The gift of single life

Writing Contest Announcement 3
Single Life in the Body of Christ 3
Countercultural Single Life 4
The Goodness of the Christian Single Life 6
Unmarried and Caring for the Things of the Lord 8
The Purity of God’s New Creation 9
Preparing for Dating 11
In Preparation for Marriage 12
1 Peter: Encouragement for the Suffering Christian 14
Morning Melody 17
Church News 18
Fathers in the Bible 19

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Beacon Lights is excited to announce that we will be sponsoring a summer writing contest! This contest is for anyone entering seventh grade or older during the 2021–22 school year, and there will be a monetary prize for the top FIVE entries in each of the four age groups. Please follow the link from the “Contact Us” tab of the Beacon Lights website for more details!

The four categories and the writing prompts for each category are as follows:

- **Grades 7–9: Ministers of the Word**—Give a brief history of the life & service of a Reformed pastor of your choice who has retired or gone to glory. Write 600–800 words.
- **Grades 10–12: A Most Elegant Book**—Explore an aspect of creation that you find especially beautiful or interesting. Describe how that aspect leads you and Christians in general to a greater knowledge of the Creator. Write 800–1000 words.
- **Post-high, age 18–22: Cults and Other Religions**—Give a summary and description of a cult or other non-Christian religion of your choice, focusing on the errors of the group and giving a biblical defense against the errors. Write 1000–1500 words.
- **Post high, age 23+: Nations, Tribes, and Tongues**—Describe the history of the spread of Christianity in another country than the United States. If applicable, include an explanation of Reformed church work in the region, and explore the Christian calling to witness to all nations, tribes, and tongues. Write 1000–1500 words.

Each article must be typed in MS Word or Google Doc format. Submit all completed entries with the subject line “Writing Contest” to promotions@beaconlights.org. No article previously published in Beacon Lights may be submitted. Each article will be judged on mechanics, quality of writing, adherence to the topic, and biblical accuracy. The deadline for all articles is August 1, 2021.

What are the prizes, you ask? See the table below for details! Contact a Beacon Lights staff member with any questions you might have...and have fun writing! We look forward to reading all of your entries!

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All monetary prizes will be handed out in the form of prepaid gift cards. Articles will be judged anonymously, and authors agree that all submitted articles may be published in a future issue of the Beacon Lights.

The Issue at Hand Brendan Looyenga

SINGLE LIFE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

For young people considering their future, the question of marriage looms large. Among the various choices we make during our lives, the decisions of whether to marry and whom to marry are probably in the top two or three for most of us. For many Christian young people, the answer to the first question regarding whether to become married someday seems almost to be a foregone conclusion. Will I get...
In his first letter to the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul presents a striking and countercultural perspective on the single life (see especially 1 Corinthians 7). In contrast to the Greek and Roman cultures of his day that viewed unmarried life as a societal dead end, Paul taught the church that this state is a good one that is blessed by God and of great use in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. As young people living in the twenty-first century, we do well to pay close attention to what the Spirit is teaching through this word, since we too are always in danger of becoming products of our culture. A careful evaluation of the biblical perspective on single life will help us to avoid two dangers that so easily arise in our hearts due to the culture in which we live today.

The first danger is perhaps the more obvious one, which is to make the single life an idolatry of self-fulfillment. The message of the worldly culture married someday? Well, of course. Someday.

But pause there for a moment. Whose will is this? Your will? Or God’s will?

This might be something that we as young people are prone to forget. Marriage, as it turns out, is neither inevitable nor is it God’s will for all of his children. For some of us, his good and gracious plan is for us to live unmarried in single life, either for an extended period of time or even for our entire lives. And God’s will is always good! In this edition of Beacon Lights, we consider the goodness of single life and how Christian young people ought to behave while living in that state.

The reality is that all young people, to one extent or another, will spend some time in single life. Though you may be dating someone or even looking toward engagement, you are still “single” in God’s eyes until you have taken the lifelong vows of marriage. Several of the articles in this edition of Beacon Lights focus especially on that time of preparation leading up to marriage. During this time, you are called to be pure in all aspects of your life and to seek God’s word as the primary means by which to prepare for marriage.

For those living as unmarried young adults who are not in a relationship that could lead to marriage, this topic may stir up mixed emotions. On the one hand, there is a unique freedom to serve God and his church that accompanies the unmarried life. In this freedom, there is a rightful joy and fulfillment that you might be experiencing. But on the other hand, there can be struggles, too. Maybe you desire marriage but have not been led into a suitable relationship by God to this point in your life. Or perhaps you are content with unmarried life but don’t see much of a place for yourself to participate in church life. Either circumstance can be painful in both an emotional and spiritual sense, and so we need to turn to God’s word for help in both of these situations, too. Articles in this edition of Beacon Lights will address these questions by pointing you to biblical principles that will guide you toward contentment and help you to see your important place in the body of Christ as single believer.

In whatever state you find yourself, child of God, know that his grace always accompanies his will. And when his will is hard for you to bear, God’s mercies will be great for you.

“And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him” (Isa. 30:18).
in which we live is that single life provides the best means of self-fulfillment because it allows a person to focus on himself or herself without worrying about a spouse or children. Getting entangled in a committed relationship, it is said, comes with a lot of complications. It’s time-consuming, it’s emotionally exhausting, and it can be financially expensive. After all, nothing should stand in the way of you expressing, pleasing, and promoting one thing—youself. If staying single is the best way to accomplish this goal, then single life is best for you.

