

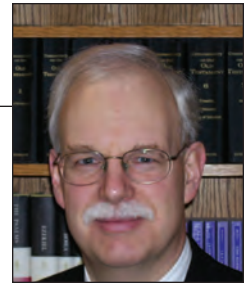
Clarion



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FAREWELL TO THE
VANWOUDENBERGS



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Meeting the Family

Even in the church family, some sisters can be snippy, some brothers can be bombastic, and they may not be very welcoming

Awkward moments

When a young man and young lady begin to take a serious interest in each other, sooner or later they have to meet each other's family. This can be a nerve wracking experience. The girl may worry whether her family will like the young man. Even more, she may worry that her sister, with a knack for smart remarks, will embarrass the young man, or that her father will be happy to have a new audience for his particular brand of humour. And what about her mother, ever concerned for the best for her daughter – will he pass her approval? In case of older, married siblings, there may be the added fear of a brother or sister-in-law who has a way of communicating that takes a little getting used to? In anticipation of the big “meet the family” event, the young man will have his share of anxieties, wondering what the family will think of him, whether they will like him.

Of course this also plays out the other way, as the young man introduces the young lady that has captivated his heart to his family. Will they be as enamoured with her as he is? Will his mother think she is good enough for him? Will his father welcome her? Will his sisters be on their best behaviour, making every effort not to make her feel awkward? Will his brothers keep their smart remarks to themselves?

It will not only be the young man and young lady who will be prone to nervousness. The family may be just as nervous. In a way, the smart remarks and efforts at humour may be a cover up for nervousness. At least the family has strength in numbers.

In the end, it usually works out, even if the first encounter is a bit awkward. You have to figure each other out. That process includes getting to know the strengths

of each other's family as well as their peculiarities. In due time, one learns to know the family, warts and all. Usually, the sooner this process starts the better because it gives everyone a chance to really get to know each other and be comfortable with each other.

Applying it to the church

We have a similar situation in the life of the church. As we live our lives as Christians, there will come various situations where we have opportunity to speak about our faith. Perhaps it is through interaction with neighbours, or with one's fellow workers. At times, when it involves single people, such conversations have a romantic potential. There may be many discussions about faith and the person or persons we are talking to may seem to be genuinely interested, eager to hear more.

Just like in the relationship between a boy and girl, there is the matter of meeting the family. In this case, of course, it is the family of God. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he called the church the “household of God” (1 Tim 3:15). In this family, we have brothers and sisters. While we don't have a “father and mother,” the church family does have office-bearers, called to lead the family. The question is, “At what point should we introduce someone to the church family? Should it be sooner or later?”

If we listen to some popular evangelistic methods, you might conclude that “sooner or later” is really a false dilemma. This is so because some approaches suggest that belonging to a church family is not really that important. All you have to do is tell people about Jesus. As long as people love Jesus, well, then they belong to the invisible church, and that's what counts, right? Talk of church only muddies the waters and might turn people off.

Of course this viewpoint ignores the fact that while Christ gathers his church from the beginning to the end of the world, from all peoples and nations, he always does that concretely in time. When Paul and Peter wrote their letters, they always wrote to very concrete churches, made up of visible members, with visible office bearers. When governments wanted to persecute the church, they had no trouble finding the believers either. Indeed, the church is a very visible entity in this world.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Issue 5 brings you an editorial from Rev. Eric Kampen. In his editorial he addresses the question: At what point do we introduce someone to our church family? Is sooner or later the best approach?

Bible translations – in particular, which translation our federation should use – will be discussed at our upcoming general synod this spring. Dr. Theo Lodder gives us thirty reasons to consider sticking with the NIV.

We continue with two series in this issue. Music in worship, a series by Dr. Theo Lodder, this time takes a look at music and instruments in the New Testament. And Dr. Cornelis Van Dam writes about prophetesses in Israel in the second of his three-part series, "Prophetesses, Then and Now."

Issue 5 includes an article from the Emmanuel Guelph congregation and their farewell to the VanWoudenberg family. We also have regular columns Treasures New and Old and Education Matters, as well as two letters to the editor and a Mission News insert.

