If you are a young man, you probably fit into one of three categories of men.

Man #1: You are a big, bad, brazen, beer-drinking individual.

You are the cool kid at school. Weaker boys fear you. You have no problem with cutting them down with your words, or with your brute, physical strength. Most people consider you a bully, but they just need to get over it. If you had a friend in the Bible, his name would be Lamech. You are violent, and any man or woman who tries to impede you will be trampled. You drink beer—lots of beer—even though you are not 21 years old. You do it because you think it’s cool. You do it because it’s fun. And you try to get others to join your riotous, partying lifestyle.

You don’t do homework because you think it’s stupid. Only losers try hard in school; the same ones you bully every day. You despise those who try to direct your life, whether they are your parents, your pastor, or your teachers at school. You sit in school, slouched down in your chair, with an “I don’t care” look on your face. It’s not cool to care, so you don’t. It’s not worth caring anyway. It will only be a matter of time before you fly the coop. You are probably going to leave—your friends, your parents, your church. When you go anywhere, you need your phone. You are constantly checking your social media feeds and making sure your online image is just so. At social gatherings, you have no problem ignoring others as you stare into your screen. People might say things to you, but you don’t care; you’re not listening; you just nod your head.

When you are playing sports, your team must win because you are the best. If your team is struggling, you cuss and swear. You might even use the f-word. Maybe you use the f-word a lot. Maybe you even find a way to slip it into most sentences. Either way, you think it makes you more masculine to use that word. It makes you feel powerful. So you use it shamelessly.

Man #2: You are gentle, kind, genuine, forbearing, and forgiving.

You are friendly to everyone you encounter, even those who are not friendly to you. When others harm you whether by accident or on purpose, you are quick to forgive. Those you encounter feel comfortable around you because they trust you. You look for ways to build others up. You protect the weak, help those in need, and encourage the despairing. When Man #1 targets his prey at school, you protect the victim without escalating the situation. You are cool-headed and know how to deal calmly with conflict.

You are keenly aware of your daily struggle against sin. You fight against sin, but you watch yourself fall. A lot. You view yourself as Paul did: the chief of sinners. You are honest and open about who you are: a dirty sinner saved by grace. As the publican, you beat your breast and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

Man #3: You are somewhere in between Man #1 and Man #2.

You aren’t the obnoxious type like Man #1, but you don’t see yourself at the level of Man #2. You think of yourself as neutral. You aren’t known as a bad guy, but you aren’t necessarily spoken highly of either. You fly under the radar most of the time, and that’s fine by you.

Perhaps you aren’t actually in neutral. You are transitioning from Man #2 into Man #1. You are curious and open to trying new things. You accept Man #1’s offer to drink this and smoke that, and you kind of like it. You feel yourself being pulled in that direction, into the chasm.

In the midst of the fight, you pick up this issue of Beacon Lights, and you read what it is like to be a true man of God. You are called to go about your work, whatever it is, seeing it as set before you by God for your good, so you are determined to work hard for his glory. You contemplate Phinehas of old, and learn to hate all forms of impurity, striving to kill them in your flesh every day. You prayerfully
**CHARACTERISTICS OF A GODLY MAN**

A man’s man is real tough
He avoids what’s just fluff
Occasionally has to be rough
Always nurtures good stuff.

Boys aspire to become men. They want to have big muscles and become the nurturing leaders that their fathers so naturally exemplify. Boys see their fathers as men who are active. They use each day with purpose. They set themselves to a task. They have agency. That is, they shape the world in which they live. They care for the people and things in their lives. Boys learn that men nurture the people and projects for which they care. They aim to fix what they can. Boys also learn that men aggressively fight for those causes that they consider right.

Neither of the above descriptions are explicitly Christian, but I’ll argue that both are in harmony with 1 Timothy 6:11–12. Those verses have the following to say about the man of God: “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

**Men Flee**

Men flee. Men flee when unnecessary hurt is imminent. Strong and tough men flee! Imagine a lumberman doing good work cutting down a tree. He does the work and flees a safe distance as the tree falls. Men flee when they are up to bat and notice an errant pitch curving towards them. It’s foolish to remain and get hit by the ball unnecessarily. Fighting military men also flee. Even the greatest generals survey the battlefield and plan retreat locations should the battle not go well. It’s smart to flee. It’s even manly to flee. Men recognize their vulnerabilities and guard against them, and in the smart dodging of unnecessary blows they show themselves strong.

The strong and tough Christian man also flees. No matter his earthly physique, he flees. There are many engagements with which men ought to tangle, but others which men need to flee. “O man of God, flee these things” in 1 Timothy 6 refers to avoiding the snares of worldliness and false doctrine. Men understand that the fight against evil is a real military engagement with a dangerous enemy. Not out of fear, but instead by sanctified wisdom, men flee. The worldly lure of life’s physical pleasures is a strong temptation and a very real danger. Our natural man can desire the latest recreational vehicle, the full sound of high-end headphones, an enormous TV half the size of our wall, and the latest smart devices, all of which bring a world of entertainment to our fingertips. But the Christian man knows the cost of such engagements and, as necessary, he flees. The damage done can be the loss of hundreds of hours of income. The fool and his money are soon parted, after all (Prov. 21:20). More importantly, the higher cost or damage is paid in exposure to the filth of the world, a damaged conscience, lack of knowledge of school curricula, loss of knowledge of catechism answers, loss of time with parents and friends, lack
of development of a mind capable of deep thought, lack of developing into an interesting person, and an underdeveloped sense of the majesty of God.

Young men, be smart about your entanglements with worldly fluff. Be a man and flee.

**Men Pursue Important Things**

Men wisely flee when they may get hurt unnecessarily, but men also aggressively pursue important things. For example, men are aggressive and even violent when playing sports. Men also exert themselves at their work. They bend their backs and strain their muscles to get the job done. When the driveway needs shoveling, the snow flies. When walls need building, piles of lumber transform into rigid walls. When the car needs waxing, the rags whirl.

Strong and tough Christian men also doggedly pursue important things. They “nurture the right stuff.” No matter their earthly physique, Christian men violently chase what is worthy. Matthew 11:12 expresses it this way: “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” This is a description of the Christian man. The Christian man is violent and takes the kingdom of God by force. Across time Christian men have snatched on tightly or seized or embraced the kingdom. Jacob, wrestling with the angel, said, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Gen. 32:26). Right doctrine, right living, and genuine love of God are seized on by Christian men. When the light of the gospel of grace shines into men’s hearts, the result is that they have no doubt about what is real, what is valuable, what is worth their best effort…and they get violent to have it.

Specifically, 1 Timothy 6:11 says that Christian men seize on or follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. Men nurture these attributes in themselves and in others. No doubt you recognize these to be the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Christ’s instrument of faith excites men’s souls with the result that they give themselves for the kingdom causes and take on and express these attributes. They desire to support the ministry, be involved in church activities, support their struggling family members, develop good friendships, and find their way into solid careers. Yes, even their careers are viewed as directives from God on how God would have them to engage with and benefit their community. Good men push away distractions and sacrifice other earthly pleasures to create opportunities to engage with these and many more great activities.

Young men, get in hot pursuit of godliness.

**Men Respond to Encouragement**

Men are not stubbornly individualistic, but instead are energized by the encouragement of others. The football player who makes an important tackle gets a good chest bump or helmet knock from his teammates and is excited to exert himself again in the next play. Effective cross country coaches have high demands for their runners but also shout incentives, knowing how they themselves respond to encouragement. Exhausted warriors rally one another to repel the enemy one more time.

The strong and tough Christian man also welcomes and is spurred on by encouragement. Men nurture others. No matter their earthly physique, they are energized by encouragement. 1 Timothy 6:12 says it this way: “lay hold on eternal life.” The promise of reward comforts and inspires. Eternal life with Christ is surely coming. There’s no doubt in our minds. The time of stress and struggle will be short compared to all of eternity in heaven. As long as we have breath we will work.