It would be nice to think that this mindset doesn’t affect young people in the church, but that would be naive. It is impossible to remove ourselves entirely from the messaging of the world, and therefore we need to hear what God has to say about the single life and the role of unmarried persons in the church. Do not make an idol out of single life by making independence and pleasure your greatest goals. Seek to serve the Lord and to edify his church when you are a single member looking toward marriage or if you are living a contented single life by virtue of God’s calling.

If the first danger regarding single life is to make an idol out of the self-fulfillment that comes from independence, the second one is its opposite. This danger is the temptation to despise single life by making an idol of marriage. In many ways this is also a “cultural” temptation, but not one that comes from the ungodly world in which we live. The culture in this case is the culture of a church community that highly values the institution of marriage and family life. This kind of culture is one that Reformed churches have rightly promoted due to their emphasis on the covenant of grace and God’s promise to perpetuate that covenant in generations (Gen. 17:7). For these covenant-perpetuating generations to come into existence according to God’s ordained means, marriage between a man and a woman is necessary. And because of this necessary link between marriage, procreation, and the covenant, marriage is highly valued by believers living in a faithful Reformed community.

But highly valuing something according to God’s word does not mean that we may make an idol out of it. And yes, this really is a danger. Young women may be tempted to despair of a place in God’s kingdom when they are not asked out by a young man during their high school years or thereafter. And young men may despair of their place in the church if they can’t work up the nerve to ask out a young woman or have been turned down before. This despair about marriage can show itself in an attitude of discontentment with one’s life or an unwillingness to participate in church life as a single person. Though we should not simply assume this is the case when someone is struggling with contentment or seems isolated from the church as a single person, there is a real possibility that it represents an idolatrous view of marriage. This idolatry makes married life the only way a person can fruitfully contribute to the kingdom of God.

The Bible presents three key principles that we can use to avoid both of the dangers explained above. The first principle that is given to us in scripture is that everything we do in this life is done in service of the Lord and to the glory of God (Col. 3:23–24). The calling we receive in this life is to live as servants of the one who has bought and redeemed us by his blood. The practical way this is accomplished is by serving others in God’s kingdom in whatever situation God has placed us, whether it be married or unmarried (1 Cor. 7). Understanding this principle helps us to avoid making an idol out of single life as a means of self-fulfillment, and it also helps us to understand that there is a place and work for those in the church who live as single adults. Service is the common calling and privilege of all believers.

The second key principle that is taught in scripture is that every believer is part of a family, whether married or not. That family is the body of believers who have been adopted by God and made his children in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:5). When a church correctly views itself as a family in Christ, it will—and must!—create a place for all its members, whether married or unmarried. Understanding this principle helps us to avoid making an idol out of marriage, which is, after all, a temporary institution (Matt. 22:30). Yes, marriage is a beautiful institution that a young person may rightly aspire to possess. But it points to the greater reality of the union between Christ and his church that will last into eternity (Eph. 5:31–33). Earthly marriages will end when we die. Our union to Christ and life in his family, however, will last forever.

But what about the children? Didn’t we just say that God is pleased to perpetuate his covenant through generations of believers? If this is true, how can a single person participate fully in the covenant? The answer to this question is found in the third biblical principle, which is that our hope for the future is not in our children and our ability to produce them, but in the Lord our God who creates and calls his covenant people by his power (Matt.
THE GOODNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN SINGLE LIFE

As Reformed churches we (rightly) emphasize the importance of the family. In light of Genesis 2:18—“It is not good that the man should be alone”—we believe that in general it is best that a man finds a wife and marries (and vice versa). In harmony with passages such as Psalm 127:3—“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward”—as well as our understanding that God establishes his covenant with believers and their seed, we encourage couples to have children and raise them in the fear of the Lord.

But all this emphasis on the family can sometimes leave the single members of the church wondering, “Is there a place for me in the church?” I certainly pondered that question at times. I married later in life than most of my classmates and occasionally felt as though I did not really count or matter—that there was no place for me in the church unless I got married and had children.

Thankfully, scripture addresses such thinking. It does so by clearly teaching that the Christian single life is good and honorable. Specifically in 1 Corinthians 7:8, the apostle Paul writes as one who never married: “I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide [remain] even as I.” Paul by inspiration says it is good for some to remain unmarried. And that word “good” refers to that which is honorable, even excellent. The single life is useful for worthwhile purposes. This holds true whether one remains single because in God’s providence he or she has not been given a spouse or remains single willingly.

In writing this, Paul is not contradicting Genesis 2:18. But rather, 1 Corinthians 7 adds a level of balance and clarity by indicating that there are some exceptions to the general principle that men and women should seek a spouse. In other words, this text shows that not everyone has to get married. For while the married state is good and honorable, so too is the single life.

This has application for you who are single: you are not a second-rate, inferior Christian simply because you are unmarried. The Spirit’s evaluation of your relationship status is that it is honorable. Therefore, you must not believe the discouraging lie of the devil that you are less important because you are single. For it is written: it is good for them if they remain single.

This also has application for us who are married and, perhaps, also have children. We must not be guilty of disparaging the single life and thereby leave the impression that single members are somehow second-class citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Instead we must recognize the essential place they have in the body of Christ and appreciate them. Rather than neglecting the single members of the church so that they feel like misfits, we must include them in the life and fellowship of the church. If the single life is good in God’s eyes, it must be viewed as something good in the eyes of the church. Do we view it as good?

**THE GOODNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN SINGLE LIFE**

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1 In this article “single” refers to anyone who is not married, whether dating or not.

2 Due to space limits, I pass over the prerequisite for willingly remaining single, which according to vv. 7, 9 is the gift of continence: the God-given ability to contain oneself sexually.
honorable? The answer of scripture is that single members are able to devote themselves more fully to the service of Christ and his kingdom.