Laura Veenendaal

- 114 EDITORIAL**
Meeting the Family
- 117 TREASURES, NEW & OLD**
Extravagant Devotion
- 118 Thirty Reasons to Stick with the NIV**
- 122 Phophetesses, Then and Now (2)**
- 125 Musical Instruments and Musicians in Worship**
in the Bible: The New Testament
- 127 EDUCATION MATTERS**
Media Studies at our Schools?
- 130 Farewell to the VanWoudenbergs**
- 131 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**



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Based on the very concrete way of speaking about the church in Scripture, we know then that the “don’t worry about meeting the family approach” is not an option. That still leaves the question of “sooner or later?”

Later?

Like in a dating relationship, it is easy to come up with arguments for “later.” There may be hesitation because, like in a family, there are your brothers and sisters. And yes, even in the church family, some sisters can be snippy, some brothers can be bombastic, and they may not be very welcoming. And then there may be the worry about the sermons. Yes, they are scriptural, they give sound explanation and good application, but how can someone who is not familiar with the Bible understand all that? And then there is the matter of the songs. Yes, the congregation sings wholeheartedly, but how can a newcomer sing those tunes and understand those words? The thought might arise, “What will my neighbour or my fellow worker think if I take them to meet the family?” In cases where there is a romantic angle, the thought might arise, “What will it do for that relationship if I take the person to church? Will it end the conversation and the relationship?” It is not difficult to justify the “later” approach. Should you not ease a person into the family?

Sooner!

There is a big problem, however, with the “later” approach. To compare it again to a dating relationship, the later you do it, the harder it actually becomes. It is a case of “the sooner, the better.” This is so for a number of reasons.

In the first place, faith is personal, in that we personally believe, but it is not a private faith. The Christian faith is the faith of the church, the Christian household. Personally, we have learned to know that faith as a member of that household. Our worship as household of God is an integral part of the expression of our faith and the growth of our faith. If we have talked openly about our faith, our activity as church family should have been a natural part of what we talked about. It may even have started as simple as a person asking, “How was your weekend?” They would soon learn that going to worship the Lord is at the heart of our “weekend.” Just like a young man and young lady getting to know each other would learn something about their respective families, so in our faith conversation people should learn some about our church family. God is not ashamed of our family. He gave his Son to die for it. Why should we be ashamed of it? Again, like with a young couple developing a relationship, talking positively about each other’s family should make each person inter-

ested in meeting the family, so our talk about our faith should stir up interest in our church family.

Second, we might have our hesitation because everything will be so strange to the other person. Again, think of a young lady bringing home a young man. There will be excitement mixed with trepidation. But think through how such a visit goes. The young lady does not just walk the young man in the door, tell him to sit on the couch and talk to the family, while she goes off to talk with her sisters in the kitchen. Especially at first, she sits down beside him to get that first awkward conversation out of the way. It may take quite some time before everyone is comfortable enough to the point that the couple does not always have to sit side by side. In the same way, if we invite someone to church, we shouldn’t just take them in the door and then let them find their own way. No, you have them sit with you. And afterwards, you stay at their side while they get to meet the other members of the family. Yes, it will be awkward. Yes, there will be brothers and sisters that might make it very uncomfortable. But, if the attraction was to the God of the family, who sent his Son as Saviour, one will get past that. This is just like in a dating relationship. Love for the other person makes one look past the peculiarities of the family.

We should have some confidence in the Holy Spirit

Third, and this is really the most important, we should have some confidence in the Holy Spirit. We confess he works faith through the preaching of the gospel (Rom 10:14-17). That preaching takes place when we are together as spiritual family. You can’t go wrong by taking someone to meet your church family, the place where the Spirit is working. And yes, there will be many strange things. But, it will not all be strange. After all, the person was willing to come based on your conversations. Something piqued his or her interest. The experience of worship will only give more food for thought and conversation.

The sooner the better

What it comes down to then is that when conversations develop with others about our faith, we do well to take them to meet our church family. It is the household of God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. If God loved this family to the point of giving his Son for it, if the Son does not hesitate to dwell in its midst through the Holy Spirit, we do well to make meeting this family a matter of sooner rather than later. Indeed, the sooner the better!





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Extravagant Devotion

"Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

(John 12:3)

Everyone knew what Jesus had done in Bethany — raising Lazarus from the dead — and that the Sanhedrin had decided to kill him. If anyone knew where Jesus was, they had to report it, and they'd arrest him. But John says Jesus made a conscious decision to go the Bethany at just that time, because the Passover had almost arrived. And there he didn't keep a low profile. A dinner was given in Jesus' honour.