Saul’s son Jonathan, at great personal risk, sought out David in the wilderness of Ziph and strengthened David’s hand in God (1 Sam. 23:16). Jonathan reassured David of God’s promises to him. David was to rule a nation for God’s sake and conquer the enemies. David was encouraged and pressed on in his work. Eternal life awaits. For now he must be about his Father’s business. God the Father does not leave us without incentive as we live our lives for him. We “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). We have incentive to make the right choices, “[k]nowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:24). Christian men are energized and encouraged by these passages. We will receive a reward not on the basis of our good efforts but according to and consistent with those efforts.

Christian men nurture and encourage one another to continue to run the race. The pain is acute. The sacrifice is lengthy. The reward is fabulous.

**Conclusion**

Young men, lay hold on eternal life, pursue godliness, and flee from unnecessary dangers. These are three characteristics of godly men.

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PHINEHAS: STANDING FOR THE TRUTH AMID EVIL IN THE CHURCH

We sing in our Psalter, “The Lord approved the righteous act of him who sin abhorred, and honored him forevermore with just and great reward.”¹ The “him” of whom the Psalter speaks was a young man by the name of Phinehas, a most important saint in the unfolding of God’s covenant. In this brief profile of the godly man Phinehas, we would like to call your attention to who Phinehas was, what he stood for, and why he is an example to us.

Who was Phinehas? Of priestly descent, Phinehas was a grandson of Aaron (Ex. 6:25). As a ruler of the tabernacle (1 Chr. 9:20), Phinehas was devoted to keeping the purity of worship and consecrating the people to Jehovah. In this connection, we observe the “righteous act” of Phinehas when he stood for the truth as the children of Israel apostatized from the Lord, as this story is told in Numbers 25:1–8.²

We read that while “Israel abode in Shittim… they began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab” (v. 1). Idolatrous fellowship was the chief sin of the people, wherein they did join themselves to Baal-peor.³ The rotten fruit of this sin was that “the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel” (v. 3). God then commanded Moses that “all the heads of the people” be hanged and that all who were joined unto Baal-peor be slain (vv. 4–5).

Amidst this awful situation, Zimri, a leader in the tribe of Simeon, boldly defied God before Moses and the people by illicitly consorting with Cozbi, who was a Midianitish woman. A belligerent trampling underfoot of God’s law had taken place. Who would stand for the truth? Beholding the sins of the people, the children of God weeping before the tabernacle, and the overthrow of the law of God, Phinehas rose up. Filled with love and holy zeal for God’s house, the godly man Phinehas thrust both Zimri and Cozbi through with a javelin (v. 7–8). And thus, the plague was stayed.

What specifically did Phinehas stand for? Was Phinehas simply a radical who enjoyed a good fight? God forbid. Phinehas stood for the truth of God’s covenant. Positively, he stood for the mighty God of the covenant who brings his people out of the bondage of sin and causes them to enjoy the fellowship of his friendship. Negatively, wherever the truth of that covenant is denied or opposed, there must be a radical and sharp condemnation of anything that offends. Be not deceived, it is not they of the world that chiefly deny God’s truth; but in the church, the carnal seed always defies God’s covenant. For it was a fellow kinsman, even an Israelite, that Phinehas killed with a javelin. And he did not hesitate to do so.

Young people, do you stand for God’s truth when it is denied, in the classroom, out with your friends, or perhaps even in your own home? Surely it is easy to identify moral sins, which we might all easily condemn, but what about doctrinal sin? Do not forget that the sin of Baal-peor was not simply a moral transgression, but a spiritual and religious departure (see Rev. 2:14). In love for the neighbor, we must rebuke the free-willer, the divorced and remarried, the worldly, the federal visionist, the conditional covenanter, and the like. These sins do not belong in God’s covenant! And they who have the

Correction:
The article, “Scars on Creation: Berkley Pit” in the February issue was written by Erin Van Baren, not Philip Rainey. We apologize for the error.

¹ Psalter 291, stanza 4.
² For an awesome sermon on this history, listen to “In the Matter of Baal-peor” by the venerable Reverend Marinus Schipper. http://www.prca.org/resources/sermons/audio/message/in-the-matter-of-baal-peor
³ This is not an isolated event in Scripture. See Psalm 106:28–31; Hosea 9:10; Micah 6:5; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14. The import of these passages indicates that the sin of Baal-peor is the principle sin at work when the church departs from Jehovah.
spirit of Phinehas, which was that of Christ, will not be afraid or ashamed to wield the javelin of God’s word.

Phinehas was a godly man who stood for the truth amid evil in the church. Like Phinehas, we will stand for the truth of God’s covenant. Even if we must stand alone, as Phinehas did, we place our confidence in the truth that “Israel then shall dwell in safety alone” (Deut. 33:28). In opposition to those who war against God’s covenant, we have a “covenant of peace” (Num. 25:12) which assures us of victory in Christ. May the prayer of the psalmist ever be on our lips: “Save us, O Lord, our gracious God, from alien lands reclaim, that we may triumph in thy praise and bless thy holy Name.”

Elijah is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan and serves as contributing writer correspondent on Beacon Lights staff.

4 Psalter 291, stanza 11.

THE BLAMELESS YOUNG MAN

We use the term “gift” in many ways today. We may say that a high school student is “gifted” at playing basketball. What we mean to say is that he plays basketball well. Or we may say that a musician is “gifted” at playing his instrument when we mean to say that a person has practiced hard and has mastered his instrument. This is not the way the Bible uses the word “gift.” Rather, by “gift,” what the Bible means is that the Spirit gives to the Christian certain strengths and abilities to edify the church in the position in which Christ has placed that Christian.

The Spirit does this even with those men that he has called into special offices in the church: pastors, elders, and deacons. The lists of gifts (or qualifications) are found in 1 Timothy 3:2–12 and Titus 1:6–9. If a man desires to be a pastor, elder, or deacon, he must fit all of these qualifications, showing that he has been called by Jesus himself to serve in this office of the church.

Many of the qualifications that are found in these two passages fall under the general category of godly living. Therefore, all young men, not only the ones who feel called to serve in the church, ought to examine themselves to see how these characteristics apply in their own daily lives.

In both passages, the qualification “blameless” is used to introduce all the other qualifications (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6–7). This is because all the characteristics that follow in this list of qualifications are the description of what the Bible means when it says, “A bishop must be blameless.” Blamelessness involves every aspect of a man’s life: his general mindset, his family life, his social life, and his spiritual life.

Calvin, in his commentary on the pastoral epistles, says concerning the word blameless, “[the bishop] must not be marked by any infamy that would lessen his authority. There will be no one found among men that is free from every vice; but it is one thing to be blemished with ordinary vices...and another thing to have a disgraceful name or to be stained with any baseness.” Blamelessness means that no one should be able to find fault in the young man’s life and accuse him of intentional sin. This is not to say that he is sinless, but a person should be able to look deeply into all aspects of the young man’s life and see evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work of sanctification.

First and foremost, the qualifications in these two passages apply to officebearers. These are the characteristics that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write down for the men aspiring to serve in the special offices of the church. A man with these characteristics, at least in seed form, ought seriously to consider whether God is calling him into the ministry.

Still, many of these qualifications also describe godly life in general and therefore apply to all young men in the church in some way. Though young men who are aspiring to the ministry ought to examine themselves with this list more seriously than most, all young men in the church must examine their lives because all young men are called to live godly.

“The husband of one wife” does not only mean...
that a man is married to only one woman. It does not only mean that he has not remarried after a divorce. It means much more than that. This qualification means that the young man is living a sexually pure lifestyle so that he intimately knows only his future wife.

“Sober” does not simply mean “not drunk.” “Not given to wine” addresses the man’s relationship with alcohol. Rather, “sober” means that the young man is able to think clearly and live wisely, knowing the word of God and allowing it to dictate his decisions throughout life.

“Lover of hospitality” does not only mean that he enjoys the company of others. It goes much deeper than being a “people person.” To love hospitality means, principally, that the man loves his local church and wants to talk to and know his fellow members. He wants to know their current life situations. He wants to know how to pray for them. The man who loves hospitality loves the people of God.

These are just a few examples of how many of the qualifications apply to every young man. One still may ask why he should care to live blamelessly. The young man should care to live blamelessly because God’s name is on the line. In Exodus 20:7, the third commandment, God says, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” God’s name is his reputation. He is holy, perfectly good, and unchanging. To take the name of the Lord in vain is not only the heinous sin of using his name irreverently, but it is not to live according to the calling which we have received (Eph. 4:1).