In 1 Corinthians 7:32–33, we read: “But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.” According to these verses, Paul’s purpose in recommending the single life is that one might be free from “carefulness,” that is, the anxieties and concerns that come with family life. Being married and having children brings with it certain cares that belong to this earthly life (“the things that are of the world”). In contrast, the single member is able to focus on the things that belong to the Lord.

And now we must understand that the difference is not an absolute difference, but a matter of degrees. In other words, it is not as though married persons are under no obligation to devote themselves to spiritual matters. Nor is the point that unmarried individuals have absolutely no earthly responsibilities. But rather, in general, those who are married and have families have more earthly cares and responsibilities than the single members. Thus, as we said, single members are able to devote themselves more fully to the things belonging to Christ and his kingdom. That makes the single life good and honorable.

This also implies a calling for the single members of the church: use your time as a single individual in devotion to the Lord.

To put it negatively, the single life is not a time for self. That is how the wicked world views the single life. For them, being single means being free—being able to do whatever I want, whenever I want. For them, being single means I can use my extra time, energy, and resources for myself, specifically, for my own pleasure. This, according to the world, is what makes the single life good. However, this mentality is antithetical to the teachings of scripture and God’s own purpose for the single members of the church.

Instead of serving ourselves as single individuals, we are to devote ourselves to the Lord. Being single means one has an opportunity for greater service in the church, exactly because he or she has more time and energy. As Rev. Josh Engelsma put it so well in his book Dating Differently, “Singleness is not for enhanced selfishness, but for enhanced service.”

Now to be more specific, devoting ourselves to the Lord includes both studying and serving. First, the Christian single life is an opportunity for studying God’s word more closely and carefully. Single members, this is the time for making your devotions a time in which you truly study God’s word, diving into it. It is a time for reading good Reformed literature (like Beacon Lights). It is a time for being involved in Bible studies, coming prepared and then exercising your prophetic voice there, rather than always deferring to the married persons.

Second, the Christian single life is an opportunity for service in the church. Rather than frittering away one’s time, energy, gifts, and resources, these things should be used for the advantage and salvation of the other members of the church. The calling of the Christian single, therefore, is to be involved in the life of the congregation, finding ways to help out. The single members of the church should be right in the thick of things, rather than on the fringes in the church.

Perhaps you object: “But I am so busy with schoolwork, a job, and sports.” To that I say, “Good! Throw yourself into your studies and the other aspects of your station and calling; do them heartily unto the Lord.” But at the same time, be careful and ask, “Am I starting a trend right now of always putting my vocation first, ahead of serving the Lord?” Singleness is not first and foremost a time for self, but for service.

Rev. Kortus is the pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.

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3 Joshua Engelsma, Dating Differently (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2019), 118.
Dear Unmarried Friend,

When you hear the words “unmarried and caring for the things of the Lord,” what thoughts arise? I will share some of mine. It appears that this pathway may be lonely. Will I be able to experience the fullness of life in Christ without marriage? Do I have the gift of remaining unmarried? I love the thought of dedicating my life to caring for the things of the Lord. I do sometimes wish someone would put together a list of what it all entails. Let’s delve into the unmarried who care for the things of the Lord.

Single. That is the term used today. I prefer the biblical word “unmarried.” Why? The word “single” holds the stigma of being by yourself and alone. No one likes the thought of being alone, and your ears sometimes ring with what God said in Genesis 2:18: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” Just remember that God also inspired Paul to say in 1 Corinthians 7:7, “I would that all men were even as I myself.”

You may be unmarried, but you are not alone! Jesus said, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:20). Our bridegroom has come and purchased his bride. Ephesians 5:23–27 tells us what marriage pictures: the church being subject to Christ, her head, who is savior of the body, who loves her and gave himself for her that he might sanctify and cleanse her by the word, that he might present her to himself, glorious, holy, and without blemish. Christ loves his church as himself, cherishing her and joining her unto himself. Understand that a piece of the puzzle is not missing for the unmarried. Marriage is only a picture of what you already have in Christ. You are part of his body, and all the members work intimately together in that one body for the building up of it (Eph. 4:16). Earthly marriage will pass away, but fellowship with Christ and his bride will continue forever.

My friend, each child of God goes through an unmarried state, whether for a time, or for life. If you are looking forward with hope to marriage, I do not ask you to give up that good desire. Be sure to bring it before the Lord, but do so following Philippians 4:6–7: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by
teachers are needed, so you prayerfully consider those vocations. A piano player or organist is needed at church, so you volunteer. There are those who are sick and dying, those marrying, and those with new babies at church. You write them little notes of encouragement. When you hear of hardships in another’s life, you pause for a moment and pray for them or with them. There is so much room for an unmarried child of God to dedicate time to prayer, as did Anna, the prophetess.

I could make a longer list, but I trust that as you spend time in the word, you will be transformed and will learn to apply what God delights in to your daily walk. I wanted someone to write a list of “todos” for me, yet the more time I spent in the word, the more I began to understand, first, that simply being in the word is caring for the things of the Lord. David said, “One thing have I desired of the Lord… to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple” (Ps. 27:4). God delights in your beholding his beauty and speaking to him! Second, God uses his word to open you to opportunities of service that abound all around you! As you read God’s word and pray, he will open your eyes to the multiple ways of service you may have missed before.

