Putting Away ChildishThings

Writing Contest Announcement  3
Putting Away Childish Things  4
Response to "Dramtics: Always to be Condemned  5
Response  6
Growing Up Together into Christ  7
Spiritual Maturity and Progressive Sanctification  8
Honoring Father and Mother  10
Turning from Worldliness  11
Changing Obligations  13
2 Peter True Knowledge and False Ideas  14
Baptism  18
Church News  19

A Protestant Reformed Youth Magazine beaconlights.org
**WRITING CONTEST ANNOUNCEMENT**

*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*. 
PUTTING AWAY CHILDISH THINGS

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

This month’s issue of Beacon Lights takes as its theme the words of the inspired apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:11. Near the end of his chapter on the spiritual gift of charity (or love), the apostle Paul uses the metaphor of “growing up” to describe the temporary nature of the more sensational spiritual gifts that God gave to the New Testament church. While gifts like prophecy and speaking in tongues would vanish as the church matured and the apostolic age came to an end, the three gifts of faith, hope, and love would remain. These are the gifts that most fully characterize the mature church of Jesus Christ as it anticipates eternal life with its Lord in heaven.

It is noteworthy that Paul takes for granted that children will grow up and put away the “childish things” that characterize their earlier years. We probably have a fairly good idea of what he meant. Children are naturally selfish and dependent on adults for provision and guidance. They are immature in their interactions with others and are highly vulnerable to the influence of adults. Paul makes a similar reference in Ephesians 4:14, where he exhorts believers to “be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” Remember that the word ‘doctrine’ used here simply means teaching. Unlike a mature adult who has made up his mind based on the instruction of God’s word, a young child is easily molded to believe the lies of this world and to live according to the sinful nature with which he was born. So the word of God comes to us with an important command about our spiritual life.

Grow up!

With this command in mind, the articles in this issue of Beacon Lights will seek to explain the different ways that the process of spiritual maturity is worked out in the lives of young believers. Especially important here is the truth that it is God’s work of progressive sanctification that leads young people from their childish ways and into a life of spiritual maturity. Without this sovereign activity of the Spirit in the hearts of his people, no effort by parents or children will accomplish anything of value. The first of our feature articles this month will explain and apply this doctrine to the process of spiritual maturation.

In addition to his internal work in believers’ hearts, the Spirit also uses external means to carry out his work of sanctification. First and foremost among these are the regular means of grace—preaching and the sacraments—by which the Spirit works repentance and faith in God’s children. These means are providentially reinforced though godly instruction and discipline in the home by believing parents. Though the relationship between parents and children changes with time, the ongoing emphasis of God’s word is that children ought to honor their parents at all times. How the fifth commandment can be obeyed in the lives of maturing young people is described in this issue.

Sanctification in the life of believers occurs in response to the prior work of conversion. The daily work of conversion produced by the Spirit comes in two parts (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 88–90). Both of these parts will be addressed in our last two feature articles this month. In the first place, true conversion involves a turning away from the “sins of youth” (Ps. 25:7), which includes fleeing from the influence and temptations of the world around us. As a complement to the feature article on worldliness, we include a letter to the editor and a response from Prof. Herman Hanko regarding the issue of drama. This is a timely and important exchange we need to consider in light of the great temptation that this form of entertainment presents to us in our present age.

The second part of true conversion includes turning unto a life of thankful obedience to God. As a child of God matures into Christian adulthood, she will more and more acknowledge the obligations of life in the body of Christ and actively seek out how to participate in that life. Our final feature article will explain these different obligations and the thankful obedience that is due to our precious savior, Jesus Christ. We pray that you, our readers, find these words encouraging and profitable as you seek to grow up into Christ in all things.
RESPONSE TO “DRAMATICS: ALWAYS TO BE CONDEMNED”

Dear Prof. Hanko,

I would find it fruitful to begin a dialogue about your article on acting first published in 1950, lately republished in the March issue of the Beacon Lights. As I wrote this response, I found myself returning again and again to a defense of drama itself, which, as you noted, is not the target of your condemnation, so you will have to forgive me if I veer in that direction.

You wrote that the performance of drama is inherently sinful, that to participate in it is an intentional distortion of one’s self. But as I—and many young people and young adults with whom I’ve discussed the concept of acting—understand it, acting at its core is no more and no less than storytelling. Foreseeing this interpretation among your readers, you draw a distinction between the novelist and the dramatist, but I am unconvinced.

I wonder too, do you not by progression of condemning acting also condemn all films, which you initially avoid doing (whether by reading, listening to, or watching) portrayals of unrepentant sin. If something is evil, is glorifying sin, we are to put it off from ourselves (“If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee,” Matt. 5:29). And there are of course many men and women who use their God-given talents for writing and bringing stories to life for the wrong reasons, who worship the works of their hands, or who worship the talents themselves. But all talents, particularly those of the elect, are God-given and intended for use in glorifying him.

In my understanding, acting—as “mere” storytelling—is a talent, and thus not inherently sinful. No talent is inherently evil or dishonoring to God. It is the way in which talents are used (and consumed) that brings glory or dishonor to God. Likewise, lots of movies, by nature of being just another medium of art, are not inherently evil, even though they are created by evil human hands (actor, director, and producer alike). I believe that movies, theater, and the like can be created and consumed in a manner that improves the life of the Christian, that prepares the Christian for spiritual warfare, or that glorifies the great Artist and Creator. Movies and theater, like other forms of art, do not fall into such simple, black-and-white categories as good and evil. They are objects, products, tools, and—like literature, like paintings, like orchestral pieces of music—they should be consumed with discernment, with honest critique, and with a willingness to do the hard work of sorting out gold from dross.

