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Volume LXXII Number 7
Iniquity Shall Abound

Our Lord is coming. He is very near. We hear his footsteps. He is coming to destroy the wicked and bring his elect to heaven. But many things must happen before he comes to judge all men. Wars will occur. Famines will leave many desolate. Earthquakes will shake the earth, crushing the great creations of the civilizations. These are only the beginning of sorrows. We will be persecuted for confessing Christ’s name. False prophets will deceive many. Iniquity will abound. We will have to flee for our lives lest we be killed. We see the beginning of these things today. We see men committing great wickedness all around us without a thought or care for the Lord’s second coming. Unless they repent, they will be utterly destroyed in sudden judgment: “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37–39). But we by God’s grace look forward to Christ’s second coming and will not be taken unawares.

We live in a depraved society. We see wickedness increasing around us as we get nearer to the end. One does not need to look far. Even in my short time on this earth (24 years) I have witnessed our society go from bad to worse.

Only in a depraved society such as ours would a man abduct a girl and keep her in his house for ten years, repeatedly raping her and beating her so that her unborn children would die. This man was accused of murder and rightfully so. Yet anyone can go to an abortion clinic and murder an unborn, unwanted child, and this is not considered murder! Abortion is
the butchering of children, and is now on the brink of killing children who survive failed abortions. This is all justified because the death of the child was the original intent of the woman. This justification comes from human rights activists, of all people. This is how twisted the world is.

We currently have a president who crusades for abortion. He commends those who promote a “choice.” Recently he took this abominable step farther when he gave a speech at a Planned Parenthood gathering praising their efforts. He ended his flattering address by saying, “God bless Planned Parenthood.” God bless Planned Parenthood? Really? The God of the Bible who hates the sin of sexual promiscuity that leads to the sin of murder by way of abortion is going to show his favor to Planned Parenthood? God does not bless Planned Parenthood, and he never will. Their promotion of sin is an abomination to him, and he will judge them in his righteous wrath.

In our selfish, idolatrous society there are other “choices” in addition to abortion that all mankind is encouraged to make: the choice to choose your gender and the choice to be a homosexual. Many do this flying the banner of Christianity. This is not Christianity. They do not worship our God, but they worship their own gods: themselves.

When a society has reached the point that homosexuality is commonplace and commended, as ours has, it has fallen so far into sin that it is on its last leg before judgment. Homosexuality is a sin that comes to light when a culture is far advanced in sin. Our society is ripe for judgment, just as Sodom and Gomorrah were before their fiery end. Homosexuality is so rampant in the United States that the Department of Education decided to replace the terms “Father” and “Mother” with “Parent 1” and “Parent 2” on the application form for federal student aid—all this in the name of “inclusiveness” for “unique family dynamics.”

Sexual promiscuity is widespread among people of all ages, especially the younger generation. In 2008 alone there were 110,000 pregnancies among 15 and 16-year-olds in the United States. What is the government’s plan to reduce the problem of teenage pregnancies? Ignore the real issue, which is sexual promiscuity, and lower the minimum age allowed for purchase of the morning after pill. The government did not address the problem of sexual promiscuity but merely gave young girls free reign to be sexually active before marriage without consequential pregnancies.

We have seen school shootings and bombings at public events. Violence on such a scale is becoming more and more common and will continue to increase as we near the end. What is the government’s answer? Gun control. While I do not intend to get into the politics of gun control in this editorial, I merely want to draw attention to what they ignore. Video game violence, they say, has no effect on the minds of children. They can murder hundreds of people in a hundred different ways on the screen in front of them and not be affected. This is not the case at all. They cannot be entertained for hours with violence and gore without consequence.

On the subject of screens, the computer and television are devices in which wickedness has multiplied exceedingly in a very short amount of time. Raunchy movies and television shows can be accessed with the click of a button. Internet pornography can be viewed with hardly an effort. It seems as if the ultimate goal of today’s society is to be entertained. Billions of dollars are spent each year to satiate the thirst of the world for entertainment. Millions come again and again to the empty, broken cisterns of this world’s entertainment, only to leave thirsty again. They ignore the fountain of living water, Jesus Christ. Family time has changed from recreation and fellowship into the family gathering in the living room for hours each week with glazed eyes fixed on a 42 inch plasma screen TV. Are we aware of the increasing wickedness surrounding us, or are we in an entertained stupor as the world is, not looking for our Lord’s coming. The Lord warns us in Luke 21:34–36: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting [overindulgence of food], and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

We live in a depraved society. We shake our heads when we think about the insanity of wicked men. We cry with the psalmist, “Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage” (Psalm 94:3–5); also in Psalm 7:9: “Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end.” The Lord hears our cries. He is near, very near. This world is ripe for judgment.

We must remember that Satan does not send this
flood of wickedness for the world. He already has the wicked in his clutches. His focus is on the church. He wants to destroy our faith in God. Satan has learned much since the fall in the Garden of Eden. He knows where and when to attack us. May the Lord preserve us in the face of this flood of wickedness. May we be found faithful and true to his word in these last days.

Ask Schuyler

Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother

“Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

In what way does obeying this commandment change as one ages? I think we all understand how it applies to small children and teenagers in the home, but what about young adults leaving home, or even young married couples establishing their own homes?

What is required by this commandment of adult children in their relationship to their parents? Does this commandment apply to mature children? Does this obligation to parents cease at some point?

What does it mean to show “all honor, love, and fidelity,” as the Catechism states?

Please instruct us more pointedly regarding what it means to bear patiently with parents’ weaknesses and infirmities.

Is it ever permissible to have nothing to do with one’s parents?

The reader asks about the obligations of a Christian toward his parents, especially as he and his parents grow older. He asks especially for this instruction in light of the fifth commandment. God in his providence has placed parents in authority over their children. This means that when children are young they require the care, attention, instruction, and discipline of their parents. But the fifth commandment does not use the word obey. God requires that we show our parents honor, a word that means to hold in high esteem, to view as weighty, substantial, and important. The word honor has the same root as the word glory. Obviously God does not require us to glorify or worship our parents. That would be idolatry. But he does require us to hold them highly in honor. How highly in honor do you hold your parents?

This commandment always applies to the child of God as long as his parents are alive. When children are small, God requires that we honor our parents by obeying them. Little children are under the supervision of their parents. This means that the child’s defiant “no” to his parents’ command to pick up his toys or to get ready for bed, let’s say, is sin. Good order in the home requires that the parents (and not the children) make the rules. Modern, unbelieving psychology suggests that children be allowed to “express themselves” without rules. When this is done, children express their sinful nature, and families and society break down under juvenile delinquency. In fact, children need boundaries and young children feel frightened and insecure without them.

As children mature it is appropriate that they receive more and more freedom. Parents will relax their supervision as their children show themselves worthy of trust as reliable sons and daughters. Soon they will allow them to take part in activities with more limited supervision. This is good and proper. But even when children become teenagers and begin to flex their independence, parents must be wise. Christian teenagers have an old man of sin that is corrupt and deceitful (Eph. 4:22). Parents must impose curfew; parents must know where their teenage sons and daughters are and with whom they are; and parents must continue to impose limits on their children’s behavior. A good rule of thumb is this: as long as children live under the same roof as their parents (a roof their parents have usually paid for) they must abide by the rules imposed by the head of the household. This rule applies even if young people think their parents’ rules are foolish, old fashioned, and unreasonable, and even if other parents (for whatever reason) have less strict rules than our parents. Wise parents will
tailor the freedom of their children to the maturity of their sons and daughters.

The reader asks for “pointed instruction” concerning one aspect of the Heidelberg Catechism’s teaching on the fifth commandment. What does it mean to bear patiently with our parents’ weaknesses? It means, first, that our parents are neither sinless nor infallible. That is why, for example, Paul urges fathers not to make unreasonable or harsh demands upon their children: “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath...” (Eph. 6:4), and Colossians 3:21 gives the reason: “...lest they be discouraged.” This means, second, that the rules that they impose upon you are not infallible either. Failing fathers make fallible rules. There may well be better ways to rule a household than your father’s (in your view) “unreasonably early curfew.” Third, it means that (unless your parents are asking you to do something sinful) you must obey your parents’ rules patiently, without being soon angry, without lashing out at them with cutting words designed to hurt them, and without defying them. This means, too, that you do not grumble about them behind their back, become bitter against them, start to speak against them to your friends, or trumpet their “unreasonableness” or even their sins, on Facebook. Fourth, your parents are not only weak, they are sinful. Sometimes they will discipline you in anger instead of in love. Sometimes your father will have a hard day at work, or your mother will be stressed in the home, and they will be sinfully impatient with you. When they do this (or when your siblings do this) you must not respond in kind. “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). Instead, when you see that your parents are under pressure, offer to help. Offer to mow the lawn or help with the preparation of supper without being asked. They will be pleasantly surprised! Clean your room; do your homework. This will make life easier for your parents, and it is “your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

Young people must also learn how to speak to their parents. As children we lack communication skills. Teenagers can become sullen and retire to their rooms, all the while grumbling about their parents. If you really think that the rules that your parents impose upon you are unreasonable, then speak to them. Speak to them calmly, politely, and respectfully. Whining petulantly that “that’s not fair!” is certainly not going to convince your parents that you should have more freedom. If anything, it will show them that they need to keep a tighter rein on you. Explain to them your grievances and humbly ask them to reconsider their standpoint. If after such a discussion you have not convinced your parents to agree to your request, then continue to obey them. Believe me, they will be impressed that you have treated them in an honorable fashion and they may be willing later to afford you more freedom. Freedom has to be earned. A teenage son or daughter must show himself or herself worthy of it. You cannot simply demand it as your God-given “right.”