In summary, my dear unmarried friend, know you are not alone but belong to your faithful savior, Jesus Christ. Use the gift of undistracted time God has given you to be in his word, beholding his beauty, and praying for ways to serve. Invest yourself in the life of your church family! God provides so many little daily opportunities when you pay attention and are willing to care for the things that belong to him. Remember what belongs to the Lord. Is it not his precious people who belong to him? Serve him by serving his bride! Know that whether you marry or not, one day your Bridegroom is coming back for his bride, and the full reality of marriage will be yours forever. As you wait, abound in caring for the things that belong to and please the Lord, knowing your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Monica is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan and serves as a secretary for Kleyn Electric.

Kelsey Kuiper

THE PURITY OF GOD’S NEW CREATION

Clean, unsoiled, unspotted. White as the morning after a fresh snowfall. Purity is beautiful in creation, but the struggle for purity in thought, word, and action is constant and difficult, especially living in a culture that glorifies all things impure. Still, the admonition of scripture is to follow God and not the world. In this world of great temptation, we are to live not according to the impure desires that belong to our former lives, but according to the great purity that characterizes the holy, beloved bride of the Lamb.

What Does the Bible Call Impure?

Biblically, we are told that impurity includes sexual immorality, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, sensuality, covetousness, filthiness, crude joking, evil desire, lust, and love of pleasure more than love of God. Other things can be inferred from this list: pornography, watching or reading entertainment with inappropriate sexual content, fantasizing about someone other than one’s spouse, and any variation or perversion on God’s gift of sex by oneself or with others.

As we can see, many things fall under the category of impurity, and personal temptations change with our age and circumstances. Can any reader truthfully say they have not struggled with or been assailed by some of these things?

Our Identity

Take a moment before moving forward to examine your own heart, to see which temptations to impurity lurk within your flesh. Part of the gospel, after all, is knowing the devastating reality of our former lives. Before Christ, we lived in impurity, ignorance, and darkness. We made decisions based on our own deceitful desires. We repeatedly searched for water in broken containers that held none to quench our thirst. We were like Esau, who for a bowl of stew satisfied his bodily desire but gave up his identity as heir to the blessing of God. “And such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:11).
Some of us walked in these sins before God changed our hearts. But those who are found in Christ are new creations, no longer enslaved to impure desires and passions. Once we lived in impurity, dwelling in darkness, shame, and secrecy, and living as objects of God’s wrath. But that is no longer who we are. Before, we walked in that which is impure, but that old life is dead—as dead as Jesus was on that first Good Friday. Since we have been raised with Christ, our hearts and minds must be set on different things: that which is honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

We are those who now walk in light. As members of the body of Christ, we partake in his divine nature. Through knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, God is making us look like him. We are heirs to the blessing of our Father. We are chosen, royal, set apart, holy, and God’s very own, purchased for his own good pleasure. By the precious blood of the pure Lamb, we have been ransomed from the meaningless lives we lived. With this beautiful identity—true of you, O child of God—impurity is entirely out of place.

**Our Calling**

Our calling as holy sons and daughters is to glorify God in our bodies. To be holy, as our Father is holy (1 Pet. 1:16). To put on these virtues: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, meekness, self-control, righteousness, holiness, edifying speech, compassion, kindness, humility, godliness, faith, steadfastness, virtue, knowledge, and brotherly affection.

We must learn to control ourselves, both mind and body. Self-control is an evidence of the Spirit in our hearts, and the life of a disciple of Jesus requires frequent denial of self. Should we just sin that grace may abound? No! That makes no sense if we are living in the Spirit and believe the word of God to us. Paul says those who do not know how to control themselves in holiness and honor are just like those who do not know God. “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 4:7–8). If God has given you his Spirit and the desire to live according to his will in purity, it is an act of love for God to put certain protections into place against temptations. Here, then, are some practical steps for maintaining purity in singleness:

- **Stop consuming content that causes discontentment**, even “innocently romantic” entertainment. Your desire for marriage and companionship should come from what scripture says about marriage, not from worldly portrayals.
- **Learn about God’s design for marriage in his relationship to his church.** Seek the benefits of marriage for the kingdom of God, rather than as a means to satisfying your own desires.
- **Stop making dirty jokes and sexual innuendos.** Don’t laugh at your friends when they do. Shut them down with kindness for the sake of the glory of God and the purity of your mind.
- **Be intentional in your dating, set strict boundaries, and be countercultural.** Though not easy, it is possible to wait to kiss until your wedding! This won’t be foolproof as you still need to control yourself, but some things will be less tempting physically when you keep yourselves from kissing. Consider that your significant other is only a brother or sister in Christ until the day you are married (1 Tim. 5:2). Don’t push boundaries with sensuality. Love God more than pleasure.
- **If there are places and times that lead you to sin, do not enter those places at those times.** Watch for patterns that lead to situations in which you struggle and make every effort to keep yourself from those things (Matt. 18:9).
- **Flee from sexual sin.** Your strategy should not be to control it by being strong enough. Flee from it! When the temptation arises, say no immediately, even if it must be out loud. Then turn your mind toward those things that are lovely, pure, and honorable.
- **Grow in holiness and love for God.** Know your new identity as God’s holy and beloved child, called to all lovely, pure, honorable things. See your life as a pathway God has given you to walk toward life with him forever. Find your contentment in delighting in the Lord and living as he designed.
- **Seek out an accountability partner.** Find someone who will check you and ask you hard questions, someone who will be honest with you. Confessing sin to someone trustworthy is an important step in fighting impurity. Ask for help if you are struggling. Struggles with impurity can breed shame, but you are never alone in your struggle.