Sincerely,

Ashley Huizinga
Dear Ashley,

It has been a long time since I wrote that article—something like seventy years ago. Apparently I was still in college. I hardly recall what I wrote. I do, however, remember the circumstances. I was asked by the staff to write that article, because drama was a frequent subject of discussion among the young people. I had never considered the question of drama because TV was rare and I had never given the subject any thought that I recall. I myself had never had occasion to watch any dramatic production—except once in Grand Rapids Christian High when a student drama club put on a show.

So the thing to do was, of course, go downtown to the Grand Rapids Public Library to read books written on the subject. I returned with an armful of books and dove into these murky waters. There were plenty of books on the subject.

The consensus among all these authors was, surprisingly, that to be a successful actor one had to abandon one’s own personality and make one’s personality that of the one he or she was portraying. The more successfully one could do this, the better actor or actress one became. I seem to remember that one author, rather dolefully, observed that Hollywood (at that time the center of the movie industry) was filled with psychologists and psychiatrists, because many in the profession became rich trying to repair mixed-up minds. Actors did not know any more who they were.

The thought came to me that if an actor was successful in assuming another character’s personality, he would be assuming the thoughts, the desires, the emotions of another person. I could not bring myself to imagine how anyone would dare to put himself into, for example, Luther’s position when he ruined his health in his agony so great that he thought God was cruel, as he tried to placate God’s wrath against sin, making himself suffer hunger and pain. I could not imagine how anyone would even dare to make himself go through the grief, anxiety, pain, and sleeplessness of Luther in his cold monk’s cell—and not himself sin. I could not imagine the exaltation Luther knew when what he called a light from heaven burst on his soul so that he knew Christ his righteousness. I could not imagine how anyone could think, will, and feel David’s sin and put himself into David’s lust for Bathsheba and ultimate murder of Bathsheba’s husband—and not sin himself.

I also recall another incident that is relevant here. Back when I was in high school, I spoke with Dr. Leonard Greenway, who was one of my teachers at Christian High. He told me that he had spent many sessions with a girl who had been the star of the high school’s dramatic production. Her problems, Dr. Greenway said, stemmed from her very successful role in this drama. She suffered and struggled to return to a normal life. All that set me to thinking and ultimately resulted in the article I wrote.

There is a profound difference between writing a book or reading a book and impersonating another person—as the word impersonate itself suggests. I strongly recommend the former. There is so much outstanding literature available that goes almost unread. Charles Dickens is probably literature’s best describer of the personality of those fictional characters whom he makes come alive in his books. But neither he who wrote about them nor the one who thoroughly enjoys his books is guilty of impersonation. Why be so insistent on defending drama when, at the very least, it is dangerous to one’s mind? I am in full agreement with some critic who described TV as “one vast wasteland.” And he referred especially to dramatic productions.

The ability to change one’s personality and “mess it up” is hardly a gift of God. There are, of course, good, better, and best actors and actresses. It is possible that the worst ones do not harm themselves very much. But that is not an argument in favor of drama. God made us entirely what and who we are. Let us be contented with that and not dabble with dangerous ventures into foreign territory where lurk so many evils—especially in today’s wicked world.

Respectfully in Christ,

Prof. Herman Hanko
Emeritus Professor, Protestant Reformed Seminary
GROWING UP TOGETHER INTO CHRIST

Among the various courses I was privileged to take during my college years, my favorite was a course called “Principles of Development.” As its name implies, this course explained the molecular processes that direct the development of living organisms starting from a single-cell embryo all the way to a fully formed, newborn animal. Though certainly distinct in some ways from the intricate process of human development in the womb, many of the principles that were taught in this course apply to human biology as well. I came away from that course with a greater appreciation for Psalm 139:14 and the marvelous nature of God’s work in creating the human body—indeed, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” by God!

It is no wonder, then, that the apostle Paul so frequently referred to the human body as an analogy for the church. That church, made up of many members with unique abilities and roles, is very much an organism that has been fearfully and wonderfully crafted to bear and display the image of God. This truth ought to humble us at every age, whether as children, young people, or adults. Redeemed by the blood of Christ and regenerated by his Spirit, we are being made into the tissues and organs that make up the body to which our Lord has united himself. By his grace we continue to “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:14–16). And at the end of this process we will become part of the mature and beautiful bride with whom Christ will dwell for all eternity.

Though imaging technologies like three-dimensional ultrasound and MRI continue to reveal more and more detail about the processes of human development, much of what is going on in a mother’s womb is cloaked in secrecy (Ps. 139:15). When we study these processes at the cellular level, the incredible and mysterious nature of development only increases because what we observe isn’t the obvious way we might expect an organism to develop. The mature tissues we see at birth often arise in ways that are completely unexpected. The mammalian heart, for instance, is shaped from two tubes of cells that are twisted and contorted and then fused together to form a complex organ with four separate chambers that is capable of pumping blood to the entire body for a lifetime. The actual biological process of heart development looks very much like the work of a fairground balloon artist turning a single, tube-shaped balloon into a three-dimensional shape that we can recognize only at the very end of his efforts. Marvelous works indeed!