Honor, love and fidelity must be evident in your relationship with your parents. Show appreciation for your parents. Your mother does your laundry. When was the last time you thanked her? So easily we can take the thousands of tasks our parents perform for granted. We just assume when we come home that everything will be done. Your father works long hours to put food on the table and to pay your Christian school tuition. Have you thanked him recently? Do you work diligently at your school assignments to show him that his sacrificial giving for your Christian education was well spent? Don’t wait for Father’s and Mother’s Day. Live thankfully every day! What Paul says of elders applies to parents: “Esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5:13).

Young adults and married couples have a different relationship to their parents. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). When children grow up and no longer live under their parents’ roof, and especially when a young man becomes the head of his own home, the parents no longer rule over them. And parents should resist the urge to interfere in their children’s lives after they are married. This will embitter them and undermine the young husband’s authority. Nevertheless, honor for one’s parents never ends this side of death. While as adults we no longer ask them permission whether we may do certain things (they assume that being raised in God’s fear, you will have the wisdom to make God-honoring choices, but they will give advice when asked) we never stop esteeming them highly in love. We do not neglect or abandon them. They remain part of our lives as we marry and have children of our own. How blessed it is to have godly grandparents for our children!

Jesus addressed the calling of adult children, a calling that the Pharisees neglected. God’s law requires that the children care for their parents in old
Choosing a Life’s Vocation

Writing an article concerning choosing a life’s vocation has given me opportunity to pause and reflect. I reflect upon God’s guidance every step of the way and how God’s Holy Spirit is used in my life. I can identify how God used others to instruct me, to shape me, to guide me, and it is some of these experiences that I would like to share with you, hopefully to stimulate your thinking as you consider your life’s vocation.

I begin by recognizing I have been extremely blessed. One of the richest blessings God gave to me was my parents. As kids we did not grow up with anything beyond our daily needs. My parents did not have what I would say were “extras.” Even though we were not wealthy, I can say that I was raised in one of the richest families in the world, far beyond the measurement of money or wealth, because of the values they instilled in us kids.

We were taught the value of faith and how we do all things to the honor and glory of God, seeking first the kingdom of God. Our parents taught us the value of stewardship in not only giving first to the kingdom causes, but also the responsibility of stewardship of our time, our energy, and of our talent. By their example they taught us how to work and how to do the jobs that you do not enjoy, as well as the jobs that you enjoy. This has always served me well in my career.

When reflecting on my high school years, I must confess I did not spend much time thinking about my vocation. The more I thought about it, the more confused, frustrated, and intimidated I became. The more these feelings increased, the more they shut me down. I would default into convincing myself that I would worry about a career another day, which led to inaction on my part. This confusion and frustration would only build as I grew older.

I would imagine that such a scenario would be extremely rare. Most of us have, by the grace of God, godly parents who love us. What gratitude of love we owe them in return. Let us, as young people, show them all honor, love and fidelity, for Jesus’ sake.

Finally, is it ever permissible to have nothing to do with one’s parents? The only scenario I could envisage is if one’s parents were unbelievers or excommunicated from the church so that all fellowship between you and them was or became impossible. Even if our parents were impossibly wicked, we would still honor them for their position’s sake. We would do everything we could to live in peace with them; we would live within their rules as much as we reasonably could without disobeying God. To renounce one’s parents for some petty reason would be a gross sin against the fifth commandment of God’s law.

Choosing a Life’s Vocation

Jim Vander Kolk

I would imagine that such a scenario would be extremely rare. Most of us have, by the grace of God, godly parents who love us. What gratitude of love we owe them in return. Let us, as young people, show them all honor, love and fidelity, for Jesus’ sake.

One final point. Our Lord Jesus submitted to his earthly parents, Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:51). He did so despite the fact that he was the Lord of glory and therefore always knew better than they! He did so despite the fact that they were sinful and weak, and he was the sinless Son of God. And he did so because that was part of our salvation, that he keep the law (including the fifth commandment) for us and that he die for all our sins (including our sins against our parents) on the tree of Calvary. Our gratitude to him will be seen in how we treat our parents. And the world will be watching!

Schuyler
that were available to help me research and wrestle with in order to increase my understanding. Farming was all I knew. For example, I used to think an engineer was a train driver; today I have five different types of engineering disciplines working at Royal Technologies and none of them drives a train.

It was intimidating when people would ask me if I was going to college. I would always say, “I don’t know.” I always feared their second question which was “what for?”, because I knew I didn’t have an answer. I remember one time a teacher said to me, “Jim, not many people know what’s going on in this world, but you, you don’t even have a clue what’s going on.” I never forgot that, and even though I would never suggest you use that statement, she was right.

My frustration had been building because my attitude led me to do nothing about it and I would default into responses of “I don’t know,” which also allowed me improperly to blame others for my predicament.

Given the opportunity to do it over again, I would change my attitude and behavior. I should have accepted the reality that it was OK for me not to know precisely what my vocation was going to be. With the attitude of a teachable spirit I would share and consult with others whom I respected. I would consult with parents, my pastor, some of my educators, people whom I admire in my church community and in the work community. I would ask to visit their place of employment, exploring and learning all the different aspects and requirements. A teachable spirit means you should not be defensive, but encourage feedback, critique and constructive criticism to help you grow.

Yes, that even means you are open and vulnerable. I believe that listening and having this type of exposure would have increased my understanding, shaped my thinking, helped define a direction, and developed a process that would have helped me set into motion a strategy of selecting my vocation. It never ceases to amaze me when I consider that everything I know or do, I learned from someone else. Realizing that only God knows what the future had in store for me I would have more fervently gone to him in prayer, asking for grace, wisdom, and guidance, according to the example of Samuel. God demands of us to use our talents, and that requires prayerful consideration that must stimulate us into action. Don’t fall into the trap of “I don’t know,” which leads to inaction and produces a low self-esteem.

Like many others after high school I followed my father’s vocation. He got me a job at his place of work. It was there that I would spend the next fifteen years of my life. It was there that I was introduced to many different types of manufacturing and processes. They taught me how to make things and how to put those things together really well. During this time I attended some college classes and seminars, but to my disappointment even yet today, I never continued formal education.

I became very comfortable working for this company. Not only did they teach me how to use my hands, but they also taught me how to use my mind. They had a great leadership development program and I would like to think that because of my attitude, my character, and my performance they subjected me to this program for four years. I was blessed to have leadership at this place of business that exemplified good role models. It was this leadership development program that in addition to values, taught me the skill sets required for leadership, which helped me in having my own business today.

Upon reflecting, although I didn’t go to college because I used the excuse that I didn’t know what I would study, I wish today I had pursued it. My unwillingness to sacrifice time and energy to continue my education has placed obstacles and even some roadblocks that stifled my advancement and placed restrictions on me even today that I wish did not exist.

In 1987, having spent several years consulting and strategizing, I started a business in a ten thousand square foot building with two machines and called it Royal Technologies. With unmatched energy, I began my journey full of excitement and enthusiasm, which quickly identified my naiveté and even made me fearful. I had to do things that I had never done before. I worked with a bank to convince them to lend me money by articulating a business plan. I had to search for customers and try to convince them why they should purchase from a brand new start-up company. I had to build stuff I had never built before, collect money people owed, and pay bills, hoping at the end there was a little left over so I could pay myself. I even remember calling my dear wife at home to solicit her help by buckling five little kids into a car and chasing around town to become my pick-up and delivery service.

Today Royal Technologies has grown into an advanced engineering and manufacturing company serving industries as diverse as automotive, furniture, and consumer products. Our products range from simple components to highly sophisticated finished
goods for customers across the country and around the globe.

We have six facilities totaling over 1.2 million square feet located in Hudsonville, Michigan; Cullman, Alabama; and Mission, Texas with around one thousand employees. In 1987 I was not able to run a company of this size, but because God has blessed me and because I was able to grow with it, there are many things I have learned along the way. I learned in short order all the varied responsibilities that come with ownership, and that the bigger the company becomes, the more your responsibilities grow. It is true that you hire competent and capable people to assist you with these responsibilities, but at the end of the day the responsibility still lies with you. Very seldom do I have any two days that mirror one another. It is incumbent upon me to articulate the vision and strategies of the company for the next three-five-eight years to assure that we are executing and making adjustments in order to assure our long term sustainability. I try to keep well versed on the economic climate not only in West Michigan or North America, but in Europe and Asia as well. With thirty-five percent of our products being shipped to these global locations, a change in the economic climate can have a dramatic impact on our organization, and we have to adjust accordingly. There are weekly and monthly scheduled meetings for each function of the company. There we go over the key measurements and discuss our strategies going forward. Because I never want to separate myself from my employees, this demands I travel often to our facilities in Alabama and Texas. I am constantly barraged with all the creative ways people come up with both internally and externally to get in contact with me for one reason or another. I have to make customer and supplier visits, meet with economic and governmental people to solicit their help in achieving some of our objectives. There are capital expenditure requests that need my approval. The list goes on and on.

The largest area of my responsibility is also my biggest challenge and where I spend the majority of my time. That is in the area of growth and development of people. As the business world continues to change, our job requirements and competencies must also change. That is not the growth I am referring to now. I am referring to growth in character that manifests itself in our understanding, embracing, and promoting our corporate values. As a Christian and as a Christian business owner I have values. I must make sure that by my speech, by my example, and by my actions I model Christian values. As our company grows I need to nurture and cultivate this culture. I spend more time explaining the “why and how” we do things versus the “what” it is we do. I always say that operationally we will change every day, but we may never fracture or change our Christian values.