In that time, people reclined at a table on couches, with their heads toward to the table and their feet stretching out behind them. Jesus would've been lying that way when Mary took about a pint of pure nard, poured it on Jesus' feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. John also makes special mention that the smell of the perfume filled the house. Why does he mention that? Half a litre is a lot of perfume, and this would have been fairly concentrated, so when she poured it out, the aroma filled the house. It would've been almost overwhelming.

John wants us to have a sense of what Mary was saying by what she did. That perfume cost a year's wages for a labourer. Mark says that that bottle of perfume was worth more than 300 denarii, almost a year's wages for a labourer: \$20,000.00 in our time. She broke the bottle, and poured out every drop of the perfume on Jesus.

And then she did something no decent woman would ever do in that

culture: she let her hair down in public. That was considered an act of intimacy, a thing done in private. It's what the sinful woman had done in Luke 7. Jesus said her sins, which were many, were forgiven, for she loved much. And now Mary was doing the same thing. She was overwhelmed and overflowing with love for him.

Can we imagine how she felt? Can we even begin to understand her inexpressible joy and happiness? We haven't had Jesus in our homes, and we haven't had a brother raised from the dead by Jesus. But we know that he laid down his life for us. We don't all have to do what Mary did. In fact, we can't. But we should reflect on this deep love, this act of devotion, and see the beauty of it. And ask the Holy Spirit to make us love Jesus the way Mary did. This is extreme worship, extreme love. She was so overcome with joy in Jesus that she made a spectacle of herself, emptied herself to express her love.

And when John says, "The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume," he's saying that the overpowering aroma was an expression of the extravagance of this act of love. That's how Paul spoke about the gifts he received from the church in Philippi: "They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God" (4:18). That's the spirit that should bring us to church, that should make

us sing, and pray, and give. That's where a life of worship comes from: from this kind of love and joy and thankfulness for the goodness of God in Jesus Christ.

Think how quiet that room must have become! And into this silence there came a harsh, critical voice. Judas Iscariot objected. Why wasn't this perfume sold, and the money given to the poor? Judas had no idea of what could possibly have made Mary do such a thing. In fact, when Matthew and Mark tell this story, they tell us that when Jesus rebuked Judas for what he said, he made up his mind to betray Jesus. In his account Matthew says that the disciples were indignant about the waste. The other disciples agreed with Judas — they didn't understand Mary's extravagant act of thankfulness either.

Again, this story isn't in the gospels to tell us we should find expensive ways to worship. But Jesus does demand an act of devotion that's even more extravagant: "Offer me your life. Offer your bodies as living sacrifices." This story gives us a picture of the kind of devotion and thankfulness that we ought to feel and show toward Jesus. In that respect, this was an absolutely reasonable and appropriate thing for Mary to do, and for us to do. And if we knew Jesus, and looked at Jesus the way she did, we would understand perfectly what made her do it. C



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Thirty Reasons to Stick with the NIV

In consultation with:

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The synod-appointed Committee for Bible Translation (CBT), not to be confused with the CBT of the New International Version (NIV), has delivered its final report to the churches for general synod. A preliminary report was published already some time ago, but the general direction of the CBT did not change. The report is critical of the 2011 edition of the NIV (NIV11), judges the NIV no longer fit for use in the churches, and praises the English Standard Version (ESV) as a superior translation.

There are Canadian Reformed church members, families, and pastors, however, who have made the switch to the NIV11 with ease and appreciation, and do not agree with the conclusions of this report. In this article, we have put together some of our own research on the NIV11, combined with the thoughts of some of our ministerial colleagues. Our collective hope is that some critical reflection will be given to the direction proposed by the CBT, and that the churches will not be deprived of a translation that they have grown to love and appreciate through some twenty years of use in worship, prayer, devotions, Bible study, and memorization.