Like the processes that govern development of human bodies in the womb, there is a great sense of mystery in the processes that God is using to shape his church into the fully developed, mature bride of Christ. What we see from the outside with our limited understanding is a work that is not according to our expectation because it is a work that belongs to God alone in his eternal counsel. At all points in history, he is at work crafting the church and directing the spiritual development of each of its members with an eye toward the beautiful body that he has given to Jesus Christ. But the developmental process is not obvious or easy.

Each and every generation of the church faces circumstances and experiences that God, by his providence, is using to direct their spiritual development. For some generations of the church, this process is mysterious—and even painful. From the outside we may only see twisting and contorting of the developing body of Christ that seems entirely contrary to what we expect for the church. A year and more of COVID restrictions. Ongoing theological controversy. Friction and conflict. Even division. How can any of this possibly be good?

This is the same question that the prophet Habakkuk asked at the beginning of his ministry as he viewed Judah, the church of his day. What he saw in the church was “strife and contention,”
SPIRITUAL MATURITY AND PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

One thing distinguishes a child from an adult: growth. A child grows into an adult. This takes many years and God uses the means of nurture in the home. This is also true of spiritual growth. Just as we grow physically because we have physical life, so we grow spiritually because we are spiritually alive. Our life began when we were regenerated. At that point, we began to live and we began to grow. The goal of spiritual growth is that we become like Christ Jesus. Paul writes, “[That we] may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15, emphasis added). We have been predestinated in order “to be conformed to the image of [God’s] Son” (Rom. 8:29). We must “desire the sincere milk of the word, that [we] may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2), and we are called to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18).

The theological name for spiritual growth is sanctification. Sanctification is God’s work of making us holy. Sanctification is progressive, which means that we make progress in sanctification. We become more and more holy, as we grow spiritually. That is the essence of growth. Physical growth is to become larger, taller, and heavier. Spiritual growth is to become more and more holy, more and more...
conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and more and more separated from sin. The Belgic Confession talks about “[being made] a new man, causing [us] to live a new life” (Art. 24). As we grow, we make progress in the Christian life. We should not expect to regress, to go backward, or even to stagnate—to remain unchanged—although that can happen if we walk in sin. We should expect, and we should strive, to grow and make progress.

Scripture and our Reformed confessions teach this truth. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we read, “We all...are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” The words translated “are changed” are literally, “We are being metamorphosed.” Metamorphosis is familiar to us. It’s how a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. We metamorphose from glory to glory, from one degree of glory to another degree of glory. The glory into which we are transformed is the image of Jesus Christ. He is glorious. God’s work of sanctification is to make us like him, which is to make us holy. As Christ. He is glorious. God’s work of sanctification which we are transformed is the image of Jesus of glory to another degree of glory. The glory into metamorphose from glory to glory, from one degree of glory to another degree of glory. The glory into which we are transformed is the image of Jesus Christ. He is glorious. God’s work of sanctification is to make us like him, which is to make us holy. As we behold him as in a glass (that is, in the holy scripture, and especially as he is preached), we become like him. The verb in the Greek is in the present tense: we are being changed or metamorphosed. We undergo a process of change. In Romans 12:2 the same Greek verb appears, also in the present tense: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (emphasis added). This transformation, which occurs by the renewing of our mind, is the progressive work of God’s Spirit.

In 2 Peter 3:18 we are urged to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Perhaps you have learned that grace is “God’s unmerited favor.” While that is true, a more complete definition is given by Professor Grieters in a recent sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:10 (“Grace’s Explanation of the Christian”): “Grace is God’s wonderful power and favor that is bestowed upon unworthy sinners to make them beautiful with the beauty of God’s own Son.” We cannot grow in God’s unmerited favor because that is unchangeable. God does not favor us more one day than another day. But we can grow, and we do grow, in the beauty of God’s own Son. We grow in grace when God works increasingly by his grace in us. The result is that we become more and more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and we live more and more out of God’s grace. Our confessions also use the language of “more and more,” which is the language of growth. Look up “more and more” in the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 76, Q&A 81, Q&A 89–90, Q&A 115, and Q&A 123. You find similar language in Canons 5:2, 7, and 13.

We grow physically as we eat, play, and work. Similarly, we grow spiritually as we desire the word, as we listen to the preaching, and as we use the sacraments, so that we work out our salvation (Phil. 2:12–13) and we “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). This growth never occurs independently of Jesus Christ and his Spirit, but we grow as he works in us by his Spirit. The fruit of this spiritual growth is good works. We are not sanctified by our works, but as we are sanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we bring forth good works.

Growth occurs in the right atmosphere, while growth is hindered when circumstances are unfavorable. That is true with physical growth. A child’s development is severely hindered if he is malnourished or deprived of love. The same is true spiritually. When we are growing, we also lay aside “every weight,” as well as “the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb. 12:1), including a “root of bitterness” (v. 15), “all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings” (1 Pet. 2:1). What kind of influences in your life—people, hobbies, forms of entertainment—hinder your spiritual growth? What kind of habits—prayer, reading, worship, and fellowship—promote your spiritual growth? And of course, we never reach perfection because our sinful flesh (the old man of sin) hinders us. He—the old man—is never sanctified: he does not grow in grace, but we do.