I always knew that with ownership comes responsibility, but I am continuing to learn a whole new level of responsibility as the company grows. Today I have many of the same challenges, obstacles, disappointments, frustrations, opportunities, and rewards I had when I started as a one-man shop, but they are much larger and have bigger consequences attached to them. My daily prayer is that God continues to give me and this company the strength, the courage, the wisdom that enables us to glorify his name.

In summary, this has been a brief overview of a few things that influenced me and some of the lessons I learned in my life’s vocation thus far. I will conclude by offering a few thoughts you might find helpful in your consideration of a vocation.

First, we have been blessed by God in that we were raised in a God-fearing home, instructed by God-fearing pastors and teachers, all of whom have encouraged us to work in accordance with God’s will and for the glory of his name. When selecting a vocation, think of one that allows you to adhere to your Christian values, and prayerfully ask for God’s direction in your life.

Second, I understand that continuing your education after high school is not for everyone, but seriously consider it. Its importance might not be apparent to you today, but do not let that determine your decision. Prayerfully consider it. A lack of education in today’s world can be an obstacle in your future.

Third, reach out to others in many different vocations for their good counsel to assist you in your understanding of what different jobs entail and require, and what job best fits your desires. To that end should you desire to learn more about the different elements of the business world or job requirements, I would be more than willing to meet or set something up with you.

Fourth, apply yourself. Take the initiative and work hard. God has given each of us talents, time, and energy, and we must use them to the fullest. [Jim is the owner of Royal Technologies and is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.]
Rejection of the (impossible) project of Christianizing the world by a (fictitious) common grace of God in no wise implies an Anabaptistic flight from the world. The Reformed Christian who heeds God’s call in Scripture, rather than Abraham Kuyper’s in Lectures on Calvinism, lives a kingdom-life by the grace and Spirit of Jesus Christ in all the spheres of human life in God’s world.

Already in this series I have affirmed the reign of King Jesus in the heart of the elect, Reformed believer and described the extension of the kingdom into the spheres of the church, the family, and the education of kingdom children.

**The Sphere of Labor**

Another sphere of earthly life in which we hold aloft the banner of King Jesus is labor. Calvinist businessmen and financiers run their enterprises honestly; provide fairly, even liberally, for their employees; and with their well-gotten wealth “do good… [and are] rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate [that is, give to the needy],” in obedience to the charge of the apostle of Christ in 1 Timothy 6:18. This is their kingdom-behavior, not because some labor union, in disobedience to the fifth commandment and to the New Testament precept that employees be subject to their employers, forces them to do so, or because a civil government, influenced by Karl Marx, usurps the authority to redistribute the wealth of the citizenry. But this is the behavior in the sphere of labor of Reformed businessmen because they know that, although they did build their companies by their own creativity and hard work, they are not lords of their companies. Jesus Christ is lord in business and finance.

In the sphere of labor, the Reformed workingman is diligent and reliable, submitting to the authority even of a “froward” employer, for God’s sake (1 Pet. 2:18–25). He repudiates the revolution and violence of the labor unions, even though this may mean financial loss and suffering. The explanation is that King Jesus reigns in his heart and therefore over all his life, including his behavior at work.

I instance the example of my own father in the matter of the kingdom-life of the Reformed workingman. He worked diligently and reliably for more than forty years in the Keeler Brass factory in Grand Rapids. Wages were not the highest in this non-union plant. Many of his fellow workers were constantly grumbling, always critical of the owners of the factory. Again and again they tried to get a labor union into the shop. Every time my father was a leader in keeping the union out. At his retirement, his fellow workers, who respected him even though they disagreed with his Reformed principles (which were the basic truths of the kingdom of God), gave him a farewell party. Unexpectedly, Mr. Keeler, the owner of the company, appeared in the gathering. My father began his prepared farewell remarks this way: “I thank Mr. Keeler for work, so that I could support my family, support the Protestant Reformed Church, and send my children to the Christian schools.”

This was the confession of King Jesus in the sphere of labor. That conduct on the job and that speech flew the banner of the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the realm of labor.

**The Sphere of Government**

On the sphere of politics and government the cultural-Calvinists put heavy emphasis. Abraham Kuyper did. A prominent feature of his project to Christianize the Netherlands was the forming of a political party that would propel him into the office of prime minister of the nation. This achievement of political power by that extraordinary man fascinates his disciples today. They are impressed with that kind of showy accomplishment by a uniquely gifted Calvinist. This attainment of earthly power and earthly glory is what they are really after, when they proclaim the coming of the kingdom and the Christianizing of the world.

But this is clean contrary to the message of the gospel of the kingdom in New Testament Scripture. Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, not many Abraham Kuypers, has Jesus Christ called into his kingdom. Rather, he has
chosen the foolish, the weak, the base, and the nobodies, “that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor. 1:26–29). Accordingly, the kingdom is extended into every sphere of life, for the most part in very ordinary, unnoticed, obscure ways. There are no trumpets blaring, no balloons dropping from the ceiling, no television cameras recording the action.

This is true particularly of the kingdom-life of Calvinists in the sphere of government. It consists of simply submitting to the rulers and paying one’s taxes, because the Christian recognizes the civil powers as ordained of God (Rom. 13:1–7).

At such simple, ordinary behavior the cultural-Calvinists jeer. They want influential political parties. They want illustrious men and women in high office. Many advocate, and some take part in high-profile, glamorous revolution. Traipsing off to South Africa to stir up revolution is acclaimed by the proponents of Christianizing the world as a glorious expression of the life of the kingdom of common grace. Distinguishing oneself as a revolutionary, especially on behalf of blacks or women, is a badge of honor in the common grace kingdom. That in the kingdom of God, King Jesus forbids revolution against the civil authorities is of no concern to the cultural-Calvinists (Rom. 13:1–7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13–17).

Scripture bestows its badge of honor upon the simple, ordinary conduct in the sphere of government of the vast majority of Christians in all ages and among all nations of submitting and paying taxes.

In his inimitable way, Martin Luther affirmed the ordinary behavior of the lowly and no-account as the characteristic life of the kingdom of God:

A faithful servant girl does more good, accomplishes more, and is far more dependable—even if she only takes a sack from the back of an ass—than all the priests and monks who sing themselves to death day and night while making bloody martyrs of themselves (quoted in William H. Lazareth, Luther on the Christian Home: An Application of the Social Ethics of the Reformation, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960, 159).

**The Sphere of Leisure**

The Bible hardly recognizes a sphere of leisure among the important spheres of human life. But so prominent has leisure become among the nations of the West that any treatment of distinctively Christian behavior must take account of it.

Scripture does not encourage leisure. Scripture calls humans to work in the short time of the life of all of us. Two truths ought to govern our sparing enjoyment of leisure. First, regarding our earthly vocation, we are called to work six days and to rest one day the rest of God. This is the force of the fourth commandment of the law: “six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God” (Ex. 20:9–10). The rest of the Sabbath is not the same as North American leisure. It is a rest involving, indeed requiring, spiritual labor. Diligently we attend the church of God. We work at preaching and hearing the word of God. The remainder of the Sabbath is spent, not in “sacking out,” or in amusing ourselves by watching NFL Sunday, but in good reading, instructing our families in the word of God, and meditating on the things of God. This is work. But this rest affords peace to the soul that mere leisure cannot give.

Second, with regard to our work in and on behalf of the kingdom of God, we ought to be diligent in working “while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

Our main calling is to work. Leisure, in the small place it has in our lives, must serve our working and not become an end in itself. The Reformed Christian therefore must keep leisure in its place. As much as the everyday duties of his or her life permit, the Reformed man or woman ought to seek or accept activities that promote the kingdom of God: for men, membership in the consistory and school boards; for both men and women, help of the needy, whether poor, or sick, or otherwise distressed; involvement in various projects of church and school; and diligent study of the word of God, so as to develop in the life of the kingdom.

With regard to the entertainments that jostle to dominate our leisure, the very first rule of the kingdom of God is that we refuse those entertainments that are unfitting for a citizen of the kingdom of God: the dance; movies that entice with sensuality or amuse with violence; gambling.

**Dancing**

The tendency of the theory of common grace to make its adherents worldly, rather than to Christianize the world, is evident in the inability of the proponents of common grace to condemn and repudiate even the worst of the world’s organizations and most corrupt productions. Whereas once the Christian Reformed Church and its colleges condemned dancing as worldly (which it is—a prelude to fornication), now they embrace it, extol it as an art form, and practice...
it. They have “redeemed” it. But its “redeemed” form differs in no respect from its unredeemed form. It remains lascivious movements of males cheek to jowl (and not only these body parts) with females to whom they are not married, to the accompaniment of arousing music. To speak of the redemption of dancing is to demean the glorious Christian concept of redemption. To encourage dancing among college students is to pour gas on the flame of lust.

**Movie Attendance**

As I write this article, the Winter 2012 issue of the Calvin Spark arrives in my mailbox. This is the magazine for the alumni of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Prominent in the magazine is a full-page, favorable review of a book by a professor at the college—William Romanowski—titled *Reforming Hollywood* (15).

The first reaction of a spiritual and doctrinal Calvinist is incredulity. Is there another human in the world besides the author who thinks that reforming Hollywood is a possibility? Indeed, does the author himself really think so?

The second reaction is more substantial: Christianity does not think or write of reforming the moral cesspool that is the Hollywood of the filth, violence, and sheer ungodliness of the movies, of the immoral, if not amoral actors and actresses, and of the antichristian producers. Christianity thinks and writes of as well as prays for the utter destruction of that opening of hell into the earth called Hollywood.

In the review of the Calvin professor’s book, the Calvin Spark notes approvingly the author’s evident agreement with the liberal James Wall’s commendation of the movie *The Graduate* as having “moral and religious significance, as well as artistic merit.” I distinctly recall (the names Dustin Hoffman and Anne Bancroft unfortunately stick in my memory) that the reviews and graphic advertisement of this movie in the public press promoted the movie as featuring fornication and adultery as an acceptable, indeed desirable way of life for moderns.