How does one examine himself? In our churches, we have a week-long self-examination before communion. This is a wonderful time to reflect on the work of the Spirit in your life. If, while you are in prayer, the Holy Spirit reveals to you a besetting sin, repent and ask for forgiveness. Remember that you have been forgiven in Christ and that God is forming you more and more to the image of his Son. As his children, be encouraged, knowing that God is working in you. Pray to live according to the will and commandments of God.

We are beloved of God in Christ. Therefore, in gratitude, let us all live according to these standards in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Jeremy is a first-year student in our churches’ seminary. Jeremy graduated from Kuyper College, where he met his wife, Hailey, in December 2018. He and Hailey are members of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Rev. Stephan Regnerus

THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY

Our churches need more ministers. Synod 2019 expressed an urgent need for more seminary students; pastors regularly pray for more ministers; godly fathers encourage their sons to consider whether God has called them to become a preacher. The need for more ministers has been well documented, and I trust this need will continue to be in our prayers until the Lord of the harvest gives us more men.

Understanding the need for more ministers, we as young men now face a practical question: How do I know if I have been called to the ministry? Am I to look for a special revelation from God? Will there be a still small voice whispering in my ear, or am I to look for handwriting on the wall? I remember in my own pathway to the ministry there was variation in my level of conviction: sometimes I was certain that the Lord was calling me to preach; at other times I teetered on the brink of discontinuing my pursuit of the ministry. In this article, I want to offer the young man guidance as he considers whether he has been called to preach. To be sure, this guidance will be colored by my personal experiences. Every man’s path to the ministry will be unique. Thus, this guidance is not intended to discourage those who have different experiences than mine, nor is this list exhaustive. But here are some things the aspiring minister ought to consider:

We are to know that the Holy Spirit is the person who calls a man to office in the church. The Spirit works the internal call in the man, and the Spirit through the church extends the external call to that man. Acts 13:2: “...the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have
called them.” The Spirit goes forth with irresistible power, and he is able to give the young man the conviction that he has been set apart for the work of preaching. The man who is wrestling with whether he is called to the ministry ought to pray that he be anointed with an extra measure of the Spirit.

We must be humble enough to listen to the advice of other godly people. Do your parents, teachers, or co-workers point out gifts in you that are compatible with the ministry? Paul says that the officebearer must be of “good report of them which are without” (1 Tim. 3:7). I can remember teachers and classmates in high school commenting to me: “You would make a good pastor!” Every Christmas during my college years, a professor from our own seminary would visit me and encourage me to pursue the ministry. Other members of the church have perceptive insights into our strengths and weaknesses; we do well to seek and listen to their judgment.

You ought to consider the ministry if you are filled with zeal for God’s house and the people who dwell in that house. It is true that every Christian—whether a minister or not—loves to worship God along with all the saints. But my experience was that the older I became, the more the needs of God’s people were on my mind, until it became the longing of my heart to devote my life to serving them. The aspiring minister is one who can say with the psalmist, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life…” (Ps. 27:4).

You must examine whether you have been endowed with God-given abilities to understand and communicate the rich truths of Scripture. 2 Tim. 2:24 says that the minister must be “apt to teach.” That is, the minister must be able to take a complex subject, break it down into its simplest form, and communicate that simple truth to God’s people. It could be that a man is godly and humble, and the same man has a desire to serve God’s people, but the man lacks the intellectual ability to put together two sermons every week, teach several catechism classes, lead societies and meetings, and do counseling work besides. A man who has a kind heart, but who lacks the ability to teach, is not fit for the gospel ministry. (But do not worry if you are not a straight A student. Academic excellence is not a prerequisite to entering the ministry, nor does academic success necessarily equate to success in the gospel ministry. God is oftentimes pleased to use “the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (1 Cor. 1:27). Lean on others, especially your professors, to help you know if you have intellectual abilities to serve as a minister.)

You know you are called to the ministry if you can do no other. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:16, “… woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” It could very well be that you have other strong interests in your life. Prior to the ministry, I wanted to be a truck driver. I loved the sound and size and power of semi trucks. For three years during college I drove a semi as a part-time job. But I had to learn an important lesson: just because you love something, or you find that you are good at something, does not necessarily mean that you are called to do that thing. God would not give me peace of heart driving semi. The Holy Spirit brought me little by little, through many experiences of life, to the point where I could say with Paul: woe is me, if I preach not the gospel.

May God give the aspiring minister humility to heed the Spirit’s call, patience to wait on the Lord’s timing, and strength to do the blessed work of preparing to preach the gospel message!

Rev. Regnerus was ordained in 2017 and is the pastor of Lynden Protestant Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington.

**Book Review Derek Kuiper**

**THE MASCULINE MANDATE: GOD’S CALLING TO MEN**


What is your mandate as a man? Is it to spend endless amounts of time on your electronic devices? Is it to sleep in until the last minute possible and then rush out the door to school or work, neglecting your own personal devotions? Is it indulging in sports or some other leisurely activity? The word of God gives us the proper mandate in Genesis 2:15:
“[T]he Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.” The ESV is translated “work” instead of “dress.” This is what Richard Phillips uses and what I will use here, as the book runs with a theme of “work and keep.”

Phillips does an excellent job of expounding on this mandate that we all share as men. In the first half of the book he focuses specifically on what that mandate is. He begins in the garden with who and what we are and how we must obey God. He then moves on to the mandate generally, first in the area of working and how we are to labor in whatever field the Lord has placed us. Phillips then reminds us of the second part of the mandate, to keep safe all that the Lord has put under our care. It’s striking that although this book was published ten years ago, what it contains is even more applicable today than ever.

Men have a calling to work, plain and simple. In the day and age of mothers working outside the home and stay-at-home dads, we do well to consider this for ourselves as well, even in our own circles, as we see more and more men willing to give up their masculinity in the way of neglecting this mandate to work and keep. Work is a very important part of our lives here on earth. Phillips speaks of the reality of the temptations we face in work. World glory, self-serving power, and many sinful pleasures there are that can be associated with work. Sometimes we find that our identity has become wrapped up in who we are professionally. This is a real danger for many self-employed men especially. We must remember our God-given mandate to serve others and have a balanced life in our labors. Above all we must work to glorify God and serve him in all we do. If God is pleased with our work, we can be satisfied in it, even if the world opposes it. Work is important, but it should never be so important that a man is forced or even tempted to neglect family, friends, church life, or, most importantly, regular time with God. Phillips ends his chapter on work with a reminder that we serve an audience of one. We do not labor for the praise of men, but solely for the glory of God.

When considering a masculine mandate, one cannot help but think of leadership. Phillips makes no effort to sugarcoat the current state of our nation and the church today in the lack of leadership. He focuses specifically on shepherding in guiding, protecting, and caring for that which God has put under our care. Much of this mandate applies to leadership in the church. Too often the motivation of leaders is to use their office improperly in a self-gratifying and self-glorifying way. True leadership is nothing but self-sacrifice. True leadership is protecting and caring for the flock. Phillips reminds us that in anticipation of his death on the cross to deliver his flock safely home, Jesus says in John 10:11, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” This is a tremendous calling we have as men to lead in offices of the church. We must always pay close attention to the ultimate Shepherd-Lord, Jesus Christ, in his ultimate act of service, his death on the cross.

Maybe you think that you have a good understanding of what a man is, and you don’t need this book. I would challenge you to read it and not grow from it. Every man I know, myself chiefly, will benefit from it. Once you begin you will be humbled more and more and realize how much growth you need in the way of working and keeping in every aspect of your life. Ultimately the place to learn of this mandate is in the word of God, but this book can aid us greatly, and it is my prayer that God will use it to spur on a new zeal for godly living in manhood.

The name of the book implies it is solely for men. I would encourage women to read it as well, both young and old: young women, to assist you in your searching for a husband and a father for your children if the Lord wills; older women, so that as mothers and grandmothers you may be better able to train your sons and grandsons to carry out their fatherhood.