We are weak in the area of impurity. Satan knows this too, but thankfully God has begun a good work in us to sanctify our hearts and conform us to his image. We have a beginning of obedience and victory, even in this difficult area of purity. Our hope is not in thinking more and fighting sin harder; we
would certainly fail. Our hope is in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Though we have sinned in the past and continue to fight these battles in the future, we are presented before God in white robes. What a beautiful new identity God has given to his children! Out of thankfulness to God, let us live in the purity of the bride of Jesus Christ. Let us resolve to live not as the world, or our former selves, or even how we behaved yesterday, but according to the will of God (1 Tim. 6:11–16).

Kelsey is a member of Zion Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan and serves as a college campus coordinator for International Friendships.

PREPARING FOR DATING

Have you prepared yourself for dating? Are you prepared to date? How exactly should you prepare for dating? There are many ways you can prepare yourself for dating, in the way that you live, what you consume, and your view toward others and dating itself. The devil would have you consume the entertainment and media of this world to influence how you prepare and ready yourselves for dating. As God’s children, turn from the devil’s temptation and walk in a godly path. Dating is no time to ease up on your antithetical walk. As God’s children, what kind of entertainment can you consume to grow in your understanding of dating and preparation for it? In opposition to the devil and his growing sinful influence on this earth, foster a proper view of those whom you desire to date, and grow in your spiritual walk and union with Christ.

First, the world would try to taint your perspective of the one whom you desire to date. Movies, college education, books, and politics would have you look for qualities and personalities that are not approved of God.

Young man, what kind of young woman do you look for? Do you look for the woman described by Hillary Clinton, who says, “[I am] valuable and powerful, and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and achieve [my] own dreams”?1 Or do you desire the woman who says, “I shall serve my Lord and fear him. I desire his kingdom to come and his will to be done”? Look for the woman described in Proverbs 31, who seeks to labor for and serve those around her. The woman who “worketh willingly with her hands” for the sake of her home is the one who has value “far above rubies” (vv. 10, 13).

Young woman, do you look for the man who is a strong leader and is dedicated to the church, or the popular athlete, or the rich man? Are you attracted to his car, his biceps and his jokes, or his union with Christ? The world, a successful man works tirelessly so that his barns are overflowing. The world’s man is praised for his lack of sleep and dedication to work in every hour of the day. Surely, look for one who works heartily, but a wise man spends time laboring in God’s word and would one day be active and lively in the home.

The world would have you, young men and women, all to focus on that beauty that is outward. The regular use of social media can lead you right into this trap. Social media is designed to seek after attention by posting the best picture. You get one chance to get the approval of others, and you better look as good as possible when you post something. The devil desires to distract you with this media from that beauty that is most important. Do not let the agendas pushed in the movies, books, and politics of this world affect your view of a godly and desirable mate. Before you ever date, you must first know and desire the right kind of person to date.

Second, as you prepare to date, grow in your spiritual life. As Rev. Engelsma says, “We should give more thought to becoming someone rather than finding someone.”2 Take seriously your walk

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in fellowship with God. Pray earnestly as David in Psalm 86: “Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name” (v. 11). Desire to be united first to God; only then will you ever find true union with another. Live in faithfulness, and in recognition of your weaknesses, strive to grow each day. Seek to learn from scripture. Take up good Reformed literature. Let your entertainment be glorifying to God’s name. Pray without ceasing.

The world does not recognize these things as the activity of a young man. A young man is supposedly in a unique position to pursue all his hobbies and desires and is not held accountable to anyone but himself. Godly young men realize they walk before their Father’s eyes. Young men, learn from God’s word how you must walk. Seek to become a man who is capable of being head of his wife (Eph. 5:23). Labor diligently to be able to provide for home and family; he that does not is “worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). Learn to love with a love that builds up a woman in her faith as Christ loved the church and gave up himself to make her holy (Eph. 5:25–26). Trust God to lead and direct you as you grow in maturity.

Young women, be not like worldly women who seek to “usurp authority over the man,” but rather learn to submit graciously as the church does to Christ (1 Tim. 2:11–12). There is much honor to this kind of woman. Seek to grow so that one day you may be capable “to be sober, to love [your] husbands, to love [your] children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to [your] own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:4–5).

To become someone who is “dateable,” you must seek God’s strength. Pray earnestly that God would strengthen you to become such a person, to walk opposed to the world’s desires, and to desire such a holy one. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee” and “the man that trusteth in thee” (Ps. 84:5, 12). Do not rely on yourselves. God’s children are strongest when they rely on God the most. As the children of God cast their burdens upon him and rely upon him, they will be sustained and led in a godly walk (Ps. 55:22). Trust that God will both make you godly and bring unto you a godly companion. Know that the Lord is in control when he makes you wait for many years, or perhaps even guides you into lifelong singleness within the church.

Young people, the devil thoroughly seeks to taint the home. He knows the church’s health is found in the health of its homes. Already in the dating stage before marriages are made and homes are formed, the devil seeks to bring about destruction. The devil “deceiveth the whole world” in its view of dating and marriage (Rev. 12:9). “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). As you prepare for dating, seek for God to give you wisdom. All God’s children naturally lack wisdom, so “ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given [to you]” (James 1:5).

Luke is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California and is currently in college preparing for a career in elementary education.
leadership? To your sinful heart, a life of service is not natural, but as a Spirit-filled young man you are capable and called to serve in the kingdom of God. A single man who is active in the spheres of the kingdom will know how to give of his time and energy for his wife, should God call him to that role.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ flowed out of his love for his church. Again, how do you prepare to love a spouse while you are single? The emotional aspect of love is difficult to prepare for, but there is much more to love than emotion. Love seeks the good of another; there is no better example of good than what Christ has done for us, as spoken in John 15:13, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Seeking the good of your wife means caring for her soul. This points to your calling to seek God’s truth and to lead your wife into it. Bible study, godly conversation, and society attendance, among other things, will all build your knowledge and understanding of biblical truth. Growing in these practices will facilitate this particular aspect of love that you must show your wife.