Kuyper concluded that attending the movies is a “Rubicon which no true Calvinist could cross without sacrificing his earnestness to dangerous mirth, and the fear of the Lord too often far from spotless pleasures” (75, 76).

The cultural-Calvinists have long since crossed this Rubicon.

And Kuyper himself with his doctrine of a common grace of God and his call to Christianize the world by this common grace is to blame.

Once the monster of conformity to this present world is unleashed in the church, on the advice of the church’s theologians and by official church decree (as was the decision of the Christian Reformed Church in its adoption of the theory of common grace in 1924), there is no stopping the monster until it has devoured all the life of the members of the church, beginning usually with the young people.

Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Theology and Old Testament in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches.
Last time I began an examination of the biblical teaching that Jehovah laughs. I took note of the outstanding passages in Scripture where this is taught. I explained as well that Jehovah’s laughter is directed against the ungodly, reprobate opponents of himself, his Christ, and his kingdom. That Jehovah laughs is beyond dispute. That he laughs at the wicked is clear. That is laughter is not the kind of laughter by many who join in with the world is clear. In his laughter he is angry and vexes them in his sore displeasure. What is the meaning of this laughter?

The laughter of Jehovah at the ungodly reprobate is a vivid anthropomorphism describing the relationship between the holy God and the enemies of himself, Christ, and his people.

First, Jehovah’s laughter expresses his absolute sovereignty over the wickedness and opposition of the ungodly. In connection with Psalm 59:8, Calvin speaks of laughter as “well fitted to enhance the power of God.” Calvin makes plain that by “power” he means sovereignty (2.59:8). That power is sovereignty is also clear from Psalm 2, where the reference to God’s laughter is prefaced by the revelation of Jehovah as “he that sitteth in the heavens.” He rules over all things, including the actions of wicked men and devils even in their persecution and opposition to the church. His sovereignty includes that he decreed their wickedness, though as something that he hates, and for which he willed a good end. He is neither the author of their sin, nor can he be charged with their wickedness.

When Scripture puts Jehovah’s laughter in the future—he will laugh—it gives indication of some temporary, outward success in the efforts of the wicked. In his laughter God gives them enough success in their efforts to cast his bands away to harden them in their violent opposition to him. Cain killed Abel. Egypt enslaved Israel. Babylon took Judah captive. Pontius Pilate crucified Jesus Christ. In his commentary on Psalm 2, Calvin refers to the “time of his laughter,” as being when Jehovah “permits the reign of his Son to be troubled” not because God is for any reason either unwilling or unable to avenge, “but he purposely delays the inflictions of his wrath to the proper time, namely, until he has exposed their infatuated fury to general derision” (1.2:4). Included in this figure, then, is God’s purpose with the apparent success of the wicked with regard to the wicked themselves. He exposes their fury. He exposes it as foolish. In their opposition they fill their own cup of iniquity and render themselves guilty for failing to “kiss the Son,” that is, turning to the Son in faith and repentance. He also exposes them. They reveal the depth of their hatred of God.

Although Calvin’s term “permits” is fine, if we understand by this simply that God is not the author of their sin and wickedness, we can say more, and Calvin thinks so too. He writes in his commentary on Psalm 37 that God teaches us by his laughter that he is not “resigning to chance the government of the world, but purposely delays and keeps silence.” By this Calvin indicates that he sees the “government” of God as extending to evil events, especially the persecution and distressing situations of the church (2.37:12). God withholds his final judgment of the wicked until they have done what he wills to be done by them. Nothing they do is outside his sovereign control, and he willed it for a good end.

Second, God’s laughter reveals the ease with which Jehovah accomplishes his will through the wicked, and when they have done his will, the ease with which he takes vengeance against them. Calvin says, “David ascribes laughter to God…to teach us that he does not stand in need of great armies to repress the rebellion of wicked men, as if this were an arduous and difficult matter, but on the contrary, could do this as often as he pleases with the most perfect ease” (1.2:4). Calvin also explains that the
figure teaches that “when the wicked have perfected their schemes to the uttermost, God can, without any effort, and, as it were in sport, dissipate them all” (2.59:8). He is as little concerned that they will actually succeed in casting God’s bands and cords from themselves, and so certain that he will do in every detail his will that he laughs at their efforts.

God’s laughter teaches that the wicked will not only fail in their purpose to cast away God’s bands, but also in all their opposition they will be doing his purpose. There is an exquisite turn of events that we see in the light of Jehovah’s counsel. For all their attempts to destroy his kingdom, God uses them to accomplish the establishment of his kingdom and the salvation of his church.

This was made known at the cross as nowhere else. The church confesses that the cross was the fulfillment of Psalm 2 of the people’s raging. The church also confesses that in the raging and gathering together of Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel against the Lord and his Christ, whereby they shamefully treated, condemned, and crucified him, they did whatsoever God’s hand and counsel determined before to be done. All of their hatred and opposition to Christ was not outside of God’s counsel, but carried out his counsel. God was there directing, so that the church speaks of his “hand.” Those who opposed Christ did not succeed in thwarting one jot or tittle of God’s counsel. Rather, through it all God redeemed his church and set his king, Jesus Christ, upon God’s holy hill.

What is true of the cross is true of the history-long opposition to God, his Christ, and his church by the ungodly. Jehovah has them in derision. He laughs at their foolish rebellion and vain attempts to break his bands and cast his cords away. In all their opposition they will not succeed in overthrowing God’s rule, but will in fact be doing his will, at the heart of which stands the exaltation of Jesus Christ as God’s king upon his holy hill and the salvation of his elect church.

Third, Jehovah’s laughter reveals God’s contempt for the opposition of the wicked and for his wicked enemies themselves. His laughter at them is a manifestation of his hatred for them. In the language of Calvin: “He would confront their insolence with quiet contempt” (1.2:4). Again, Calvin says that this teaches us that God “despises their vanity and folly” (2.37:12). In their opposition to him the wicked appear often to succeed. God holds them in contempt. This is also clear from the parallel term “derision” that is used with laughter in Psalm 2. The poetry of the Hebrew psalms uses a device known as parallelism, in which two similar phrases describe the same thing. The worth of this device is that the two parallel expressions explain one another. In order to understand God’s laughter, we can use the parallel line in Psalm 2:4. He laughs at the wicked, and this means that he also has them in derision. “Derision” means “mockery” and is one word that Scripture uses to describe the vile sin of blasphemy. Blasphemy is to hold God in contempt. The wicked blaspheme his name and in their contempt attack his name, especially as it is revealed in Christ and in his church. Likewise, when God has them in derision he holds them in contempt in accordance with his eternal despising of them, because of which he appointed them to destruction.

Fourth, Jehovah’s laughter refers to the superbly poetic justice in God’s judgment against the reprobate ungodly for their wicked opposition to him. Jehovah’s laughter speaks to the certainty of divine retribution. In Psalm 37 this is given as the reason God laughs: “for he [God] seeth that his day is coming.” Speaking to the salutary effect of God’s laughing upon the righteous, Calvin says, “He who sees the executioner standing behind the aggressor with drawn sword no longer desires revenge, but rather exults in the prospect of speedy retribution. David, therefore, teaches us that it is not meet that God, who sees the destruction of the wicked to be at hand, should rage and fret after the manner of men” (2.37:12). God sees their day coming like a man sees the executioner behind the aggressor with sword drawn. Seeing their day coming, Jehovah laughs.

In the knowledge of the certainty of their judgment, Jehovah’s laughter is his delight in the fitting character of his just judgment on the ungodly. Like a capable poet delights in some poetic turn of phrase, so God delights in the justice of his judgments. Immediately after teaching of God’s laughter and the certainty of judgment, Psalm 37 says, “The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken” (vv. 14–15). There is a pleasurable fittingness in the justice and judgments of God in which he delights in his justice, as he delights in seeing the accomplishment of all his counsel.
The truth of Jehovah’s laughter and the destruction of the ungodly, the work of his laughter typified in Psalm 52 by the destruction of Doeg the Edomite, bears spiritual fruit in the righteous: “The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness” (vv. 6–7). The righteous see God’s judgment, they fear God, and they laugh at the wicked too. The fear of the righteous is not their trembling at God’s judgments, but their reverence at seeing his just dealings with the wicked, if not in actual fact in this world, then by faith in the next. They also laugh. Calvin calls the laughter of believers because of the judgments on the ungodly, “joy.” He goes on to explain: “They would laugh at their destruction, yet not in the way of exulting over them, but rejoicing more and more in the confidence of the help of God, and denying themselves more cheerfully to the vain pleasures of this world.” The knowledge of God’s laughter and its teaching of certain judgment, in the language of Calvin, “would promote religion in the hearts of the Lord’s people, and afford them a refreshing display of the Divine justice” (2.37:12).

What are some of the benefits of the teaching of God’s laughter?

In light of Scripture’s teaching about God’s laughter, we cannot believe a theology that teaches a love of God for all men. This would include the doctrine of the well-meant gospel offer, which is the false doctrine that teaches that God expresses his love for all who hear the preaching of the gospel, and that in the preaching he expresses his desire to save all who hear that preaching. If God will laugh at the wicked and does laugh at them, he cannot at the same time express his will that they be saved. This would also include a theology that teaches the logical implication of the well-meant gospel offer that the love of God for all men means that there is no hell or eternal punishment. It is no wonder that the old preacher mentioned in my second story denied Psalm 2. The laughter of God cannot be harmonized with a doctrine of God’s universal love. If one holds to God’s universal love, he has to deny God’s laughter. In the knowledge of God’s laughter in the judgment upon the wicked, even in this life, we cannot ascribe to a theology that speaks of God’s weeping at the plight of the ungodly.