Growth is a mystery. Can you understand how you grow physically, gaining height, weight, and strength? Similarly, who can understand that mysterious wonder of grace by which we grow spiritually in holiness? Your elders might ask at family visitation: “Have you grown in grace this past year? Are you more sensitive to, and more sorry for, your sins than you were last year? Have you increased in your appreciation for God’s grace? Do you love your heavenly Father, your Lord Jesus Christ, and your neighbor more than before? Do you express that love by honoring your parents, loving your siblings, respecting your teachers, studying the scriptures, and by prayer, participation in public worship, and by keeping God’s commandments?” The answers should be “Yes.” Although you have only a small beginning, you “earnestly desire to have [your] faith more and more strengthened, and [your] life more holy” (Heidelberg Catechism, A 81). You are
growing! Do not expect instantaneous change, for growth takes a lifetime. But give humble thanks to God: he is causing you to grow, and he will continue to work such growth in you until he takes you to glory (Phil. 1:6). What a wonder of grace!

**HONORING FATHER AND MOTHER**

Honoring father and mother is no easy task, yet it is commanded by God. First Corinthians 13:11 serves us as well as young people as we consider this calling: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” It is important to consider this verse in its context of charity as it provides important application to the fifth commandment.

Becoming independent in the decision-making process of everyday life is part of growing up. One aspect of this is growth in the ability to form our own opinions about how to respond to the regular, daily situations we face. These situations involve our doing what we think is best for us at that certain time. Our opinions therefore define some of our personality and outlook on life. Whether it be about our curfew, work, friends, or school, there are instances where our opinions do not line up with those of our parents or other authority figures. It is important in these situations to remember the command of God directed toward us as it relates to our father and mother.

In each situation we face, regardless of how significant it may be, we must recognize that we are in the process of growing into adulthood and have not yet arrived at full maturity. The apostle Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 13:11 describe one aspect of this process, which is the maturation of our thoughts and words. Often the thoughts and desires we have as children are very different from those that we have as adults. Our childhood mindset and the words that flow out of that stage in our understanding may seem “foolish” as we look at them later in life. By God’s grace, this foolishness will change as we grow both physically and spiritually. Eventually we will find ourselves in the place that Paul describes, where we are no longer children and have “put away childish things.”

During the time that we are growing toward independence, it is important to recognize that we remain under the authority of our parents. The calling of scripture to show charity toward them is obeyed when we honor and respect their God-given position. In loving our father and mother, we show our love to God and the authority figures he has placed over us. Personally, I can testify to the positive role of parents in my life. In looking back at this past year with the turmoil caused by events in our world (COVID-19) and the church, there were many times that I quickly made decisions in word or action that showed my emotions had taken over my thought process. It was not until I talked with my parents and listened to their advice that I realized how foolish some of my opinions and thoughts were. Though this may be a situation with little effect on my life, the themes are present in many other situations too. So often we give ourselves over to our emotions, which fuel opinions that are misrepresentative of the situation. This childish thinking is what we are called to put away with our parents’ guidance.

But more than just our opinions come under the guidance of our parents. Many of the practical rules and restrictions that they set in place for us as teenagers, or even young adults, have a significant effect on our lives. Rules concerning curfew and our obedience of COVID-19 guidelines are good examples, as are general restrictions concerning where and with whom we spend time on weekends. Our desires often take first place in our minds with regard to these issues. For myself, there were times when I didn’t understand, nor did I want to understand, why certain guidelines were made by my parents regarding COVID-19, when other peers seemed to have few restrictions placed on them. I now see the benefit of their instruction, but in the moment, I was blinded by what I thought was best for me.

This battle of wills between my parents and me,
which is common to almost all teens and young adults, is one that can either build or burn relationships. Without charity and spiritual maturation fueled by the work of the Spirit in our hearts, it is impossible to honor and respect them as we ought. Rather than disagreeing and creating a situation worse than the current one because of a difference of opinion over what is best for me, charity toward my parents means a willingness to listen and learn. While we might not understand why our parents give us direction or make this or that restriction, it is not our place to antagonize them or to demand that they back down and allow us to live freely. Such actions are not in accordance with charity, nor with the putting away of childish things.

In instances where we might actually be right about what is best for us, our attitude toward our parents is important. Being right does not give us the freedom to prove to our parents that we were right and they were wrong. While it is perhaps good for parents to recognize their own faults in order to cultivate a healthy relationship with their children, there is never any justification for Christian young people to antagonize their parents by demanding apologies or reminding them of their weaknesses. Humble submission and obedience, which includes respect for the Lord’s sake, is our calling. We ought to recognize as well that in most cases our parents’ instruction is actually best for us, even when we resist it. We ought even to thank our parents for their instruction as they seek to help us grow in a sort of independence that pleases our heavenly Father.

Our relational growth in loving and honoring our parents is not something that we can accomplish apart from a diligent study of God’s word. As a young child drinks milk for her nourishment and the adult eats meat for his nourishment, so the child of God grows spiritually as he or she dives into and eagerly seeks out the truth of God’s word. Through his Spirit, God applies his word to our hearts and makes us to grow in grace. Our love for God will show itself in our love for the neighbor, especially in our treatment of father and mother. Our place as young people is not to question, but to listen with a heart and mind full of charity, knowing that even in situations where we don’t understand or even agree, God has placed our parents over us for our good.

In whatever situation may befall us, he is our true Father, guiding and leading us to maturity through their instruction.

Alex Van Uffelen is a member of Zion Protestant Reformed Church and is currently attending college at Calvin University.

**Joshua Harris**

**TURNING FROM WORLDLINESS**

The world is an enticing place. We live alongside it, and it influences our lives in many different ways. Our human nature tries to pull us toward the lusts of the heart, yet the regenerated man within us pulls toward the cross of Jesus Christ. We are locked in a fierce battle both internally and externally regarding the world, and it is a daily struggle to fight against our sinful desires, which tempt us to go against our calling to love not the things of this world (1 John 2:15). There are many ways in which the world can compromise our countercultural calling, but let’s consider this topic by looking at the effect of the world on us as individuals and the effect of the world on the church.