This mandate is also important as there continues to be a growing need in the church for boldness and yet humility in the offices of elder and deacon. Most important is this mandate for men who take up the high calling of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified. It is Phillips’ desire, and should be ours as well, that God raises up men who kneel before our sovereign Lord and acknowledge our complete dependence on him. We will fail as men in every aspect of this mandate, but God’s grace, and his grace alone, will equip us to serve and lead as he calls us in various ways. Then when Christ returns, we will hear the words we should prize above all others: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant…enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21).

Derek is the husband of Lydia and a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.
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**March 8**  
*Read 1 John 4*

We’re going through a novel in school called ... *And Now Miguel*. It’s about a boy who wants to prove to his shepherding family that he’s man enough to go with the men into the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to care for the sheep. The story also gives some glimpses into the life of a child growing up in Roman Catholicism. There’s one part where Miguel says he’s very good at praying, because he can rattle off “Our Father” faster than anyone in his family. In another chapter, Miguel talks about how he thinks it’s really good to sing hymns for solemn occasions, although he has no idea what the Latin words mean. The book paints a picture of a religion that’s very cold and superficial.

What a contrast this is to true Christianity! 1 John 4:18a says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.” In this chapter we read that God is love, and we must not approach him with a cold fear and dread. He’s our heavenly Father who loves us so much that he sent his only begotten Son to die for us. May we love one another as he has loved us. *Sing or pray Psalter #163.*

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**March 9**  
*Read 1 John 5*

Verse 21 of this chapter reads, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”  
Rev. Schipper said it’s important to recognize that the warning in the text comes to us, not to the wicked world. We make an idol when we don’t keep the sabbath holy as we ought. We make an idol when we imagine that God is not the all-powerful, everywhere-present God that he is. We make an idol when we make our salvation dependent on our own work. When we love money, we make for ourselves an idol. If we study the Bible academically and don’t write that word in our hearts, we are guilty of serving an idol.

To “keep” in the text means to protect from danger. There is a battle here: not against the idol, because the idol can do nothing, but against ourselves. Our old man of sin is always inclined to worship the idol, and we must constantly fight against that. *Sing or pray Psalter #231.*

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**March 10**  
*Read 2 John*

Rev. Kortering made some nice study guides on 1, 2, and 3 John that I read in preparation for today’s and tomorrow’s devotionals. 1 John, he says, addresses the significance of love as a power for true fellowship in Christ Jesus. Now the other two epistles deal with applying this guideline in different ways. 2 John emphasizes the importance of showing hospitality to those who walk in the truth, but not to heretics. Finally, in 3 John, the apostle commends one saint for his hospitality, while reprimanding another.

The theme of walking in the truth is developed throughout the epistle. John begins by greeting his fellow saints, whom he loves “in the truth.” He then exhorts us to walk in the truth and tells us how to deal with heretics who are not doing so. John concludes the book by telling the saints that he has many more things to write but will wait until he sees them in person.

One question Rev. Kortering posed was about how we should deal with the Jehovah’s Witnesses that come to our door in light of the instruction in verses 10 and 11. What do you think? Should we allow them into our houses? *Sing or pray Psalter #228.*

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**March 11**  
*Read 3 John*

This letter is written to Gaius, a spiritual brother in one of the churches of Asia Minor. The purpose of writing the letter was to commend Gaius for his Christian hospitality and to seek help in dealing with Diotrephes, who was causing division in the church. This man refused to receive John and the apostles, which would have discouraged these traveling preachers in their work.

Kortering says, “Evaluate yourself and your
fellow saints to determine whether the blessings of hospitality are present. Consider whether there are areas in which they could be improved. John deals with hospitality shown to itinerant preachers. The same principles apply, do they not, to any stranger or even to a member of the church that seems to be a loner?”

Rev. Kortering also invites us to reflect on how to deal with the Diotrepheses in our church. “Are there some who try to set members of the congregation against certain of our preachers, missionaries, or professors?” What should we do about this, in light of John’s instruction here? Sing or pray Psalter #226.

March 12  Read Revelation 1:1–8
In Behold, He Cometh!, Herman Hoeksema says Revelation’s theme is “how the Lord is related to the things that come to pass throughout this dispensation, how through them He is coming all the time, and how He will ultimately come in all the glory the Father hath given unto Him” (p. 6).

We will briefly look at a few things from these first verses of Revelation. First, what are the seven spirits? How could they refer to the Holy Spirit, who’s one with God the Father and God the Son? “The words, therefore, must be applied to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the exalted Christ and as He is poured out into the church” (p. 19).

Second, what does it mean that Jesus is “the first begotten of the dead”? Just as a firstborn “opens the womb” and prepares the way for his siblings, so “Christ was in the womb of death, was born from death, opened the womb of death for all those whom the Father gave him” (p. 22).

Finally, it’s significant that Christ will appear in the clouds. Clouds in scripture symbolize majesty and judgment. He comes now, not as the suffering servant, but as the king and judge of the earth. Sing or pray Psalter #183.

March 14  Read Revelation 2
In the first seven verses of this chapter, we find the letter to the church at Ephesus. This church had many strengths, but it also had a fatal flaw—it had lost its first love. In a sermon on these verses, Rev. Lanning explained four aspects of this “first love.” First, first love is the thing that’s dearest to our hearts. We see this in Jeremiah 2:2, where God compares his relationship with his church to that between a husband and wife. Second, when Jesus is first in our life, then love for all others is driven out. It’s our only love. Third, first love is a shaping, forming, determining love. Our love for God forms our love for our family. When the love of Christ is first in our hearts, we will be chiefly concerned with our boyfriend or girlfriend’s love for Christ. Fourth, our first love has as its source God’s love for us. The love of Christ is a fountain that results in all kinds of other beautiful aspects of the church. May we pray that we never lose our first love. Sing or pray Psalter #242.

March 15  Read Revelation 3
In the last section of this chapter, we have the letter to the church of Laodicea. The problem with the members of this church was that they had become spiritually complacent. They had many earthly things and thought they didn’t need God.

We can often be guilty of spiritual complacency as well. The signs of an unhealthy spiritual life are a lack of concern, a lack of zeal, and a lingering apathy, writes Rev. Cornelius Hanko. The cause of this complacency can be that it comes after much spiritual involvement, like when Israel had settled in after the wandering and conquest of Canaan. We can become too busy and get our priorities all wrong. Rev. Hanko recalled a man who decided to see in the vision in Revelation 1, we likely think immediately of the candlestick that stood in the temple. Although they are similar, Rev. Hoeksema explains there are two differences between them. First, here we have seven candlesticks standing around the Savior, instead of seven arms in a line. This represents the truth that the New Testament church is gathered from all the nations of the earth, not a specific generational line. Second, the candlesticks here are individual, not connected like the arms of the lamp in the temple. This shows that the church today is joined to Christ and one another spiritually, not physically as in the days of Israel. Sing or pray Psalter #229.
get rid of his business, lest he lose his soul. Whether it be business, family, sports, or something else, we easily start putting our focus on earthly things. Our only escape from this sin is through prayer in Christ Jesus. We must remember that, just like our spiritual lethargy can easily be transmitted to others, so can our spiritual joy. May that be the spiritual attitude we demonstrate to one another. Sing or pray Psalter #408.

**March 16** Read Revelation 4

Rev. Hoeksema beautifully explains the different aspects of the vision we read of today. John sees God sitting on his throne in heaven. He is shining like a precious stone, and there is a rainbow around him. Around the throne are 24 elders, who are clothed in white and have crowns of gold on their heads. These elders represent the church of all ages, with the old dispensation being pictured by the 12 tribes and the new by the 12 apostles. Before the throne is a sea of glass that looks like crystal, which reflects the glory of the heavenly kingdom. Then there is the presence of the four beasts, which symbolize the whole creation. Their faces represent creation’s different powers: wild beasts, domesticated animals, intelligent creatures, and flying things. The six wings that each has indicate its full development, and the eyes show how “all creation is to reveal itself plainly and openly to God’s glory” (p. 161). These beasts and the 24 elders fall down before God and sing praise to him who has created all things for the glory of his name. Sing or pray Psalter #411.