First Peter 1:15–16 highlights an important aspect of Christ’s leadership: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” The perfection of our Lord manifests itself in his fleeing from sin and temptation. Your leadership in holiness directs those in your care to be holy too. This dedication begins in your single life as you flee the temptations this world has to offer, and must then flow into your dating life also. Flee from all temptations of sexual sins, child of God, and be holy.

Your prayer to God for a godly wife is pleasing to him. Ask that he give you wisdom and the ability to lead, that he would teach you what it means to selflessly serve in love, in truth, and in holiness.

“Her price is far above rubies”
The desire to marry is a natural inclination for a godly young woman. That longing is neither despised by God nor discouraged in his word, as the Lord formed that relationship by his hands and considers it a “good thing.” In Genesis 2:18, 22 we read, “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him....And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.” We look forward to this marriage relationship as daughters of our heavenly Father.

For some, marriage comes quickly with little time for preparation. Others may wait for a time, hoping and navigating their lives as single women. And still others wait, desiring a good thing and yet finding God’s answer to them to be no. God molds each woman in service to him, and in all this he speaks to his daughters, writing the value he places upon them on their hearts. “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!” (Ps. 139:16–17).

We wait with patience, but also with purpose. Scripture abounds with verses similar to Psalm 62:5, “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.” We confess God works all things to our salvation, and we prepare for marriage by learning trust in God’s plan for our lives right now. No matter the duration of your single season, there is practical, biblical preparation to participate in.

First, your relationship with your Lord matters. God has graciously given you the desire to know, seek, and love him; these are building blocks he sets to prepare you for any godly relationship. We learn love, honor, and respect for others from the Lord! Second, Proverbs 4:23 instructs the child of God to “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” The world has much to say about how you should live in your singleness and in your marriage. It is tempting to be caught up in this messaging, but the thoughts of your mind, your actions and words, and certainly where you spend your time and energy all impact the state of the heart you have been called to guard. Finally, connected to both your relationship with God and guarding your heart is prayer. In this season of waiting, your prayers for patience and trust in the Lord, for strength to reject lies you are told by the world concerning purity and marriage, and also for the desire that he will bring a spouse into your life do not go unheard. They are answered according to his plan for you, and with much grace.

Derek and Meghan are members of Zion Protestant Reformed Church. Derek works as a computer programmer at Vibration Research. Meghan is a former teacher at Covenant Christian High School and now a mother in the home.
1 PETER: ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE SUFFERING CHRISTIAN

Both Peter and the recipients of his first epistle were no strangers to suffering. The believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (now modern-day Turkey) in AD 62–63 were living under the tyrannical authority of the Roman government. Their lives could change dramatically at any moment based on the whim of the current emperor. These believers had been exiled from their homes and dispersed into different provinces in the Roman Empire. They undoubtedly faced social pressure to participate in the wicked, worldly entertainment of the Roman culture and hatred because of their refusal to participate in the state religion. And as Christians, they were subject to increasing persecution under Nero’s reign. Even Peter was himself imprisoned, and it is believed that he died as a martyr soon after writing his second epistle. For these reasons, a prominent theme in the book of 1 Peter is encouragement for God’s people as they experience suffering on this earth.

First Peter 4:12 and many other passages in scripture make clear that believers should expect to endure trials during their time as exiles in this wicked world. At times, Christians are subjected to trials that are chastisement from God, meant to draw us away from a particular sin back to him. It is reassuring for a child of God to remember, when facing chastisement, that any fiery troubles they may experience now are nothing compared to the fires of hell that the ungodly will experience for all eternity. At other times, believers may experience suffering in the form of persecution because of their faith and walk as children of God surrounded by a hostile world. Both of these types of suffering are a necessary part of the Christian life. Christians can and should view the experience of suffering during their life on this earth as a confirmation of their status as children of God.

Even though you may know that our trials are sent by God for a purpose, it can still be scary to feel the heat rising from a purifying fire in your own life. Perhaps you or a loved one has received a medical diagnosis that changes everything. Or the person you had planned on spending the rest of your life with has suddenly ended the relationship. Maybe you are going through another year of your life single, while dreaming of finding a spouse. Or you did not get into the college you wanted or did not receive the job offer you were counting on. No matter what your specific situation is, it is difficult and discouraging to watch your own hopes and expectations for your life go up in flames and turn to ashes at your feet.

By God’s good design, the fiery trials of this life burn away the flimsy, earthly things that we are tempted to rely on for happiness, such as health, earthly relationships, financial security, or personal accomplishments. By purging these potential idols out of our lives, our trials serve to strengthen our faith in the only thing we can truly rely on—our heavenly Father. He is acutely aware of what you are going through in every moment of your life and has planned it to carry out his perfect purposes and your salvation. Have you ever noticed that suffering tends to have a positive impact on your devotional and prayer life? Sometimes God answers our prayers by providing the deliverance that we seek, while at other times he answers our prayers by giving us increased strength to persevere without taking our trial away. But as we are purified by the refining fire of suffering in our earthly lives, the “gold” that emerges is the ability to better reflect the image of God and bring praise, honor, and glory to his name no matter what our circumstances are.