**The World in Our Life**

We are surrounded by the world every day in all that we do, be it in work, in college, or the things we see and hear on our phones. There is the subtle whisper from the devil in all these things to compromise our faith and adhere to the thinking of the world. Our calling, however, is to reject the practices of the world and do those things that are good and pleasing in the sight of our Lord God. It would be good for us to look at specific examples of how the world infiltrates our life and misdirects our gaze away from Jesus Christ.

Music is one tool that the devil seeks to use to slowly cause us to compromise our faith. The lyrics are perhaps filled with profanity or sexual suggestion, yet we allow ourselves to continue to listen. There are inevitable excuses that arise: “It won’t affect me; I can withstand it”; or “It doesn’t matter
as I’m not the one saying those things.” The words of 1 Thessalonians 4:7 give an answer to these excuses, reminding us that “God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” This is our calling, a holy life in which we give thanks and praise to the name of Jehovah almighty who has given us life in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is out of this life, then, that we must live.

To live contrary to this life of Christ is to walk in the way of sin and in the way of disobedience. God’s Spirit works in us to do his good pleasure and works a fervent desire to devote our lives for the sake of our Lord. God’s word warns us in many places of the consequences of living a life of sin (Col. 3:5–6), and it specifically shows us our sins by way of the law. We have the law read out every Sabbath morning. There is no excuse for not being aware of the command of God. Beloved young people, cursing is a sin! Drunkenness is a grievous sin listed alongside such things as murder (Gal. 5:21) and fornication (1 Cor. 5:11)! To live contrary to God’s law is lawlessness. Or to put it more formally, it is “practical antinomianism.”

Anything that pollutes and poisons your mind with the wicked ways of the world must be put away in repentance. We are to turn and look to Christ Jesus, our perfect Savior, who has paid for these sins and renews our hearts and minds. This gospel is always the answer! Having been renewed in Christ, we are called to a life of good works out of which we are to show our thankful hearts, which rejoice in the knowledge of our salvation earned and given by the Lamb of God by whose blood we have been made partakers of the covenant blessings of salvation. Live for him, young people; put away those things that lead you to walk in sin and put on those things that Christ calls us to.

The World in the Church

The world can also affect the church. The devil subtly attacks the true church of Jesus Christ, and none are exempt from his lies. Tolerance is one way in which the church conforms to the thinking of the world. Look at the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), for example. This is the largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States today, and in 2014 it voted to change its laws on marriage to allow same-sex marriage. As we know, this is contrary to what God’s word tells us in texts such as Leviticus 18:22 and 1 Corinthians 6:9–10. The clear evidence of God’s word shows that the tolerance of same-sex marriage by this denomination is a compromise of scripture.

Sadly, the PCUSA is but one example among many in the mainline Protestant churches today. The world constantly pushes the church to adopt its ideology and practices. Modern Christianity as a whole promotes a “love-equals-acceptance” mentality, which seeks to meet the approval of the world.

From a more doctrinal perspective, one way in which many churches have compromised the truth of scripture is to accept the heresy of common grace, which states that God desires the salvation of and bestows his grace upon all mankind. Some claim that this doctrine makes it easier to witness, but such a witness is deceptive if it teaches a false gospel. We may not compromise our faith, but rather we are called to defend the truth set forth by scripture. We may think of Christ’s words in John 15:18–19, where he speaks of the hatred of the world toward anyone who loves and defends the gospel. Therefore, when the church compromises with the world, it says to Christ that he is not enough. It says that fear of man outweighs fear of God. Praise God that he preserves the truth of his word among us. It is a great joy for us to know that we suffer with Christ when the world persecutes us for our love for him, and if “God be for us, who can be against us” (Rom. 8:31)?

Our answer to worldliness is rooted in sound doctrine, beginning with the doctrines of justification and sanctification in Jesus Christ alone. As we receive the lively preaching of the gospel, our souls are fed and our faith is strengthened. It is out of this faith, then, that we live for the cross of Jesus Christ and utterly reject the teachings of the world. Delve deeply into his word and seek to learn more and more about his wondrous work accomplished by Jesus Christ and applied to us by his Spirit!

We live in a world that seeks to silence the true gospel of Jesus Christ in favor of the sinful pleasures of this life and the high esteem of man. Who do you belong to? Do you show this? Utterly reject the lies of Satan promoted by this world, for there truly is nothing that compares to the glory that is to come. Defend the true church of Christ, and in your individual walk, live out of the new life of Christ by striving daily to praise his name. Live a life of holiness and repent of that worldly attitude and mindset that we are all prone to in our daily lives. Live for Jesus Christ, for he is your sure hope and salvation!