**March 17** Read Revelation 5

Rev. Jeff Pollard is minister of Mount Zion Bible Church in Pensacola, Florida. At a family conference, he gave a speech entitled “How Does Music Affect the Worship of God?” which I listened to in preparation for the next couple devotionals. The passage was the last verse of chapter 4 and all of chapter 5, where we read of the song that the four beasts, the 24 elders, and the angels sing in praise to God.

God commands us to worship him with music. Music is an expression of the human heart and its ability to create. It speaks to us emotionally, and powerfully influences us. It’s a language of symbols that represents feelings and moods with sounds. Music is a powerful tool that can be used for worship or to blaspheme God’s name.

What’s the proper relationship between music and worship? First, we are commanded to come and sing; it’s not an option. Second, it pleases God when we sing to him loudly and from the heart. Third, we must be careful not to exalt music above the preaching. Fourth, our songs should be filled with the glory of our redemption. Sing or pray Psalter #406.

**March 18** Read Revelation 5

Rev. Pollard has four main things we should consider about our worship music. First, the music we use for worship should declare the glory and perfections of our God. We must remember that our worship is a response to him and what he has done. Second, the music we use should be doxological. It should be filled with praise to God. Third, our worship music should be instructive and doctrinally sound. One of the major issues with contemporary Christian music is that it lacks solid instruction. We need to brand the psalms of Zion on the minds of our children. Fourth, the music we listen to should cultivate maturity. It should help us grow in Christ and become mature emotionally. Our culture has saturated us with false emotions, and we can be tempted to add those to our worship. The media is always manipulating human emotions, making us hard, filthy, and lustful. This music influences the evil that’s already within us. In contrast, the music we use should be expressive of our deep love for God. Sing or pray Psalter #392.

**March 19** Read Revelation 6

Rev. Koole wrote an article at the end of 2007 about how we see the running of the four horses around us. He said that while 2007 didn’t see events like 9/11, the tsunami of 2004, or Hurricane Katrina, it did mark the heating up of the climate change debate. He mentioned that experts were claiming that the change in weather patterns could lead to a food shortage, and each politician portrayed himself as mankind’s only possible savior. Doesn’t this sound familiar?

Koole went on to say politicians that could be elected in 2008 seemed bent on curtailing religious freedoms. We could see the time developing when man would willingly set aside his freedoms in exchange for that elusive world peace and security. Christians were facing the new year with some apprehension, but we’re comforted knowing God is in complete control and is using the horsemen to “run with the salvation and victory of Christ’s righteous cause and church in mind.” This article may just as well have been written at the end of 2019. As we enter the new year with its hateful and
murderous political scene, the same comfort comes to us today as it did then. Sing or pray Psalter #387.

**March 20** Read Revelation 7

In this chapter, John’s attention is turned to the saints. Revelation 7 is an interlude chapter, a chapter of God strengthening his people while telling us about all the judgments he will bring on this world. We read that God will pause judgments until the 144,000 are sealed in his book. The Mormons wrongly believe this number refers to the spiritual elite, who are given special privileges in the future world. Instead, the chapter goes on to show that the number symbolizes the great number of God’s people. In a sermon on the chapter, Rev. Haak explains that one of the glorified saints addresses John when he sees the apostle looking at them with an inquisitive and astonished look on his face. He tells John that he is looking at the sinless saints, who are washed in the blood of Christ.

Rev. Haak points out a couple things about these saints that we see in verse 14. First, they are victorious. Sin has been completely destroyed, and they are now perfectly sanctified. Second, they have come out of the tribulation. They have all suffered for Christ’s sake. Is that our experience? Do we suffer for Christ’s sake? Sing or pray Psalter #374.

**March 21** Read Revelation 7

Another thing Rev. Haak talked about in his sermon was what heaven will be like. Heaven is to live day and night in the presence of God, to dwell with him. In heaven, we will have perfect fellowship with and love for each other. We will be continuously growing closer to God, all through eternity. We will perform the will, purpose, and intentions of God, and the joy of serving him will fill every moment.

In addition, the chapter ends by saying that in heaven God will wipe all tears from our eyes. This life is called the valley of tears, but there will be no pain or sorrow in heaven. This is because God has removed all sin, the cause of our tears, and the effects of that sin from our lives. Also, God will give an explanation for the tears we have shed throughout this life. God will show us how his divine wisdom worked our tears to our eternal glory. These revelations will cause us to fall down in praise to him, as we are brought to see so much more how he truly worked all things for our profit. Sing or pray Psalter #373.

**March 22** Read Revelation 8

Rev. Dale Kuiper wrote an interesting article about trumpets in the Bible. The trumpet’s call has the unique ability to quicken and excite. Trumpets in Bible times were usually made of rams’ or goats’ horns, had no valves, and produced the sound of one pitch. Trumpets were used to herald the year of jubilee, announced the appearance of the new moon and full moon, warned of approaching danger, and were blown at the dedication of the temple, coronations of kings, and burnt offerings and peace offerings. However, the main purpose of these horns was to give signals in battle. The preaching is compared to the sound of a trumpet, because it must be clear and sharp, preparing God’s people for the spiritual battle.

In Revelation 8 and 9, we read about seven angels who each have a trumpet and announce God’s judgments upon the earth. The comfort for the church is that these angels blow their trumpets under God’s direction. These judgments are under his control and work for our good. Christ’s return will be accompanied by the sound of a trumpet, which will strike fear in the hearts of his enemies and signal the end of the battle. Sing or pray Psalter #330.

**March 23** Read Revelation 9

This chapter talks about locusts being released out of the bottomless pit. Rev. Van Baren wrote that these locusts are figurative, but they devour and destroy and afflict an area for about five months like earthly locusts do. These locusts are especially destructive demons that are only released at the end of time.

There are distinctly different parts to these locusts. Their front is very appealing: “like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions” (vss. 7–8). Their backs, however, are horrifying: “they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months” (v. 10).

Rev. Van Baren closed his article with the comforting words that, although we can start to see the locusts’ work around us, “For the Christian it is a time to look up, for redemption draws nigh. We live in amazing times. We see the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Word of God. Then we know that the return of our Lord is at hand.” Sing or pray Psalter #327.
March 24  Read Revelation 10

Verses 1–7 here constitute another interlude in the book. Hoeksema reminds us that Revelation covers the breaking of the seven seals. The seventh seal is revealed by seven trumpets, six of which we have already read about. This seventh trumpet manifests itself as the seven vials, which we will hear about in Revelation 16. Just as there was an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, so here we have an interlude between the blowing of the sixth and seventh trumpets.

The first four seals (Revelation 6) revealed the general history of the world. When the fifth seal was broken, we read that the cry of the persecuted church was heard. Then the sixth seal revealed the shakeup of the physical universe as the day of judgment drew nigh. The first four trumpets (Rev. 8–9) demonstrated nature’s destruction. The fifth trumpet brought forth a special army of Satan, and the sixth released the demons who influence Gog and Magog to bring the world to war. Just like the interlude in Revelation 7, the purpose for this interlude before the seventh trumpet is to comfort and strengthen the people of God as they face the last days. Sing or pray Psalter #323.

March 25  Read Revelation 11

We read about the two witnesses in the first part of this chapter. These witnesses are not two literal people, but represent the true church as she sends out missionaries to spread the gospel, preaches Rev. Griess. She brings the world the call to repentance, not a false god who loves everyone. She proclaims the need for Christ’s blood. Her message is confrontational, but she must bring it fearlessly.

The church will continue in this work until the end, when the antichrist will arise out of the bottomless pit. Then the church will be silenced. There will be believers until the very end, but an official ministry will no longer be able to exist, because the church will be declared public enemy #1. This death of the church institute happens under God’s sovereign control and at his appointed time, when her witnessing is finished and every elect has been gathered. At this time, the world will destroy the church and celebrate while their bodies lie in the streets. These witnesses had pointed out the sins the world didn’t want to give up, and now they had paid for it. This time will be the ultimate example of suffering for Christ’s sake. Sing or pray Psalter #205.

March 26  Read Revelation 11

Yesterday we talked about how the nations will destroy the church at the end of time and rejoice at its annihilation. However, thankfully that’s not the end of the story. We read that their rejoicing will only last 3 ½ days, a number which simply demonstrates how short it will be. At the end of this time the Christians will arise, and the remaining world will watch in terrified amazement as they are brought to heaven. Then and only then will the earthquake come and destroy everything for which the world has worked so hard.