As Christians, we must follow the example of our Savior and submit to suffering with patience. We
can even rejoice in the face of difficult, life-altering trials or severe persecution because we have faith in God’s promises of both current and future deliverance and glory. First Peter 3:13–14 reminds us that the righteous do not need to fear suffering because we are blessed even in the midst of our trials. And we know that Christ’s suffering on this earth ended in triumph! As a result of his redeeming sacrifice on the cross, we can be confident that our own suffering will end in the same manner. When we live in the awareness of our status as pilgrims and strangers who are on a journey to our true, heavenly home, our recognition of this fact enables us to keep our lives on this earth in proper perspective. Even though this journey is difficult, whatever pain we experience on this earth pales in comparison to the blessings that await us in heaven. By God’s grace, we may endeavor to live a holy life on this earth as a witness to him and “be ready always to give an answer” (3:15) to those who ask us where our hope comes from even in the face of intense suffering.

1 Peter Reading Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Study Question</th>
<th>Sing or Pray</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 8</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:1–2</td>
<td>How would being reminded of their place as an elect child of God have been a comfort to these exiled people? How is it a comfort to you?</td>
<td>Psalter #107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 9</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:3–5</td>
<td>Think about the words that Peter uses to describe our spiritual inheritance, looking up the meanings if necessary. Which one is most striking to you?</td>
<td>Psalter #30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 10</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:6–9</td>
<td>Consider a time of suffering that you have experienced in your life. How did God use this trial to refine you and your faith in him?</td>
<td>Psalter #174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 11</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:10–12; Hebrews 11:39–40; Ephesians 3:8–10</td>
<td>How does the revelation that God gives his people in the New Testament compare to what he revealed to the Old Testament saints and the angels?</td>
<td>Psalter #389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 12</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:13–16</td>
<td>These verses contain beautiful promises of grace for the believer that enable them to live as God commands. Can you list all the commands and promises that are given?</td>
<td>Psalter #89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 13</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:17–21</td>
<td>What are some “corruptible things” that you are tempted to trust in for your salvation rather than placing your full faith and hope in God?</td>
<td>Psalter #401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 14</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:22–25; Isaiah 40:6–8</td>
<td>What do the images that both Isaiah and Peter use to highlight the disparity between weak, perishable man and the enduring Word of God teach us about our salvation?</td>
<td>Psalter #245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:1</td>
<td>Identify the five sins we are commanded to lay aside in this verse, looking up the meanings if necessary. How do these contrast with the “unfeigned love” that we are called to have for the brother in 1 Peter 1:22?</td>
<td>Psalter #370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 16</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:2–3</td>
<td>What does Peter’s illustration of a newborn baby in these verses teach us about how we should mature spiritually?</td>
<td>Psalter #322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 17</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:4–5; Romans 12:1–2; Hebrews 13:15–16</td>
<td>Based on the passages you read today, what is the nature of the “spiritual sacrifices” that the believer is called to offer as part of their “holy priesthood”?</td>
<td>Psalter #317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 18</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:6–8; 1 Corinthians 1:18–31</td>
<td>Notice the differences between the two groups of people described in these verses—those who find Christ to be a stumbling block and those who have Christ as their cornerstone. What is the eternal destiny of each group?</td>
<td>Psalter #318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Scripture Reference</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Psalter #</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 19</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:9–10; Hosea 2:14–23</td>
<td>Think about God’s mercy toward his people as it is described in 1 Peter and in the prophecy of Hosea. How does the great, undeserved mercy that you have been shown as a chosen child of God encourage you in living a holy life?</td>
<td>#94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 20</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:11–12</td>
<td>What does Peter mean by “fleshly lusts” (see also Galatians 5:19–21 and James 4:1–4)? Think about how partaking in these sins detracts from God’s glory and harms your witness to the world around you.</td>
<td>#335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 21</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:13–15</td>
<td>What was God’s purpose for establishing earthly government according to these verses? How should this affect the believer’s attitude toward these authorities?</td>
<td>#223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 22</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:16–17; John 8:31–36</td>
<td>What does it mean to live in freedom as a servant of God? How will this show itself in our relationships with others?</td>
<td>#25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 23</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:18–20</td>
<td>Why is God pleased when his children are willing to patiently endure suffering at the hand of unjust masters?</td>
<td>#153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 24</td>
<td>1 Peter 2:21–25</td>
<td>Christ is shown to be the ultimate suffering servant in these verses. You can read more about this in Isaiah 52 and 53 as well. How does the fact that we are following in the footsteps of Christ in our own suffering give hope and comfort to the believer?</td>
<td>#184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 25</td>
<td>1 Peter 3:1–7</td>
<td>What does proper submission in the context of marriage look like? If you are single, think about how a woman can cultivate an attitude of godly submission and adornment that is befitting for a Christian even if she is not married or how a man can honor women even if he is not married.</td>
<td>#284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 26</td>
<td>1 Peter 3:8–12</td>
<td>Christians are called to dwell in unity with each other both in our family relationships and in the church community. How can the proper and improper use of our tongues help or harm this unity?</td>
<td>#90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 27</td>
<td>1 Peter 3:13–14</td>
<td>What wonderful promise does Peter give in these verses to the righteous who are facing suffering?</td>
<td>#71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 28</td>
<td>1 Peter 3:15–17; Colossians 4:5–6</td>
<td>How can your godly conduct in the face of persecution and trials be a witness of the truth of the gospel to the world around you?</td>
<td>#373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 29</td>
<td>1 Peter 3:18–22</td>
<td>Make a list of all the actions of Christ that are mentioned in this section of verses. How does this work of Christ give confidence to you in the midst of your own suffering?</td>
<td>#79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>1 Peter 4:1–7</td>
<td>Contrast the list of vices in verse 3 with the virtues that Christians are commanded to have in verse 7. Why do you think unbelievers (and sometimes believers as well) are so attracted to pursuing these earthly pleasures?</td>
<td>#323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1</td>
<td>1 Peter 4:8–11</td>
<td>What are some practical ways that you can show earnest love for your brothers and sisters in Christ?</td>
<td>#350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2</td>
<td>1 Peter 4:12–14; Malachi 3:1–5; Hebrews 12:7–11</td>
<td>How do “fiery trials” serve as an assurance of salvation for the child of God?</td>
<td>#122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 3</td>
<td>1 Peter 4:15–19</td>
<td>Identify the two types of suffering that are described in verses 15–16. How would you answer Peter’s question at the end of verse 17?</td>
<td>#84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
July 4  1 Peter 5:1–4;  
Ezekiel 34  How does Jesus perfectly shepherd his people and how can church leaders today strive to reflect this?  Psalter #52