Josh is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan, and a writer correspondent for Beacon Lights. He is a student at Grand Valley State University.
“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” In this passage (1 Cor. 13:11), the apostle Paul refers to two states of life: childhood and manhood. Although he is speaking primarily from a spiritual perspective, of our interests moving from earthly things to the heavenly, there is a connection here to real life too. When we were children, many others had obligations toward us, including our parents, teachers, church members, and even older siblings. Our obligations toward these people were either very limited or nonexistent. As we develop and mature, however, our obligations do as well. We are part of a spiritual body (1 Cor. 12:12–31), and we have growing obligations toward it throughout life. It is tempting to remain in childhood. Our sinful nature finds it easier to take from others and ignore our obligations toward them. This is not a biblical response to maturing, though. The apostle Paul clearly describes in 1 Corinthians 12 our responsibility to use our talents for the benefit of the body of which we are members. As we mature, we need to recognize our talents and look for ways to serve the church. We have new obligations toward family, congregation, and peers. Spiritually, much of this has to do with recognizing faith as something personal. There is a reason we make confession of faith as young adults. As children, our faith is real and true, but it is also passed on from our parents. As we mature, however, our faith becomes our own. We begin to go to church not out of obligation to our parents, but because we want to. We avoid sin and seek to be obedient because we want to serve God, not because our parents demand we do so. Ruth is a great example of this. She was a Moabitess, but when her husband died, she remained with her mother-in-law, Naomi, rather than returning to her family. Her faith was personal to her, not merely the faith of her husband’s family. Although Naomi was the “mother” in this story, Ruth worked to support them both. As a young woman, she maintained her love, respect, and service toward her mother-in-law.

As young adults mature, they have changing obligations toward their families. A child is served by his or her parents. Parents fulfill their baptismal vows by loving that child and providing for him or her physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The love of the parent does not change as the child grows and matures, though the responsibilities of the child do change. This can include physical responsibilities (doing more work around the house, helping cook or clean, helping with yard or car maintenance, etc.), but it also can include spiritual responsibilities. As young people mature, they may begin to lead the family in devotions, have spiritual discussions with their parents, and serve as strong examples of a godly walk for their younger siblings. The respect and love one has for his or her parents does not change, but their relationship naturally will.

As time goes on, the changing obligations of young people extend beyond their families to include their congregations. Just as we are members of a broader body of Christ throughout time and history, we are also members of a smaller body of believers at our local congregation. Paul wrote the letter of 1 Corinthians with this in mind, telling the believers in Corinth of their obligation to serve each other with their gifts and abilities. This is also true for us as young people. Though we often spend a significant amount of time and effort seeking to identify our talents with an eye toward our careers, this search should always be done with the church in mind as well. This is obviously true for young men with the talent and calling for the ministry, or young men and women who anticipate a career in education. These careers naturally overlap well with service of those in our body of believers. Paul is clear, however, that there is a place for each member of the church, not just those with obvious talents for ministry or teaching.

It would be far easier to ignore our talents, avoid looking for ways to serve the church, and simply show up twice each Sunday. But this is directly against the calling of God in his word. Young people should actively be seeking to identify both their talents and a way to serve the church through them. This could be through greeting and welcoming visitors, participating in Bible studies or young adult groups, teaching Sunday school, helping in the nursery, cooking...
meals for those in need, writing letters to shut-ins in the congregation, or so many other things. The opportunities to serve in the church are endless if one has eyes of faith to see the needs.

In addition to serving family and church, young people also have an obligation toward serving their peers. Though young children have little recognition of needs outside of their own, they will begin to recognize the needs and ideas of others as they grow older. This provides a basis to form friendships and to recognize the Christian calling of putting others before self. One of the key roles of Christian education is to foster this understanding. We spend hours together as a peer group in grades one through twelve, learning to live with one another. Beyond high school, however, it takes more effort to interact with a believing peer group. One must be intentional in seeking out these interactions and fostering Christian friendship with other young adults.

Our calling as Christians is to put the needs of others before our own. An obligation in this respect is to ask how one’s friends are doing physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Our calling as maturing Christians is one of gentleness and humility (Titus 3:2). Rather than always being caught up in the things we want or need, we are to put those things aside to serve our neighbor—whether it be a friend, a member of the congregation, or simply somebody God puts in our life. We need to be intentional with our friends, listening to their needs, whether they are emotional, physical, or spiritual. Then we need to move past ourselves and serve them.

All of this sounds impossible, especially with our sinful natures still inside of us. That sinful nature would always prefer taking the lazy or self-serving route. We are naturally proud and greedy, and pushing those feelings away is only possible through the Spirit’s work inside of us. Moving away from childhood and childish things toward new obligations to family, congregation, and peers requires God’s grace, which gives his people strength to complete their callings. We will inevitably fail—probably many, many times. But our Father is a God of forgiveness. May he work in us through his Spirit as we fulfill our changing obligations as young adults.

Erin teaches third grade at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, Michigan. She is a recent graduate of Calvin University and attends Trinity Protestant Reformed Church.

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Devotional Abby Van Solkema

THE DAILY PRESS
“press toward the mark...”
(Philippians 3:14)

2 PETER: TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND FALSE IDEAS

At the time he wrote this epistle, Peter knew that his death was imminent. He was imprisoned in Rome awaiting execution for his faith. Knowing that this would likely be his last letter to these beloved believers, Peter does not try to teach them anything new, but rather earnestly endeavors to remind the Christians in Asia Minor of the fundamental truths in which they had already been instructed. Such a reminder was necessary because the basic truths of the gospel were being challenged by false teachers in the church and diminished by the influence of surrounding Roman culture. Peter’s chief concern as he prepared to leave this earth was to make sure that these believers not only were firmly established in the true knowledge of God but would continue to grow in it as well by studying the scriptures. This divinely inspired message is just as urgent for believers today as we also face constant assaults on the truth of the gospel from false teachers and the ungodly culture that surrounds us.