Rev. Griess points out three applications for us in this passage. First, we must be busy being witnesses in this world. We must not cease in our witnessing until God allows the world to stop us. Second, we must continue this work while expecting it to be opposed. It’s because of this that the witnesses come in sackcloth. They know the finality of the judgment that is coming. Third, we must remember that God will vindicate his church. God will have his final say. The victory is ours! Sing or pray Psalter #297.

March 27  Read Revelation 12

Revelation 12:7–12 tell us about a war in heaven, fought between the devil with his demons and the archangel Michael with his angels. There has been much debate about the time of this battle, but Rev. Hoeksema says we must understand it as taking place throughout the entire old dispensation, from the time of Abel’s death to the resurrection and ascension of Christ. This is because the battle is for the souls of the saints who went to heaven during that time. Satan insists that they are rightfully his, because Christ has not come to atone for their sins, and he plans to keep that from ever happening. This is also why the battle ends with the exaltation of Christ. Now the sins of these saints have been atoned for in history, so even the devil must admit that he has no right to those saints. Therefore, since the devil can no longer fight for the souls of the saints in heaven, he focuses all his wrath on the people of God living in this world in the new dispensation. However, Christ will soon return, and the devil will be destroyed in this new battle as well. Sing or pray Psalter #158.

March 28  Read Revelation 13

Rev. Griess began a sermon on this text by pointing out that our greatest hope is Christ’s coming again
when he will raise the dead, judge the world, and create the new heavens and new earth. However, before this new creation can take place, he must destroy the antichrist. That beast is described here as having seven heads and ten horns, each with a crown on it. The name of blasphemy is written on each head. He has the body of a leopard, the feet of a bear, and the mouth of a lion. This beast represents a great political power. The kingdom of antichrist will have full power to enforce its laws; no nation will escape that power.

What will this kingdom look like? It will be a kingdom that the world will love, and only God’s church will see its horror. It will be a kingdom that’s inspiring, and people will sell their souls to it. The poverty issue will be solved, hunger will be abolished, work will be leisurely, and there will be amazing scientific discoveries. Does any of this sound familiar? Do we see any of these happening around us today?

Sing or pray Psalter #165.

March 29 Read Revelation 13

Yesterday we talked about the earthly glories of the antichristian world power. Today we see that what comes out of the beast’s mouth reveals what he really is. The laws, philosophies, and propaganda of this kingdom will be used to mock God and his laws. The right worship of God will be outlawed. Christians will be seen as a threat to this kingdom, a problem that must be gotten rid of. The devil has been striving ever since Babel to unite the people of the world into one antichristian kingdom, and at the end God will allow him to succeed for a short time so the cup of iniquity may be filled.

As we have discussed in other devotionals, Rev. Griess also reveals the comfort provided the saints here. First, this kingdom will be cut short. The cup of iniquity will fill so rapidly that judgment will come swiftly. Second, this kingdom is under the complete control of God. God gave the devil his power, and he will take that power away again when the time comes. Finally, God’s people will not be deceived. All will believe the beast, except those whose names are written in the book of life. Sing or pray Psalter #290.

March 30 Read Revelation 14

Revelation 13 talks about the mark of the beast that everyone must have in order to buy and sell in the kingdom of antichrist. Will God’s people be able to stand in that day? This question is answered in the chapter before us. This chapter speaks of the blessedness of heaven that all the elect will enjoy. They are described as the 144,000 that have been sealed by God. One of the descriptions of these 144,000 is that “[t]hese are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (v. 4).

Following the Lamb and being his sheep means apparent defeat to the physical eye, a very humbling and comforting truth, writes Rev. VanOverloop. The Lamb loved his Father and us perfectly, and we must follow him by reflecting that love towards one another. Following the Lamb means living a life of service. It is putting the needs of others before our own. It also means that we suffer for the cause of the gospel for the short time we are here on this earth. Through death, the Lamb leads us to heaven, where antichrist and his world of sin can never touch us. Sing or pray Psalter #100.

March 31 Read Revelation 15

In Bible class we just studied the ten plagues, which culminated in Israel’s being delivered from bondage and led through the Red Sea, while the Egyptians who chased them were destroyed. I find this providential, because we see that very event symbolized in Revelation 15, where those who were victorious over the beast stand on the sea of glass and sing “the song of Moses” and of the Lamb (v. 3). Just as the saints stand on the sea without sinking, so Israel was led through the midst of the sea on dry ground. The same sea that was their salvation was the destruction of their enemies. Just as Israel sang praise to God after they saw Pharaoh and his army swept away, so the saints here sing praise to God as the seven angels come forth with the vials, the final outpouring of God’s wrath. The strong symbolism here illustrates the fact that God’s church is truly one throughout all of history, writes Hoeksema. God saves one people throughout all times and places. Just as the church sang this song at the Red Sea, so she will be led to sing it again in the last days. Sing or pray Psalter #59.

April 1 Read Revelation 16

Revelation 16:10–16 speak of the pouring out of the fifth and sixth vials. Rev. Bruinsma, in a sermon entitled “Gathered to Armageddon,” explained how these verses speak of the kingdom of antichrist falling apart. When antichrist comes to power, everything will be good for a while, but then the earth will stop producing food, and new diseases will spring up that can’t be controlled. People will grow bitter over
their belief that they aren’t getting their fair share of the kingdom’s riches. The pagan East will see their own might and rise up against the West. The two sides will meet in the Battle of Armageddon, which marks the end of the antichristian world power.

The cause of Jehovah will prevail against the armies of the wicked in this battle. That’s because this battle is being fought by God. He’s sovereignly directing it, and he’s also there with his army of angels. We need not fear this day, because it’s the great day of our deliverance.

This comes also as a warning to us. We must not walk naked, with our sin exposed. We must constantly ask, what does our life in this world reveal to others? Sing or pray Psalter #294.

April 2  Read Revelation 17

This chapter gives us the vision of the whore and the beast, which is clearly explained in a sermon by Rev. Rodney Kleyn. The whore here is the false church, and the beast is the antichristian kingdom. The woman rides on the beast, and she’s wearing beautiful, rich clothes and carrying a gold cup. Throughout history she has aligned herself more and more with the antichristian kingdom. Now her name is Babylon, and she’s nothing more than an arm of the antichrist. Just like a harlot is deceitful and seductive, so the false church preaches under the name of Christ while rejecting the truth. Besides deceiving, her activity is also killing the saints. She’s hungry for and drunken with their blood. It’s especially by her persecution of the true church that the false church shows herself to be false. However, her glory will not last. Her end comes when the kingdoms of the world turn against her and destroy her. The world will eventually want to destroy any trace of Christianity, even false Christianity, so that only the antichrist is worshiped. Sing or pray Psalter #307.

April 3  Read Revelation 18

This chapter speaks of the destruction of Babylon, the center of the antichristian world power. The description of this great city is set forth in contrast to that of the new Jerusalem we read of at the end of the book. However, the major difference is that Babylon’s description is connected to its complete destruction, while the new Jerusalem’s is connected to its total victory and exaltation.

Rev. Hoeksema says that it’s clear Satan will bring about this destruction himself, which is consistent with his work throughout all of history. In his efforts to destroy the truth, the devil self-destructs and works exactly according to God’s plan. We don’t know precisely how Satan will bring about Babylon’s destruction, but we are told that he will do it in a final effort to destroy the church.

Hoeksema also says that God’s people will be removed from the earth before this destruction takes place. We are commanded to stay away from Babylon now and not to join in her abominations, for her day of judgment is coming. When the time finally comes, God will take his remaining people from the earth, so that they don’t partake of that judgment. Sing or pray Psalter #319.

April 4  Read Revelation 19

Rev. Hoeksema says there are many who love to interpret Revelation 19:11–21 literally, as if Christ actually comes down from heaven on a white horse to fight the nations of the world, who are waiting for him with all their armies. This is foolish from a few points of view, but especially if we look at what the Bible tells us about what the wicked will be doing in the last days. They will not be expecting his coming. On the contrary, they will be living it up without a care in the world, just as they were in the days of Noah.

