what I have said. There is double predestination. Christ did not die for all men. God does not want all men to be saved," he confessed before the bishops and clergy there.

It was not so easy to argue against the monk. He came with Scripture to explain what he believed. This synod would not be the end of the matter. But for the time being, the men at Chiersy voted to agree with Hincmar's arguments, and not Gottschalk's. They decided that there is only single predestination, that God wants all men to be saved, and that Christ died for all men.

And now, with the Synod's decisions, Hincmar was prepared to carry out his threats. Hincmar excommunicated Gottschalk. The monk did not belong to the Church of Rome anymore. No longer was he a priest. In the city square for all to see, Gottschalk was severely whipped. With deep wounds on his back, he was put into the dungeon of the convent at Hautvilliers.

Hincmar was right—terrible things did happen. But a worse thing did not happen. Through it all, Gottschalk did not recant.

Find the underlined words of the following text in the puzzle below:

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

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

Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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Joseph had the money put
Back in his brother's sacks.
They did not waste or spend it,
But brought it, doubled, back.

So let us be good stewards
With the money that we earn.
And save some for the convention
When from Joseph's life, we'll learn.

Registration is now open for the 2011 PRYP Convention!

August 8-12, 2011
Green Lake Conference Center
Green Lake, Wisconsin
Hosted by Randolph PRC

Check out www.prcconvention.com

Would you consider signing up as a convention chap?
It can be quite rewarding, but you won't get a nap!
Visit prcconvention.com to download an application.