Let us pause for a moment to consider an amazing fact that we often take for granted. Even though we
are merely weak, sinful human beings, we can know God. We can know God through his revelation to us in creation and in the holy scriptures. And as his elect children, we are able to know him relationally. This is only possible because of the work of Christ, the living Word. God’s grace toward us in Christ is the means by which we are able not only to approach God as his children, but also to continually seek to learn more about him, mature in relationship with him, and grow in holiness. Although our experience of this relationship will never be perfect in this life, true knowledge of God on this earth will someday culminate in perfect fellowship with him in heaven. John 17:3 promises, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

False ideas are the enemy of this true knowledge of God. They undermine our relationship with him and with others in the church. An ignorance of the truth of God’s word creates a weak spot in the body of Christ for Satan to attack. No era of the church has been unaffected by false ideas. They are like a virus that just keeps coming back to attack in different forms. These attacks will only get worse as the day of the Lord draws nearer and nearer. It is the duty of the church to be able to identify the false ideas and make “antibodies” to fight them, by which means the body of Christ can continue to remain healthy and strong. Peter goes into great detail about the nature of false teachers in the second chapter of this epistle. He seeks to equip the recipients of his letter with ways to recognize false teachers and avoid their deceptive traps. He also makes clear that these false teachers and those who follow them will face certain judgment.

In addition to being susceptible to false teachers within the church, believers may also be influenced by the world around them. The myriad forms of entertainment that are available to us 24-7 at the touch of a button broadcast false ideas into our eyes and ears daily. Theories such as individualism, materialism, evolutionism, and feminism, which our postmodern society promotes, have found their way into the church in different forms, often disguised by misquoted Bible verses and facilitated by an incomplete understanding of the truth of God’s word. The world also tries to shame those who believe in the truth of scripture by calling them narrow-minded, naïve, ignorant, or intolerant. Have you encountered these attacks on the truth in your college classroom or workplace? The only way to combat them is to “stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth” (Eph. 6:14). The belt of truth is foundational to putting on the whole armor of God so that we are able to fight against the attacks of the devil.

The importance of knowing and believing the truth of scripture is that we are able to recognize not only false doctrine, but also false practice. What we believe determines how we will live in these last days. Knowledge of the truth leads not only to belief in the truth but to living out of this truth. As John Calvin says in his A Little Book on the Christian Life, “For true doctrine is not a matter of the tongue, but of life...in order for doctrine to be fruitful to us, it must overflow into our hearts, spread into our daily routines, and truly transform us within”. The way that a person lives their life on this earth serves as evidence of what they believe about eternity. For example, those who do not believe in heaven and hell will make their sole focus trying to get as much pleasure out of this life as possible. But the vastly different and holy life that Christians are called to live as pilgrims on this earth is the fruit of the true knowledge of God through Christ. “For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:8).