July 5  1 Peter 5:5–7  True humility is an essential part of the Christian life. What would it look like in your own life for you to be “clothed with humility” (v. 5)?  Psalter #14

July 6  1 Peter 5:8–11;  
Ephesians 6:10–18  How does God empower you to engage in spiritual warfare with the devil and all his host on a daily basis?  Psalter #248

July 7  1 Peter 5:12–14  After reading the conclusion of Peter’s letter, look back at his greeting in chapter 1:1–2 and note the similarities between the two. Why are these elements crucial for Christians who are experiencing suffering to remember?  Psalter #196

Poem James Jonker

MORNING MELODY

Here in the solemn solitude,
The glist’ning lake reflects the glory of the morning sun.
The moveless mountains’ mighty majesty
Is breathed abroad; each strand of breeze is spun
With magic mist that swells across the plain.
All nature seems to stand serenely awed,
As with mute tongue she shouts the strain divine:
Here is peace and power; here is God.
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:
Teagan Noelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bart & Michelle Grochowski—Crete, IL
Cora Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Russ & Gwen Birkett—Crete, IL
Ella Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dean & Anna Brummel—Doon, IA
Elsie Lynnae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan & Joni Buiter—Doon, IA
Ian Chase, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle & Kara VanDenTop—Doon, IA
Graham Louis, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tyler & Bethany Kamps—Grace, MI
Shiloh Ryan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan & Lindsay Kroese—Hull, IA
Ethan John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark & Shannon Van Maanen—Hull, IA
Averie Jae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Greg & Rochelle Gritters—Hull, IA
Jessa Hope, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Martin & Karmin DeJong—Loveland, CO
Grayson Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff & Maruso Hendriks—Lynden, WA
Abigail Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jon & Katie Camarigg—Lynden, WA
Elias Thomas, son of Tom & Abigail Pastoor—Zion, MI
Micah Dean, son of Nick & Susan Talsma—Zion, 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:
Nikki Westra—Georgetown, MI
Jeremy Zollen—Georgetown, MI
Josh Zollen—Georgetown, MI
Grace Buchanan—Grace, MI
Abby Kaptein—Grace, MI
Teagan Murphy—Crete, IL
Daniel Olsson—Crete, IL
Josie Ophoff—Crete, IL
Allyson DeBoer—Zion, MI
Lynnae Looyenga—Zion, MI
Elena Overway—Zion, MI

MARRIAGES
“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14
Mr. Dillon Altena and Miss Anna VanDyke—Doon, IA
Mr. Seth Kalsbeek & Miss Taylor Lubbers—Georgetown, MI
FATHERS IN THE BIBLE

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him” (Psalm 103:13).

In the United States, we celebrate Father’s day in June as a means to recognize the important role of fathers and grandfathers. In the Bible, human fatherhood is used as a picture of God’s relationship to us, his adopted children. The typical role of representing this relationship is a duty that godly fathers humbly accept, knowing their examples are intended to point their children to God.

The Bible tells the story of many covenant fathers:
- Adam, the father of all mankind.
- Abraham, the father of all the faithful.
- Joseph, the adoptive father of Jesus.
- The Bible also tells the story of many godly men who were often imperfect fathers:
  - Noah, who faithfully raised his sons while building the ark, yet later failed in his drunkenness.
  - Jacob, the father of the nation of Israel, who failed in favoritism between his many sons.
  - David, a man after God’s own heart, who failed often as a father in disciplining his children.

Yet God, in his grace, preserved the covenant even through these failures. Even when the earthly picture fails, God remains the ultimate example of true fatherhood. He never fails or falters. He loves his children and always does what is best for them to the glory of his own name.

On Father’s Day, did you take the time to thank your father for all he does for you? For the long hours he works to care for you. For the time he spends with you teaching you life skills and lessons.

For listening when you need advice. And, most of all, for teaching you the Bible and pointing you to your heavenly Father.

Many of us have amazing fathers who are godly examples to us, and Father’s Day is a day to let them know they are appreciated and, especially, to thank God for giving us the good fathers we have.

Find the word in the puzzle.
Words can go in any direction.
Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

Abraham    David    Jacob
Adam        Father    Joseph
Covenant    Isaac     Noah

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

Tricia is a member of Unity Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.
THROUGH MANY DANGERS

Written by P.M. Kuiper
Illustrated by Paula Barone

August 1862. Harm van Wyke and his friends leave Holland, MI to join the Union army. There they face temptations to forget God and turn from their faith, like gambling, drinking, and theft.

The friends gather regularly to sing psalms and discuss the Bible, but on occasion, they stumble and fall.

As the war progresses, the boys from Holland endure an arduous march to east Tennessee. Later they take part in General Sherman’s prolonged and bloody Atlanta campaign.

In the midst of the harsh realities of war, Harm’s faith is tried at every turn. But when his greatest conflict turns out to be spiritual, will God give him the strength to stand for what is right, even if he finds himself opposed by friends?

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