Likewise, we take to heart the practical, spiritual purpose of the teaching that God laughs.

We may and do laugh at evildoers. Calvin explains that we pray that God “would enlighten us by his light, for by this means alone will we, by beholding with the eye of faith his laughter, become partakers thereof, even in the midst of sorrow” (2.52:7). With such laughter we will certainly not laugh and entertain ourselves with the wickedness of the wicked, with their dancing and merry-making or their unfruitful works of darkness.

Furthermore, there are other spiritual benefits to the knowledge of Jehovah’s laughter. In verses 12 and 13 of Psalm 37, we read that God laughs. In verse 1 we are commanded: “Fret not thyself because of evildoers.” Literally, do not be “kindled” because of the wicked. The idea is that we need not fear them or be worried about them. The idea is also that we are not moved to impatience and murmuring at God’s delay and seek to avenge ourselves on the wicked, especially when we are the objects of their opposition. Vengeance is God’s; he will repay. It is certain. Further, the idea is that we will not be moved to copy their evil because we see their success in it. Psalm 37 also warns us not to be envious of evildoers. We see the success of the ungodly. We see that they prosper in the world. We see that in their prospering wickedness the world is full of levity, as though they have not a care in the world. We might be tempted to envy the ungodly, envying them to emulate them, and emulating them to make ourselves guilty of their wickedness.

Do not be envious of evildoers and their laughter. Do not envy the workers of iniquity. Do not emulate them or laugh their laughter.

The wicked have nothing to laugh about. Scripture exposes the laughter of the ungodly as wickedness, because “knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom. 1:32). Scripture exposes their hilarity as an expression of their hopelessness as they eat and drink and make merry as in the days of Noah. Theirs is a dreadful lot. Jehovah is laughing at them. The Lord will have them in derision. Whatever outward success they have in this life is no success at all, but is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Laughing, God is speaking to them in his wrath, and that word of God to them is a word of curse working their eternal destruction. There is no blessing in that life, but only a word of wrath from
God, who laughs and has them in derision and is joined by Wisdom and his church.

Rev. Langerak is pastor of Crete Protestant Reformed Church in Crete, Illinois.

The Pursuit of Holiness

The Pursuit of Holiness, by Jerry Bridges.

God’s attributes often are given consideration by us when they are answers to a catechism question or when one is considering the deep doctrines of who God is. But have you taken time to consider what an attribute of God means to you as a child of God? God’s attribute of his sovereignty is one that easily comes to mind and that affects us in our everyday lives. He rules over all aspects of our life and brings about all things according to his plan. What about his holiness? How does his holiness affect your life and your thoughts? Jerry Bridges, in his book, The Pursuit of Holiness looks at the holiness of God and our calling to pursue a life of holiness. He grounds our calling to live a holy life on the attribute of God that is his holiness. He does not stop there but continues to demonstrate in very practical ways how the calling to pursue a life of holiness calls us to examine every aspect of our life to live in obedience to God.

The author correctly begins the book by showing that God is holy. Revelation 4:8 has the four beasts proclaiming God’s holiness by saying “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” The author describes what that means when he says, “He has perfect knowledge of what is right…perfect freedom from all evil…and he is in perfect conformity to his own divine character” (pp. 22–23). After having established that God is holy in his being and his works, the author goes on to show from Scripture that if God is holy, then his people are set apart and he sanctifies them to be holy.

The author then brings us to the next step of his argument. Being called holy or set apart, God’s people must also live a life of holiness. They are called to be holy as he is holy. “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). God is holy; he has consecrated his people, set them apart for a special work, and calls them to a life of holiness.

Having established the foundation of our holiness and the call to be holy, Bridges begins a thorough review of how this is worked out in our lives. “Holiness…is…conformity to the character of God and obedience to the will of God” (p. 68). Our hearts, minds, and bodies must serve Christ. We must strive, struggle, and fight our nature to conform our lives to the will of God and be in obedience to his will. This pursuit of holiness is a battle. It is a very real battle, as Paul says in Gal 5:17 and Romans 7, of the new man in Christ against the old man of sin in our experience. The author is at pains to point out that this is not a battle that we fight on our own, in our own strength, or that God merely lends us a helping hand along the way. Rather, God has made us free in Christ and lives in us; and in him we live and move and have our being. He has called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light, and in that light we live and are enabled to fight. On page 52 Bridges says “our dying to sin is not something we do, but something Christ has done.”

Bridges uses a metaphor to compare us to a slave. We were once slaves to sin, but are now called to live as free men to obey and glorify God. In that metaphor one could not say to the slave, “Live as a free man!” He isn’t free, and therefore he cannot live as though he were free. You can say, however, to a man who has been freed from slavery, “Now, go live as a free man.” In Christ we are freed from the bondage to sin and have the victory. We are commanded, “Now, go live a holy life!” We are called to struggle and fight to expend energy to conform to him. We must consider in what we desire, what we think, and how we act that Christ can be seen in us, that we are obedient to his will.

The author provides some practical ways to break the habits of sin. First, we must understand that sin habits are created by repeatedly breaking God’s law, so through the power of the Spirit we...
must say “No”. Second, never let an exception occur. Third, be diligent in all areas of obedience or else weakening resolve in one area will cause weakness in other areas. Finally, don’t be discouraged when you do fail. Continue to fight! Perfection in holiness is not attainable while on this earth.

God has provided tools for growth in holiness. God has given the gift of discipline in our lives. Paul speaks of using discipline as athletes do in our Christian walk. Our lives must be characterized by discipline in God’s word. God’s word is strong; it is the sword of the Spirit. Read it regularly. Memorize it regularly. Meditate on the word regularly. Apply it to your life regularly. Persevere.

This book, The Pursuit of Holiness, is recommended by this reviewer for its God-honoring presentation of God’s holiness as the foundation for his call to his people to pursue a life of holiness, which is possible only through the power of the Holy Spirit, given in his grace. Occasionally, some words or phrases used by the author cause one who is tuned to the meaning of the words choice and responsibility in Reformed theology to look a little closer as to what the author means by their use. But throughout the book we read portions that clearly set forth the distinctives of God’s sovereignty in salvation and sanctification. A couple of examples will suffice. On page 31 Bridges poses the question, “Does our salvation...depend to some degree on our attaining some level of personal holiness?” He answers, “Christians can never in themselves merit salvation through their personal holiness.” On page 52: “it is apparent that our dying to sin is not something we do, but something that Christ has done, the value of which accrues to all who are united with him.” Bridges maintains God’s sovereignty in God’s work of salvation in us.

The book closes with the fitting subject of the joy of holiness. When God’s people live in obedience to God, they experience joy. There is joy while living here on this earth and everlasting joy in glory when Christ says at the last day, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Pray for strength to pursue holiness in your life!

Doug is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

SALT SHAKERS

A salt shaker that sits humbly at the tableside has the ability to transform a bland and painful meal into a delicious and wonderful experience.

Dearly beloved brothers and sisters,

Greetings from Salt Shakers!

We are a magazine that represents the cause of Christ in this world. Not only do things of the world take up our precious time, they also blatantly push their world view and try to squeeze it into a little space within our heads. It is thus important for us to have rest from the assault of this world, and to rest in the comforts of God’s word. Having been rested, we are then to move out valiantly for our King in this spiritual battle that we are in. Put this in a convenient place, and use it once in a while, and you will notice the great difference a little salt makes!

Salt Shakers is a testimony of God’s work in Singapore and the region. We gather our writers from church, and they come in all shapes and sizes. God has led us in so many different ways, especially since many of us are first and second generation Christians. God’s grace in leading us out of darkness into his marvelous light is just simply amazing, and when such people write articles on various topics, they are literary testimonies of the work of the cross of Christ. We also have guest writers from various sister churches all around the world, and this is a great way to enjoy fellowship with other saints though we may be miles apart.

It is our firm hope and desire that this magazine be used by our Lord to cause his people to be steadfast in the truth (2 Peter 3:17), to be “strong in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:10), to be of “sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7), and to build themselves up in “the holy faith” (Jude 18–20).

With that in mind, we would like to encourage everyone to subscribe to our magazine. All you need to do is to drop us an email at cksaltshakers@gmail.com and we will send you a fresh e-copy of the magazine once every two months. If you would like to get to know us better and connect with Reformed believers from all over the globe, like us on our Facebook page.

Please subscribe today!
July 12 Read Ecclesiastes 5
After examining life in nature, and then in pleasure, Solomon now looks at the life of worship. He realizes, as we must, that this is a serious business. We must not take worship lightly in any of its aspects. As soon as we do that, we bring dishonor to the sovereign God of heaven and earth. In worship, as in no other place, we come face to face with our God. All our inmost thoughts are laid out before him. It is a quieting place for those who worship in spirit and truth. May we seek to find our God in his holy temple each and every Sabbath. Sing Psalter 256.

July 13 Read Ecclesiastes 6
The next area of inspection by the preacher is that of wealth. Who better than Solomon to carry out this investigation? He had all that a man could want, yet he saw that this too was only vanity. Do we spend our lives seeking after the wealth that perishes on this earth? Do we give up what is good, namely, God’s favor, so that we can become more wealthy? Wealth, like all the other areas of Solomon’s investigations, is a good gift from God. How will we use it? Sing Psalter 97.

July 14 Read Ecclesiastes 7
We can find in this chapter from the Preacher similarities to his writings in Proverbs. After exposing the many vanities of life, he proceeds to provide some remedies for that malady. The main remedy is to retain the fear of the Lord in one’s life. By fearing God and worshiping him in a right way, we can live our lives under the sun in a way to prepare ourselves for the next life. The last verse of the chapter explains that God has created a good creation; how has man used it? How do you use it? Sing Psalter 65.