We see here what takes place at the Battle of Armageddon. At this battle, the kingdom of antichrist meets the nations of Gog and Magog. These nations of the East believe they are fighting against true Christianity, when they are actually destroying their own cause. It’s on the scene of this horrible battle that Christ will appear victorious over all, with the glorified saints following him. Sing or pray Psalter #336.

April 5  Read Revelation 20

Gog and Magog are the focus of an article written by Rev. Lubbers on this chapter. These refer not to specific nations, but to the “kings of the east” (Rev. 16:12), who make war against Christianity. In Revelation 20, John is shown the “thousand years,” which is the New Testament dispensation, the time in which the church is gathered from all nations. This means that the church can only be surrounded again, as it was in the days of Israel, when all the nations turn against her. It is this to which Gog and Magog refers. Additionally, the “land of Magog” found in Ezekiel 38:2–6 is the populated parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Since this was the then-known world, we can understand Magog to represent nations from all over the world. The battle
described in verse 8 will be the last battle between the seed of the woman and the entire demonic world. They will be brought to the valley of Megiddo, or Armageddon. This is the place where Deborah and Barak defeated their enemies in the book of Judges, and it is there that the enemies of God will be vanquished once and for all. Sing or pray Psalter #353.

April 6
Read Revelation 21

We have now ended the discussion of the negative work of God’s judgment and close with God’s positive work of the final victory being realized. Rev. Hoeksema writes that the main focus of Revelation 21:1–4 is the perfect relationship that will exist between God and his people. Yes, the new heavens and new earth will be more beautiful than we can even imagine, but it’s that relationship that will make it so and that will give us perfect joy and happiness.

In these verses, we read of the “new Jerusalem.” Jerusalem is the city of God, the place where God dwells with his people. This takes different forms throughout history. In the Old Testament, God dwelt with his people in the physical temple in Jerusalem. In the New Testament, God dwells within the hearts of his people, who are gathered from all the nations. The church universal is the new Jerusalem. This is a closer relationship than was had during the Old Testament, but it’s still polluted with our sin. However, in the new heavens and earth, sin will be gone. We will all live within the heavenly new Jerusalem in perfect communion with our God. Sing or pray Psalter #377.

April 7
Read Revelation 22

“And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,” reads Revelation 22:17. Rev. Vos writes that when the regenerating grace of God enters man’s heart, he becomes lonely, longing for God. This is expressed as “thirst” in the Bible, and those who thirst are given the water of life. This spiritual thirsting is also brought out in verses like Psalm 42:2, where we read, “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”

Many say that in this verse God invites all men to be saved, but many don’t accept him. However, we are not thirsty by nature. Without Christ, the gospel does nothing but leave us more without excuse and make our condemnation all the greater. It’s only through Christ’s sacrifice that any of us can be thirsty and willing. Still, this does not take away our responsibility to come. As Rev. Vos puts it, “God did not choose little machines.” We are moral and rational creatures who must come to him, even as he works that coming in us. Sing or pray Psalter #382.

The Belgic Confession is the earliest of the Reformed creeds known collectively as the Three Forms of Unity. The Three Forms of Unity are the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt. The name of the creed, Belgic Confession, derives from the name of the territory, Belgium, where the creed was written. Belgium at that time referred to the whole area that today is made up of three countries: Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

The Belgic Confession was forged in the fires of the persecution of the Reformed churches in Belgium by the fanatically Roman Catholic kings of Spain. The Spanish king Charles V was the ruler of that area at the beginning of the Reformation. The territory was an important source of revenue for the perennially cash-strapped ruler, so Charles initially governed with a rather light hand. In 1521 Charles ordered Protestantism eradicated in his realm. The persecution reached its peak under Charles’ son, Philip II, who became king in 1556. At first Philip placed Princess Margaret in charge of Belgium, but sensing weakness in her resolve to prosecute his war against the truth, he replaced her with the bloody Duke of Alva in 1567. During his reign of terror the persecution was fiercest. The precise number of those martyred is unknown to any but God.

During this terrifying persecution a Reformed
pastor, Guy de Bres (pronounced de-Bray), wrote the Belgic Confession. He was born in 1522 in the French-speaking part of Belgium. He was raised Roman Catholic, but some time before 1547 he became a Protestant. In 1548 he went to study in England for several years, but returned to Belgium in 1552 to become a pastor. As the persecution intensified he was forced to flee from his congregation and to preach wherever he could. He began writing the Belgic Confession in 1559 and finished in 1561. In 1567 he was captured by the authorities who had hounded him for so long. After a brief imprisonment he was executed by public hanging. He was 45 years old and left behind a wife and five children. That persecution, and particularly the death of its author, must be remembered when studying the character of the Belgic Confession.

The Belgic Confession was a defense of the Reformed faith against the persecutors. In his dedicatory epistle Guy de Bres addressed King Philip and petitioned for relief from the persecution. The Roman Catholic authorities lumped all the Protestants together as detestable Anabaptists and thus a threat to the social order. The confession served to distinguish the Reformed faith from these subversive and revolutionary Anabaptists and to show the king that the Reformed were obedient and worthy citizens.

The Belgic Confession was also written for the persecuted saints. It was a witness that the truth for which they gave their lives was the very word of God and so a testimony that their cause is the cause of the Son of God. The beginning of every article indicates this: “We believe with the heart and confess with the mouth,” or, “we believe,” or, “we believe according to the Word of God,” or, “we believe and confess.”

Because they believed these things on the basis of the word of God, they were informing the king that they would not compromise, no matter the cost. In the stirring words of preface to the Belgic Confession,

The banishments, prisons, racks, exiles, tortures and countless other persecutions plainly demonstrate that our desire and conviction is not carnal... But having the fear of God before our eyes, and being in dread of the warning of Jesus Christ, who tells us that he shall forsake us before God and his Father if we deny him before men, we suffer our backs to be beaten, our tongues to be cut, our mouths to be gagged and our whole body to be burnt, for we know that he who would follow Christ must take up his cross and deny himself.

Their confession was a costly confession, written and sealed with their blood.

What should be the evaluation of professing Reformed young people who easily forsake that confession or will not confess it when that confession means the loss of friends, family, or popularity? Their confession is empty words, and they trample on the blood of their forebearers who gave their lives for the truth’s sake. In studying the truth of the Belgic Confession the Reformed young person must be reminded that whosoever confesses Christ must confess him before men at all costs in the fear of God, in love for Christ, and in dread of Christ’s words that whosoever denies him before men, him will Christ deny before God and the holy angels.

Because it was the confession of the persecuted, there is a strong element of comfort in the Belgic Confession. Especially important were the doctrines in Articles 21–23 of the sufficiency of Christ’s one, only sacrifice and the peace that comes from justification by faith alone for every child of God. There are also the comforting confessions of God’s sovereignty over the evil endured by the church at the hands of her enemies “when devils and wicked men act unjustly” in Article 13 on providence and of the preservation of the church “against the rage of the whole world” in Article 27 on the church. In light of the historic circumstances the believer is moved to tears by the words of Article 37 on the final judgment.

The consideration of this judgment is justly terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly, but most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and the elect; because then their full deliverance shall be perfected, and there they shall receive the fruits of their labor and trouble which they have borne. Their innocence shall be known to all, and they shall see the terrible vengeance which God shall execute on the wicked, who most cruelly persecuted, oppressed, and tormented them in this world; and who shall be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences, and, being immortal, shall be tormented in that everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.

But on the contrary, the faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honor; and the Son of God will confess their names before God His Father and His elect angels; all tears shall
be wiped from their eyes; and their cause, which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious, will then be known to be the cause of the Son of God.

In light of the persecution it is startling that the Belgic Confession is also polemical, and especially against Rome. Fearlessly the Reformed church condemned Rome’s false doctrines and rebuked “her for her errors, covetousness, and idolatry” (Article 29). If a church or individual will not condemn false doctrine in the relatively safe environment of today, how will they do that when the condemnation of error means death at the hands of those that teach false doctrine? They will not, but will betray the truth to save their lives and so will lose their souls. In the Belgic Confession the Reformed faith shows its fighting character. It also shames the spirit of this age that studiously keeps back its sword from blood in all theological controversy. This compromising spirit views controversy over the truth as a threat. When the truth is threatened by false teachers this same spirit loudly proclaims that there is no controversy at all, and its engagement with the false teacher never progresses beyond a friendly discussion or the mildest rebuke. The Belgic Confession confronts the believer with his obligation to contend earnestly for the faith in the face of the threat of the loss of name, place, and life in this world.