Avoiding error and growing in grace go hand in hand. We grow in the knowledge of the truth by abiding in it with our time, attention, effort, and heart. On the other hand, if we spend the majority of our time taking in the lies of the world, this will most definitely have a negative effect on our spiritual life. In the final verse of his epistle, Peter warns the believers in Asia Minor (and also us today) to “beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness” (2 Pet. 3:17). This month, I encourage you to pick up your Bible instead of your smartphone as the first thing you do in the morning. Follow along with the daily reading plan from 2 Peter and meditate on what you read using the study question as a guide. Pray that God will apply the truth of his word to your heart so that you are able to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Study Question</th>
<th>Sing or Pray</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 8</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:1–2</td>
<td>How are grace and peace increased in your life through the true knowledge of God?</td>
<td>Psalter #7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 9</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:3</td>
<td>How does true knowledge of God give you everything that you need for life and godliness?</td>
<td>Psalter #89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 10</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:4</td>
<td>What is the nature of the “exceeding great and precious promises” that Peter refers to in this verse? How do they enable you to live a holy life?</td>
<td>Psalter #133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:5–7</td>
<td>Look up the definitions of each of the characteristics of a holy life that Peter mentions in these verses. Do you see these markers of spiritual growth in your own life?</td>
<td>Psalter #101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 12</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:8–9</td>
<td>What impact does the true knowledge of God have on the difference between someone who is living a fruitful Christian life and someone who is “spiritually nearsighted” (as verse 9 describes)?</td>
<td>Psalter #311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:10–11</td>
<td>How does seeing the Holy Spirit work growth in sanctification in your life serve as an assurance of your calling and election?</td>
<td>Psalter #400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 14</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:12–15</td>
<td>How does Peter’s knowledge of his impending death highlight the importance of his message in this epistle?</td>
<td>Psalter #203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 15</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:16–18</td>
<td>How does the fact that Peter was an eyewitness to Jesus’ transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–8) give authority to his message over against the “fables” of others?</td>
<td>Psalter #21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 16</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:19</td>
<td>How do you see God's word shining as a light against the darkness of this sinful world in your own life?</td>
<td>Psalter #334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 17</td>
<td>2 Peter 1:20–21; Belgic Confession Art. 3</td>
<td>What effect does the divine inspiration of scripture have on the way that you approach God's word?</td>
<td>Psalter #322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 18</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:1</td>
<td>Can you think of some ways that false teachers try to disguise the true nature of their heresy?</td>
<td>Psalter #145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 19</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:2–3</td>
<td>Can you think of some ways that false teachers try to make their lies appealing to those they are trying to deceive?</td>
<td>Psalter #138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 20</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:4–10a</td>
<td>How do the illustrations from history that Peter uses here prove that God’s promise of judgment is not an empty threat?</td>
<td>Psalter #13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 21</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:10b–12</td>
<td>What does the willingness of false teachers to blaspheme both heavenly and earthly authorities tell us about their character?</td>
<td>Psalter #414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 22</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:13</td>
<td>How does Peter’s description of false teachers in this verse illustrate the fact that they are not ashamed of their sin?</td>
<td>Psalter #420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 23</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:14</td>
<td>What are five more characteristics of false teachers that Peter lists in this verse?</td>
<td>Psalter #423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 24</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:15–16; Numbers 22–24</td>
<td>What parallels do you see between Balaam and the false teachers that Peter describes?</td>
<td>Psalter #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 25</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:17</td>
<td>What does the imagery that Peter uses in this verse teach us about the nature of false teachers and their message?</td>
<td>Psalter #300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Bible References</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Psalter</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 26</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:18–19; Romans 6:16–17, 10:4</td>
<td>Why is the freedom that false teachers promise a false freedom? Where does true freedom come from?</td>
<td>#110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 27</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:20–22</td>
<td>Why will God’s judgment be even more severe for those who became part of the church outwardly than those who never knew the truth?</td>
<td>#260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 28</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:1–2</td>
<td>What is the message of the prophets and apostles that Peter wanted the believers in Asia Minor to remember?</td>
<td>#243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 29</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:3–4</td>
<td>Why is it so important for Christians then and now to remember this message of the prophets and apostles?</td>
<td>#243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 30</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:5; Romans 1:18–21</td>
<td>Peter says here that unbelievers are willingly ignorant of God’s evident work in creation. How does the revelation of God in creation leave them without excuse?</td>
<td>#402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 31</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:6–7</td>
<td>How do the events of the flood refute the error of the “scoffers” mentioned in verses 3 and 4?</td>
<td>#407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:8; Psalm 90</td>
<td>How is the fact that God created time and is not limited by it reassuring for you as a child of God?</td>
<td>#247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:9</td>
<td>What does Peter point out in this verse as the reason that Jesus has not yet returned? How is this a comfort for the elect?</td>
<td>#245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 3</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:10; Matthew 24:42–44</td>
<td>What is the meaning of the thief analogy that both Jesus and Peter use to describe the coming of the day of the Lord?</td>
<td>#139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:11–13</td>
<td>What does it mean to live your life in expectation of the day of the Lord?</td>
<td>#16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 5</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:14–16</td>
<td>Can you think of a specific way that you could be more diligent in your daily Christian life? Write a prayer asking God to help you grow in this area.</td>
<td>#391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 6</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:17</td>
<td>Why is it so important for believers to be continually reminded of the truth of God’s word?</td>
<td>#228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 7</td>
<td>2 Peter 3:18</td>
<td>Thinking back on what you have learned from this entire epistle, how can you grow in grace and in the knowledge of God as Peter exhorts believers to do in this concluding verse?</td>
<td>#376</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BAPTISM

In the Old Testaments, fathers were instructed to circumcise their sons eight days after the baby boy had been born. It was a sign of the covenant that involved blood. It reminded the parents that blood needed to be shed to save their children from sin. Back then in the Old Testament, they were still waiting for the Messiah to shed that blood.

Now we live in the New Testament. Baptism has replaced circumcision as the sign of the covenant since Christ has come. He has shed His blood. He has washed us—His chosen people—from our sins.

Did you know that you are a part of baptism every time you are in church and watch a baby being baptized? In our churches, the ministers baptize children in church where the whole congregation can see and participate. When we see a baby baptized, we are reminded of Christ’s sacrifice and the forgiveness of our sins. The water of baptism doesn’t wash away our sins. Christ’s blood does that.

The next time you watch a baby being baptized, think about what it means. That we are God’s children, and we have been washed of our sins in Christ’s precious blood.

Find the word in the puzzle.

Words can go in any direction.
Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

baptism  blood  children
Christ  symbol  washed
water

Tricia is a member of Unity Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.
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:
Lucy Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jesse Pollema—Calvary, IA
Isabelle Jade, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tayler Hoekstra—Calvary, IA
Saylor Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle & Emily Westra—Calvary, IA
Ella Hope, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Gord & Rebecca Tolsma—Edmonton, CAN
Caleb Wade, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff & Abby Thompson—First GR, MI
Riggs Jeffery, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle & Kelsey Glass—Georgetown, MI
Katherine Sage, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nick & Erika Vroom—Randolph, WI
Wade Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Clint & Lesley Meelker—Redlands, CA
Wyatt Zachery, son of Mr. & Mrs. Zach & Jodie Poortinga—Southwest, MI
Payton Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mitch & Kelli VanOverloop—Trinity, 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:
Amanda Altena—Georgetown, MI
Rachel Altena—Georgetown, MI
Kirsten Brands—Grandville, MI
Emma Bruinsma—Grandville, MI
Megan Pastoor—Holland, MI
Annika VanOverloop—Holland, MI
Irene Smit—Berean, Philippines

MARRIAGES
“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14
Mr. Dallas Van Ginkel & Miss Emily Kaptein—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Trevor VanOverloop & Miss Teagan Murphy—Crete, IL
Mr. Ben VanDrunen & Miss Brittany Zandstra—Crete, IL
Mr. Brad Kamminga & Miss Kelsey Kuiper—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Ian Mowery & Miss Abbie Cammenga—Grandville, MI
Mr. Joel Langerak & Miss Shayna Andringa—Randolph, WI
Mr. Brice VanOverloop & Miss Olivia Pipe—Southeast, M
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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