July 15 Read Ecclesiastes 8
In all of his searching, Solomon has found that wisdom is the way to live life on this earth. Even in the face of wicked men, even if they be powerful government officials, we must use the wisdom afforded to us by God. Why is this so? We find that in the last verse. God’s work is unsearchable; his wisdom is too high for us. We use what he has given to us in his honor and to his glory. In that way we can live a peaceful life in our temporary dwelling place. Sing Psalter 223.

July 16 Read Ecclesiastes 9
There are two main thoughts in this chapter of Solomon’s discourse on life. First, there is the certainty of death to all who live on this earth. We now understand that there will be some alive when Christ returns, but in the general course of life’s affairs men die and their bodies decay. Second, we see that wisdom may excel other virtues in this life, but it is usually despised among men. However, Solomon sees its usefulness in God’s working out of his providence in all things. May we seek the wisdom that is from above, use it in our daily lives, and be ready when death takes us from this temporal life. Sing Psalter 28.

July 17 Read Ecclesiastes 10
In this chapter, which resembles some from the book of Proverbs, Solomon compares wisdom to foolishness. He does this using many aspects of man’s daily life. People of God, and especially young people, do you seek to apply wisdom in your life, or do you let foolishness direct your steps? When wisdom, the principal thing, guides our decisions, we will find our feet directed along the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal glory. If foolishness is found in our decision-making process, we will find ourselves on the path that leads to destruction. Choose wisdom and use it all day and every day as you traverse the path of your pilgrimage under the sun. Sing Psalter 23.

July 18 Read Ecclesiastes 11
In today’s reading we see that Solomon is preparing for the final words on his inquiry into life’s meaning. He encourages the child of God to be charitable to those around him. As the word bread in Scripture also denotes the word, we can see that charity is not just in things but also the comfortable words of God. Second, the preacher reminds us that God is sovereign in all the things of nature. We watch nature to learn about God. Finally, Solomon exhorts the young to be thinking about the end of their life and to live a life that readies them for the end, which is death. Sing Psalter 25.

July 19 Read Ecclesiastes 12
As Solomon ends his discourse, he admonishes those who are young to live lives pleasing to God, as they too will become old. After those familiar words in verses 1–7, he goes back to his original theme that all is vanity.
Solomon can find nothing in life on this earth that has meaning apart from God. Finally, he makes that stirring conclusion in verses 13 and 14. We must fear God and keep his commandments. This is man’s duty. We must do that because there will come a day in which God will question and judge us concerning all that we have done here on this earth. Our lives under the sun must not be lived without the Son. Sing Psalter 65.

July 20 Read Song of Solomon 1

In this book of the king who prefigured Christ in all his glory, we have the story of love between Christ and his church. In this chapter we find various endearments that a bridegroom has for his bride and the bride for her bridegroom. How do we respond to the love that Christ has shown for us? Do we seek out our bridegroom? Do we respond to his unmerited love for us with a burning passion? This must be the tenor of our life. We must love Christ and the work that he has done for us. Sing Psalter 124.

July 21 Read Song of Solomon 2

Chapter 2 continues the dialogue between Christ and his church. Found in this dialogue are many references to creation. In verses 11 and 12 we have a portrayal of spring’s coming. As those in the northern climes know, the advent of spring is a long-watched for event. We wish spring’s warm breezes to waft away the cold of winter. Christ’s coming to us is pictured in those warm breezes. The pleasure we can gain from spring’s coming will be multiplied many times when Christ returns. Do we look for the harbingers of his return as earnestly as we look for the signs of spring? Sing Psalter 402.

July 22 Read Song of Solomon 3

There are times in the life of the church and its members in which she loses the sense of companionship with her husband, Christ. This is what is related in this chapter. The Canons of Dort describe this in the fifth head. When this comes upon us, we need to seek Christ where he may be found. That place is the Bible. In it we have his love letters to us in which he draws us to him. In seeking and finding him we regain the sense of his favor and can continue living our lives in such a way that we eagerly await the day when we will be personally united to him in heaven. Sing Psalter 325.

July 23 Read Song of Solomon 4

Throughout this story of love, the main characters, Christ and his bride, the church, take turns speaking. Christ speaks in most of chapter 4. He describes the fairness of his bride. This beauty is only because of the grace shed upon her by God. Of herself the church cannot be as pictured. She is only without spot because of the blood of the Lamb. In the last verse the church responds by calling upon Christ to come to her. May we show gratitude for our deliverance from sin by cleaving to Christ all the days of our lives. Sing Psalter 125.

July 24 Read Song of Solomon 5

There are times in the life of the church and its members that they make foolish decisions. Because of those decisions the sense of God’s favor is lost for a time. When those who find themselves in this strait realize what they have done, they are filled with remorse. This is the situation in this chapter. Notice the beautiful description given of the church’s bridegroom. May we walk in a way in which we do not lose the sense of his favor in our lives. Sing Psalter 135.

July 25 Read Song of Solomon 6

When the church or its members regain Christ’s favor by grace, she extols him for who his is and what he has done for her. She is able to exclaim to others, “I am my beloved’s...” Here is a clear indication of the truth of the preservation of the saints. God’s elect, the bride of Christ, will never fall away from the place that they have been given through the blood of Christ. What a joy it is for us to hear the words of the bridegroom describing our beauty, which we have not of ourselves but through him who loved us with a love that never departs from us. Sing Psalter 106.

July 26 Read Song of Solomon 7

We have in this chapter evidence of the restored favor of Christ and his church. In the first nine verses, Christ describes the beauty of his bride. As we read these words, we must realize that by nature this is not the person whom we see in the mirror of God’s law. This description is only possible when viewed through the blood of the Lamb. In the final verses the church responds to the power of her bride and wishes to commune with him. May we be our beloved’s all the days of our lives. Sing Psalter 198.

July 27 Read Song of Solomon 8

Christ is not only our bride, but he is also our elder brother. All the exclamations of love become truer because of this relationship. God, as our father, has chosen us to be a part of that family. There is also a little sister spoken of in this chapter. Some speak of the little sister as the Gentiles who will also be brought into this family. If this is so, what a glorious heritage we have been given as described in this book of love! Let us live lives that show that we wait anxiously for the coming of our bridegroom Christ Jesus. Let us know that he will ride upon the clouds of heaven coming to receive us unto him. Sing Psalter 183.

July 28 Read Isaiah 1

The prophet Isaiah was sent to tell Israel of their sin of turning away from God. This first chapter describes the various ways in which Israel was unfaithful to him who had done so many good things for the nation. For their ingratitude they would be “redeemed by judgement”. That
is the title of the commentary penned by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema. As we read this chapter we might find allusions to the way we treat our God. Let us be thankful for the redemption described in this prophecy. Sing Psalter 140.

**July 29 Read Isaiah 2**

Already in this second chapter Isaiah gives hints that God would be calling Gentiles to come into his church. Think of the dismay in Jerusalem when the people heard these words. Think of the joy we have because God has called us into the body of Christ. In verse 12 the day of the Lord is pictured. How will that day find us? Will we be found quailing in the caves hiding from God’s wrath, or will we be eagerly awaiting the day of the Lord as he will take us to our heavenly home? Sing Psalter 111.

**July 30 Read Isaiah 3**

This chapter and the one that follows are a continuation of chapter 2. Isaiah continues to prophesy of the destruction of Judah begun by Assyria and continued by Babylon. That destruction continued until Rome completely ended the nation of biblical Israel after Christ returned to heaven. However, that is not the end of the chapter. God would redeem unto himself a people. What a joy it is that we have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb! Sing Psalter 199.

**July 31 Read Isaiah 4**

The first verse of this chapter is the end of the prophecy of destruction begun in chapter 2. Some say that it would more properly be the last verse of chapter 3. But it is fitting for the desperate times described in this verse to introduce the glorious salvation shown in the rest of the chapter. Those five verses tell us about Christ and his kingdom. In contrast to the disaster that would be found in the earthly kingdom of Jerusalem, the new kingdom will be one of glory and peace ruled by a king who saved his people. Are we ready for this new kingdom? Are we looking for it? Sing Psalter 200.

**August 1 Read Isaiah 5**

This chapter starts out with the familiar figure of the church being compared to a vineyard. This figure can be found in many other places of Scripture. After describing what God has done to establish such a beautiful place, the chapter goes on to say that God will bring judgement upon that vineyard because of the sins committed by its inhabitants. Isaiah had to bring hard words to Israel. Those words are for us as well. Are we listening to them? Sing Psalter 221.

**August 2 Read Isaiah 6**

Our God is a holy God. This is what we see in the first four verses of this chapter. That thrice-holy God commissioned Isaiah to go to the people of God and prophesy of the destruction that would come upon them. Isaiah was fearful of the work. Who would not be? But the holy God fitted him for that work of describing what would happen to the rebellious people. The chapter is not without comfort, however. In the final verse God shows that he has ordained a remnant to serve him. That remnant would be redeemed even through the destruction of Judah. Sing Psalter 266.

**August 3 Read Isaiah 7**

Ahaz was one of the wicked kings who sat on the throne of God’s people. He desecrated the temple of God by destroying the articles of worship that God had commanded Israel to use. He refused to ask a sign from God of Judah’s deliverance from its enemies. Yet to this wicked man a beautiful prophecy of Christ was spoken. The prophecy of the virgin birth was scorned by Ahaz, it was scorned by those of Jesus’ day, and it is still scorned today. For us it is a beautiful prophecy, for the baby born of that virgin became our savior. Sing Psalter 388.