The Belgic Confession is doctrinal. It is not concerned with cultural issues or social justice or injustices in the world, but with doctrine. The doctrine of the Belgic Confession is the doctrine of the word of God and thus the truth that a believer must know for his comfort and salvation. Reformed believers lost their lives for the sake of that doctrine. The Belgic Confession teaches the Reformed young people to love that doctrine and to value that doctrine more highly than their own lives.

The Belgic Confession treats the doctrine according to the ancient division of doctrine known as the six loci of Reformed doctrine. The Latin word loci means topics. There are six main topics of Reformed doctrine: theology, the study of God; anthropology, the study of man; Christology, the study of Christ; soteriology, the study of salvation; ecclesiology, the study of the church; and eschatology, the study of the end times. The Belgic Confession organizes the doctrine of the Reformed faith under these six topics. Beginning the creed there is also a section on the doctrine of scripture, the source of all right doctrine and true knowledge of God.

The form of the Belgic Confession teaches that the truth of scripture must be systematized. That means that the truth that scripture reveals must be organized in a logical fashion. The truth of God can be systematized because it is logical and does not contain any contradictions. This idea about the truth of scripture is attacked. Today the thinking is that the truth is paradoxical. What is meant by paradoxical is not an apparent contradiction which can and must be resolved, but that the truth is entirely contradictory. So it is taught as profound theology that God loves all men and desires to save all men, and there is election and reprobation; or that God is three Persons and one Person. These are irresolvable contradictions. Such contradictions make the truth of God unknowable. If in the field of mathematics $2 + 2 = 4$ and $2 + 2 = 6$, then the truth of what $2 + 2$ equals is unknowable. When this is done in theology God is rendered unknowable. In churches where these contradictions are taught, the knowledge of God is taken away, to the destruction of faith and godliness. The Belgic Confession teaches in its very structure that the truth is one harmonious whole without contradictions. The truth can and must be arranged logically. By means of this logical structure God is known more and more by the believer.

Its doctrinal content and order is the beauty and the glory of the Belgic Confession as a creed. It teaches the knowledge of God in his Son Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3). There is no grander subject that the believing young person can study than the theology of the Belgic Confession, and with it the other of the Three Forms of Unity. Their doctrine is the truth of God as revealed in the sacred scripture.

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

APRIL ISSUE: GIRLS
BAPTISMS

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”
Mark 10:14

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:
Calvin John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brett & Britney Westra—Calvary, IA
Beckham Charles, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brandon & Brittany Kroese—Calvary, IA
Savannah Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tayler & Erin Hoekstra—Calvary, IA
Hendrick Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Harrison & Steph Van Maanen—Calvary, IA
Ellowyn Harper, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Peter & Keisha Brummel—Calvary, IA
Lincoln James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt & Ellen Brummel—Calvary, IA
Nora Jae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tom & Courtney Andringa—Calvary, IA
Johnny Dale, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jesse & Michelle Pollema—Calvary, IA
Beckett Dale, son of Mr. & Mrs. Darrin & Ashley Brummel—Calvary, IA
Ryker Kyle, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle & Rachel Brummel—Calvary, IA
Clayton Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan & Amber Van Maanen—Calvary, IA
Emma Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brent & Stephanie Zandstra—Calvary, IA
Parker Dean, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lane & Kassandra Brummel—Calvary, IA
Tracen Eric, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brandyn & Meghan Brummel—Calvary, IA
Weston Gage, son of Mr. & Mrs. Cody & Mariah Hoekstra—Doon, IA
Eli Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt & Chelsey Van Beek—Doon, IA
Max Logan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike & Heather Pols—First, MI
Drake Nicholas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nick & Leanne Engelsma—Georgetown, MI
Ledger Dean, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Katelyn Van Oostenbrugge—Grace, MI
Jared Walker, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Sarah Kiel—Kalamazoo, MI
Jackson Dean, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bryan & Erika Kiel—Kalamazoo, MI
Kamryn Elise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Derek & Jennifer Van Uffelen—Loveland, CO
Addison Rebecca, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Josh & Rachel Feenstra—Redlands, CA
Ruth Joanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dave & Lynnae Terpstra—Redlands, CA
Gwen Faye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brian & Faith Brummel—Sioux Falls, SD
Kainen Bartel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Justin & Jenna Zandstra—Sioux Falls, SD
Isaiah Lucas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Luke & Emily Kamps—Southwest, MI
Aaron Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt & Stephanie Hanko—Southwest, MI
Leeland Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jared & Jennelle Van Overloop—Trinity, MI
Gretchen Margaret, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim & Liza Machiele—Trinity, MI
Natalie Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad & Sara Kooienga—Unity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
Joe Monsma—First, MI
Cole Bleyenburg, Kelli Bleyenburg, Colten Miedema, Danae Miedema, & Ryan Vitale—Georgetown, MI
Dieter Goosen—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Mitchell Huiskes, Mark DeKraker, Matt DeKraker—Southwest, MI
Benjamin Steenwyk, Jordan Steenwyk, Juline Hiemstra—Trinity, MI
Ashlin Hassevoort, Bailey Van Overloop—Unity, MI
Bro. Emman and Sis. Ruby Ann Jasojaso—Provident, Philippines
Dylan Kamps—Southeast, MI
Mitchell Huiskes, Austin Van Donselaar—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14

Mr. Byron Maassen and Miss Shayna DeRoon—Hull, IA
Mr. Matthew DeVries and Miss Kalista Heynen—Kalamazoo, MI
FOUR LITTLE THINGS UPON THE EARTH (2): THE CONIES

“There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise:...The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks” (Prov. 30:24, 26).

The littlest coney was covered with brown fur, with a round little nose and round little ears. His paws were soft and squishy, too soft to dig. He didn’t have sharp claws or sharp teeth. He lived with his family and friends in a cluster of rocks high on a mountainside.

One day, as the littlest coney played on the rocks of his home, a hawk soared overhead, looking for a juicy coney to eat. But at the warning from the coney keeping watch, the littlest coney scurried into his home in the rocks. The hawk searched and searched, but the littlest coney was safe, protected by the rock.

The next day, as the littlest coney was eating a leaf, an eagle soared overhead, looking for a nice plump coney it could snatch and eat. But at the warning from the coney keeping watch, the littlest coney scurried into his home in the rocks. The eagle searched and searched, but the littlest coney was safe, protected by the rock.

The next day, as the littlest coney drank water from a puddle, a wolf prowled closer, looking for a tender coney to eat for a snack. But at the warning from the coney keeping watch, the littlest coney scurried into his home in the rocks. The wolf searched and searched, but the littlest coney was safe, protected by the rock.

When he grew up, the littlest coney remembered the safety of the rock. When it was his turn to keep watch, the coney gave warning about the hawks and eagles and wolves and, together, he and his family remained safe, protected by the rock.

The Bible tells us to be like the conies. Coney is another name for the rock hyrax, a small creature that lives in Africa and the Middle East. The Middle East is where the Bible was written.

The rock hyrax lives in large communities. Since they can’t defend themselves or even dig a burrow in the ground to hide, they live among cracks in rocks where they can stay safe and sheltered.

We are to be like the conies. When the dangers of temptations come or our life becomes difficult and hard, we are to hide ourselves in the safety of the Rock, our Lord Jesus Christ.

“The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies” (Psalms 104:18).

“But the Lord is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge” (Psalms 94:22).

Author’s Note: This Little Lights article was inspired by Prof. Huizenga’s sermon “Learning Wisdom from the Conies,” which can be found on Sermonaudio.com.
YOUNG PEOPLES CONVENTION

20/20 VISION

AUGUST 10-14, 2020
AT LAKE WILLIAMSON
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“LOOKING UNTO JESUS THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH” HEBREWS 12:2A