**August 4 Read Isaiah 8**

Israel had allied itself with Syria to fight against Assyria, the world power at that time. They came against Judah as a way to strengthen themselves and to show Assyria that they were not to be trifled with. In this chapter and the ones that follow, God through Isaiah promised that Israel and Syria would not defeat Judah. In fact, Assyria would take the ten tribes into captivity. Judah is urged to repentance by Isaiah in this sermon. We should read these words knowing that our sins, too, rise up against us. We also have the comfort that Christ has taken them away. Sing Psalter 83.

**August 5 Read Isaiah 9**

In this chapter we see both God’s justice and mercy. For those who would not walk in his paths, there would be justice at the hands of enemies on all sides. But for those who feared God—and there was that remnant still remaining in Judah—there is the beautiful prophecy of Christ found in verse 6 and 7. As we read this chapter, do we see that we deserve the justice of God and not his mercy? But thanks be to him who has delivered us from the power of sin through the Prince of Peace. Sing Psalter 271.

**August 6 Read Isaiah 10**

In the first part of this chapter Isaiah continues to prophesy judgement unto those in Israel and Judah who willfully disobeyed God and would not walk in his ways. He then pronounces judgment upon Assyria, whom God has used to chastise his chosen people. Even though Assyria was doing God’s will, they were still subject to him. In verse 20 a message of comfort is given to the faithful remnant. Even though they were oppressed by enemies within their nation and from the outside of their nation, God would deliver them. This is a comfort for us as well. Let us take heed to the comfort and call upon God’s name in prayer for deliverance from our sins. Sing Psalter 407.
Abraham had already lived a hundred years, and he had the better half of the next century to continue growing in faith. God had made plain that the salvation he had in store for his people would be accomplished not by some prescribed activities and works of man, but by God himself. He had been shown that all of salvation must be received by faith. Faith is the living bond that unites us to Christ. Through that bond all the benefits of Christ’s work are imputed unto us. Through that bond flows all the spiritual life that fills our heart. But what about that faith itself? Is there something here that man can do? Is faith the part that God has left for man to accomplish by his will, strength, and mental activity? Does faith mean that Abraham must find a clever way to fulfill the promise of a son when obstacles such as a barren wife are thrown into the way? Abraham listened to the argument of his wife and concluded that he must do his part and use Hagar to obtain this son. Ishmael was now about twelve years old, and Abraham seemed to have convinced himself that Ishmael was the son whom God had promised.

But it was just when Abraham began to find peace and rest in his own imaginations—when it was “obvious” that Sarah would not be the mother of the promised child—that God appeared to him, renewed the same covenant promise established earlier, and revealed that the promised child would indeed be born from Sarah. God himself would see to it that his promise would be fulfilled. God had promised a son, and Abraham knew by faith that God would fulfill his promise, but it was not for Abraham to use worldly wisdom to guarantee that this promise would be fulfilled. Faith has no room for some conditional part accomplished by man. True, faith is active and living, and becomes evident in the fruits of godly living (James). The godly living and good works are not parts of faith, but rather the fruit of faith. There really is nothing left for man to do. The only thing the child of God can do is respond in wonder, amazement, and even in astounded laughter (Genesis 17:17).

The name Isaac means “laughter,” and would remind Abraham and Sarah for the rest of their lives of the wonder of God’s salvation. It is in the nature of man to think that he must do something to atone for his sin or give God reason for saving him. Rather, salvation is ALL of God. God uses Paul to spell out this truth in Romans 9:7–9:

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

And in his letter to the Corinthians he writes

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. … But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence (1 Cor. 1:18–19, 24–29).

In contrast to the truth revealed by God, every heresy to one degree or another gives glory to man, which is due to God alone.

The church at this point in history has learned much about the salvation God has in store for man. So if this salvation that God has in store for man is something that God accomplishes without help or payment from man, and even the bond of faith through which the blessings of salvation are imputed unto man is not dependent upon any activity of man, how is it determined who are saved and who are not? From where does this faith come? Since faith is not something that comes from the power of our own flesh and will, perhaps it is something that comes from being born to the right parents. That is not the case either. God makes clear that faith itself and the salvation received through faith have nothing to do with our flesh, but everything is according to the sovereign good pleasure of God himself. From this child, Isaac, who was given in fulfillment of God’s promise and not in fulfillment of any conditions or natural ability of man, another wonder is revealed. To Isaac are born twin sons, in whom God reveals that he sovereignly chooses one and reprobates the other. Paul writes in Romans 9:10–11:

And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;).

Opponents of the truth that God reveals here—unconditional salvation on the basis of God’s will, to elect some and reprobate others, and accomplished by sovereign grace through Christ alone—imagine that such theology makes man a mere stock and block. They argue that it depletes man of his human-ity. If natural man has no freedom to choose and accept God’s well-meant offer of salvation, then he loses an essential part of what makes him human. They further argue that a doctrine of total depravity and sovereign reprobation turns a man into an obnoxious beast. To such men God replies, “Who art thou that repliest against God?” (Rom. 9:20). The child of God does not need a shred of his own dignity, but rejoices only in the goodness of God and the dignity he has in Christ alone. The reality is that the life of a child of God is most active and filled with the drama of battle, and total depravity and sovereign reprobation are evident among some of the most attractive people found in the world.

In contrast to this proud assessment of God and man, we see in the life of Isaac what real human life as a child of God is. His own name reminded him that the ways and thinking of man are not the ways and thinking of God. His two children, Jacob and Esau, were constant reminders of God’s sovereign choice even before they were born. The spiritual life of Jacob grew throughout his life, and the spiritual death in Esau was made more and more evident in his life. But this does not mean that Isaac lived like a robot under God’s control. Sovereign election makes us righteous before God in Christ, but the old man of sin cleaves to us in this life, and our battles serve to open our eyes more and more to the depths of God’s love and his holiness. The truths of sovereign grace take nothing from real human life and direct all the glory and honor to God alone.

The life of Isaac illustrates the battle against the old man of sin and pride that clings to us, and it demonstrates the peace, joy, and rest that we have in Christ alone. His life is the reality of life for the child of God in contrast to the imaginary life of mustering up a will to accept Christ and living in fear that we are not doing enough to merit God’s favor and are in danger of falling away from grace. Even though Isaac did not see any spiritual fruit in the life of Esau, the natural attraction of his flesh to the earthly interests and activity of Esau pulled him into a worldly way of thinking so that Esau became his favorite, and he “loved him because he did eat of his venison” (Gen. 25:28). The old man of sin living within Isaac and Rebecca introduced conflict into the home, which grew between the boys as well, as is evident when Esau sold his birthright and Jacob relied on his patience and craftiness. Isaac again fell into the same foolish trap of fear and lied...
to Abimelech concerning his wife. Even so, the new life of Christ persisted, and God blessed Isaac (Gen. 26:12), and so increased his wealth that the enemies of God around him could do nothing but confess that Jehovah God was with him. God drew Isaac to himself in covenant love and again spoke to him the comforting words of the covenant (Gen. 26:24).

Gradually the eyes of Isaac were opened to the spiritual corruption in his son as he experienced grief in Esau’s marriage to an unbelieving wife (Gen. 26:35). The battles for the elect children of God are long, painful, and exhausting, to the point that Rebecca complained she was “weary of life” (Gen. 27:46). One would think that those who are regenerated and born “after the Spirit” would be filled with pleasant personality traits and enjoyable company, but often that is not the case. Jacob did not seem to possess many qualities attractive to the flesh, and neither did most of the Israelites later on. In contrast, one would think that the wickedness and pride of an unbelieving reprobate would be evident in obnoxious personality traits, but often the most attractive people are the heretics and unbelievers. As with Isaac, we too are often fooled by the earthly attractions we find in this life, and we suffer the consequences. By the grace of God alone, our eyes are opened and we grow in grace. We see more and more the wonder of God’s love for unworthy sinners, and we learn more and more the blessedness of giving all the glory to God alone.

John is a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa and is the former editor of Beacon Lights.

Our Goodly Heritage

Lynette Kleyn

God’s People in Singapore

In November of 2012, when we traveled to the Philippines, my brother Peter and I also had a wonderful opportunity to travel to Singapore for a few days. As mentioned in my previous article on the Philippines, there are many differences in culture between these two countries, and that struck both of us when we were in Singapore. But what we noticed even more were the similarities. Both the people of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore and the people in the churches of the Philippines worship God as we do, and have the same zeal for him and for the truth.

We arrived in Singapore on a Friday afternoon and were warmly welcomed by a few of the youth of CERC (the youth being young adults about ages 15–25). Walking out of the airport we already noticed the differences between the two countries. There were no loud crowds of people waiting outside the airport, but it was very quiet and peaceful. The landscaping was perfect, lawns beautifully manicured, trees planted in specific places, and even the cars in the parking lot were parked very neatly and orderly.

Also, the drivers knew how to stay between the lines on the roads and followed traffic laws! It is obvious that Singapore is a much wealthier nation that prides itself on its cleanliness and beauty.

In addition to cleanliness, Singapore is known for its many fancy attractions. Just as the USA, Singapore wants to have the biggest and best. One very new and beautiful attraction is the Gardens by the Bay. We went there straight from the airport and walked around in the two gigantic greenhouses for hours, looking at all the different varieties of plants and flowers from all over the world. During this very enjoyable tour we were able to get to know each other better. Singapore is known to have the second largest Ferris wheel in the world (recently outdone by China, which now has the biggest) that we could see but didn’t ride. Another popular attraction is Sentosa, an island that has museums, aquariums, beaches, and little shops on it. There is also a large zoo in Singapore, of which many of you may have seen pictures (Rev. Andy Lanning holding a snake).

Singapore is the largest port city in the world, and
is a city bustling with over 5 million people packed into high-rises. Yet the streets are clean, the public transportation is readily available, and the traffic flows well. This is probably because Singapore is a “FINE” city. One can be fined for anything from spitting, littering, or smoking in public to drinking water on the public trains. Those who drive cars have to pay a large sum just for the permit to own a car, on top of buying the car itself, and most cars 10 years or older are scrapped. Singaporeans are big on education. Young people do not find jobs after high school because all good jobs require a college education, so they must keep studying. The pursuit of higher education is interrupted for the young men because they must serve in the military for at least 2 years starting about the age of 18. All this we found out very quickly, as the Singaporeans are very willing to share information about their country.

Friday night after the Gardens, Peter and I got our first introduction to the church life of the CERC. The youth have their Bible studies on Friday nights, and before studying they all get together for a meal. A few of them made spaghetti, a very American food that we were thankful for, and about 30 of us gathered to eat and fellowship. After eating, the girls and boys split up, the boys gathering in groups for Bible study and prayer meetings, and the girls gathering to study a book. By watching and listening to the youth that night, we learned quickly of their love for God and for learning more and more of his word. Most of these youth are second generation Christians in CERC, and have not had the truths of Scripture passed down to them for many generations as most of us in the PRC have. So being newer to the faith, their “first love” for God, for his people, for his church, and for his word, is very evident. It was refreshing to witness this spiritual energy and godly zeal in these young people. They know what it means to go through a split in the church, to see their parents struggle with important decisions about the church that will have long-lasting effects on the people, and they themselves suffered broken and strained relationships because of the split. Yet they take this hardship as an opportunity to learn God’s will for them, and to grow closer to him. He is most important to these people, and they do not hide their love for him.

Worshipping in CERC was also a different experience from worshipping in the Philippines. It felt more like we were at home with the nicely finished sanctuary and the quietness during the worship service. The only distractions were the occasional cries of a baby. No roosters crowing or cars honking this time, but the people were still focused intently on the preaching of God’s word. And this is the beauty of meeting believers around the world.

In our rushed society and busy lives, together with school, work, friends, we can so easily become focused on ourselves and forget that we are not the only people in the world. Sometimes it is so nice to stop and think about these people, God’s children half a world away, and know that they have the same God we do, that they worship him the same way we do, and that we share a bond in Christ that surpasses the differences we may have in culture, looks, or status. It would be worth it for any of you to make this kind of a trip, but if you have never had the opportunity to travel to a different part of the world and meet other parts of the body of Christ, I hope these articles gave you a glimpse into that kind of experience. Please keep the believers in the Philippines and in Singapore in your prayers as they continue to learn and grow in faith, and also, if the opportunity arises, I strongly encourage you to travel to either place someday. You will not regret it at all!

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

Lynette is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.
2 John 1–4, “The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever. Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.”

What is truth? What is The Truth? Today’s world seeks to compromise and mar the truth at all costs. As Christians, we experience this as we go out into the workplace, in college, and in our everyday lives as we are bombarded by the lie through the Internet, television, radio, social media, etc. Young people, as God’s children we are called to walk in the truth. What does that mean for a Reformed Christian? In John 14:6, when Thomas asked Jesus how they can know the way, Jesus’ response is “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” We must not be ashamed of the truth but continually seek to walk in that truth. The first 4 verses of 2 John also speak of this truth. Our Father commands us to walk in this truth, and when children walk in the truth there is great rejoicing.

1. Who is the author of 2 John? What is his relationship to Jesus? (See commentaries on 2 John)

2. The author calls himself “elder”. To what is this a reference? (Hebrews 13:17)

3. This book was written to “the elect lady”. Who is the elect lady? (Hosea 1-3; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25–33)

4. What is the theme of 2 John? (Read 2 John 1–4 and 3 John 1–4)

5. What is the connection the author makes between truth and love in 2 John 1–4? See also 1 Thessalonians 2:11–12 and 3 John 4

6. What does it mean for children to walk in truth? Give concrete examples of this from the life of a Protestant Reformed young person.

7. Today’s world denies the truth. What should the Reformed response be to a person who says the truth we hold is only our opinion and should not be promoted? (1 Kings 18:20–40; John 15:1–2; John 16:13–14; John 17:3)

8. How does the “church world” of today compromise the truth in their quest for ecclesiastical unity?

9. Discuss specific applications of unashamedly walking in the truth in the life of a Reformed young person. What type of relationships must we seek? How do you bring the truth to your own family/friends?

In these verses, the apostle continues his letter by beseeching the saints to have Christian sacred love toward one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.”

We do this by keeping God’s commandments and encouraging one another to walk in holiness. We must not become complacent but always strive to continue to grow in this Christian virtue of love. As we go through the following study, may we discuss and learn more about how to manifest love throughout our daily life.


2. We are commanded to “love one another”. With whom are we to establish the fellowship of love? (Ephesians 4:2–6; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:10–11; 1 John 4:7–8)
2 John 7–13, “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.”

In the above verses the apostle John warns the church of the many false teachers who seek to deceive her and rob her of the comfort that comes from confessing Christ. These false teachers (deceivers) can be identified by their denial of the doctrine of Christ, “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” This passage is a strong defense of the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ. The true believer should shun these deceivers so as not to risk losing the faith and assurance that we have. These verses have many applications for us today. Please consider the following questions as they relate to not only the above verses, but also the Christian walk of a godly young person today.

1. It should not surprise us that there are false teachers (2 Thess. 2:7). How can a Christian young person prepare himself to recognize a “deceiver?” How should we prepare ourselves for the end times? (1 Thess. 5:1–8; 1 Timothy 4:1–10)

2. These deceivers deny that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. John also calls them “antichrists.” May we call the Pope antichrist? Is any heresy (such as Arminianism or the Federal Vision) a denial that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh? (Q & A 29, Heidelberg Catechism)

3. John urges us to be watchful. In what way can young people be watchful? How can young men prepare themselves for office in the church? (1 Timothy 4:12–16)

4. John speaks of losing our reward. Does “what we have wrought” mean that we must work for our salvation? (Philippians 2:12–13; Ephesians 2:8–9)

5. The doctrine of Christ helps us to know God and walk a holy life (John 15:3). How do a holy life and the truth go hand in hand? As a young person, do you know God and love him and obey him? How is this shown in your life? How does this doctrine give us comfort?

6. If we are hospitable to deceivers, we become partakers of their sins: “For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” In what ways can we become partakers of these evil deeds? (Revelation 18:4) How does this affect the friendships (and marriages) we must have?

7. Communion of the saints, face to face, is always wonderful and preferable to “pen and ink” (3 John 3, Romans 1:12). How important is it that we greet each other with courtesy and love and respect? Are we thankful for our fellow saints, our denomination, our sister churches? Is our joy full in their presence? 

Convention Discussion Outline

Dealing with False Teachers

3. With whom can the fellowship of love not be established? (Deuteronomy 7:2–4; Ezra 9:2–4, 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:6–8)

4. Why are we commanded to love one another? (John 15:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 3:16; 1 John 4:19–21)

5. What is the relationship between love and walking in God’s commandments? (Psalm 19:7–11; Matthew 22:36–40; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:8–10; 1 John 5:2–3)

6. How is our love manifested? (John 15:12–13; Romans 12:9–10; 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 4:31–32; Ephesians 5:1–2; 1 Peter 3:8–9; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 3:18)

7. We cannot be ashamed to walk in love for we are commanded to love one another. Discuss how we are able to show evidence in our life of this fruit of the Spirit. (John 13:34–35; Galatians 5:22–23)
Schism of 1953
SIXTY YEARS

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BAPTISMS
“But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children.”
Psalm 103:17
The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:
Sydney Jolene, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron & Melinda Knott—First, MI
Dorla Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David & Gina VanDenTop—Grace, MI
Tessa Rae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brent & Kara Kregel—Grandville, MI
Grant James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jared & Jeanine Loyenga—Holland, MI
Anderson Ross, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric & Heidi Mowery—Holland, MI
Michael Elijah, son of Mrs. Katharina Rosario—Hope, MI
Jordan Dean, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan & Terri Brunsting—Hope, MI
Margaux Louise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Dorothy Duistermars—Hope, MI
Dylan Andrew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andy & Amanda Moss—Hull, IA
Hartley Rae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan & Megan Tanis—Loveland, CO
Henry Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. John & Emily Hopkins—Redlands, CA
Kyley Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad & Jeanette Richards—Southeast, MI
Sophia Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. George & Michelle Bodbyl—Southwest, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH
“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”
1 Timothy 6:12
Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
Russell Birkett—Crete, IL
Marlena Wynia—Doon, IA
Steven Corson—First, MI
Natalie Monsma—First, MI
Andrea Monsma—First, MI
Sydney Kamps—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES
“But except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it…”
Psalm 127:1
United in the bond of holy matrimony were:
Mr. Matt VanBeek and Miss Chelsea Teunissen—Doon, IA
Mr. Cody Cammenga and Miss Erin Compagner—First, MI
Mr. Seth Bodbyl and Miss Lenora Vander Kolk—Grandville, MI
Mr. Kyle Glass & Miss Keley Terpstra—Hope, MI
Mr. Caleb Spriensma and Miss Deanna Klamer—Hope, MI
Mr. Gerald Kooy and Miss Tracy Pastoor—Peace, IL
Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
2013 Young People’s Convention

NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

Romans 1:16

August 12-16, 2013
Lake Williamson Christian Center
Carlinville, IL

Rev. Nathan Langerak: Not Ashamed of the Gospel
Rev. Cory Griess: Paul, a Servant of Jesus Christ

Speeches

Please check out the updated convention website for more information!

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