The NIV on its own merits and pitfalls

1. The NIV was judged by General Synod 1995 to be a better translation than the Revised Standard Version (RSV).
2. The Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* (SCBP) has just completed a thorough revision of the prose portions of the *Book of Praise* to bring them in line with the NIV. Sticking with the NIV will only require small changes. Moving to the ESV would involve considerable change.
3. The NIV has played a large role in making the Old

Testament accessible and readable. It offers a quality translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

4. When the NIV was originally published in its complete form in 1978, it was the only modern translation that was widely accepted in conservative circles; few other translations have achieved the widespread popularity of the NIV. The CBT of the NIV (CBTNIV) is still comprised of a multi-national group of fifteen scholars who represent a wide spectrum of conservative evangelical theology.
5. The NIV11 has its weaknesses, no doubt, as does every Bible translation. Even though the RSV was weak on the deity of Christ and the personhood of the Holy Spirit, the churches at the time were able to make corrections along the way from the pulpit, lectern, and kitchen table. It would be possible and necessary to do the same with the weaknesses of the NIV11, as it would with any other translation a church would choose.
6. Since its original publication in 1978, the CBT of the NIV has met every year to review developments in biblical scholarship and changes in English usage. They solicit and evaluate suggestions for correction and improvement from Bible scholars, pastors, and lay people. Just one example of an improvement in the NIV11, that is believed to have been the direct result of a submission to the CBTNIV by one of our churches, is the addition of the word “and” before the fifth petition of the Lord’s Prayer. Hence, there is good reason to expect that the CBTNIV will be open to other suggested improvements, for example, in passages where gender-inclusive language is applied to passages pertaining to the special offices of the church.

Readability and accessibility of the NIV

7. In 1995 the CBT took what at the time was a courageous step in recommending a dynamic equivalent translation to a rather suspicious church culture, but it did so on the basis of solid research, and the result has

been a high degree of contentment: the vast majority of Canadian Reformed Churches use the NIV, and very little dissatisfaction has been expressed in the ecclesiastical press over this move.

8. The translation philosophy of the NIV aligns well with the goal of the translators of the King James Version, that is, to make their words speak directly to Tyndale's plow boy: "We desire that the Scripture may speake like itselfe, as in the language of *Canaan*, that it may be understood even of the very vulgar" (i.e., even by the uneducated).
9. It is much more work to produce what is called a dynamic equivalent translation (the NIV translation philosophy) that pays close attention to the idioms of the original languages, whereas translations that strive for formal equivalence and are more "literal" do not do justice to such idioms. The extra work of producing a dynamic equivalent translation involves deeper thought about the meaning of the original, and how best to communicate that meaningfully in English.
10. The CBTNIV indicates that "the NIV is founded on the belief that if hearing God's Word the way it was written and understanding it the way it was meant were the hall marks of the original reading experience, then accuracy in translation demands that neither one of these two criteria be prioritized above the other."
11. Pastors and parents have observed catechism students struggle to make sense of translations other than the NIV. One wonders whether we do our children and young people a disservice by going back to a more formally equivalent (literal) translation.
12. Readability is an important factor for promoting family and personal devotions, and it is undesirable to go back to a less readable Bible when so many have gotten used to a splendidly readable one.
13. As churches which take seriously our calling to evangelize and engage with our surrounding culture, it is important to have a translation that is accessible.

The NIV and gender-accuracy

14. Most ministers in their preaching and writing, and most Christians in their conversation about the Bible and otherwise, will use gender-accurate language. From this perspective, most church members will find the NIV11 more natural and accessible, comporting to language that is already familiar to them. There will be less opportunity for readers to be misled or confused by outdated ways of speaking.

15. The CBTNIV has never indicated that they have a social or feminist agenda. Changes in gender language are almost always on account of changes in English usage.
16. Our church culture may be able to understand gender-exclusive language, although even that is debatable, especially with respect to the younger generations. To most others, gender-exclusive language is archaic, and therefore misleading and confusing.

The NIV11 compared to the NIV84

17. While the NIV has undergone another revision, its third since first appearing in 1978, the CBT report shows considerable appreciation for the 2011 edition as compared to the 1984 edition (NIV84).
18. The CBTNIV has pointed out that ninety-five percent of the NIV11 is identical with the NIV84. People who are used to the NIV84 can read large portions of the NIV11 without noticing any differences. All changes were motivated by three main factors: 1) changes in English; 2) progress in scholarship; and 3) concern for clarity. Critics of the NIV11 have given the impression that the main defect of the NIV11 is its use of gender-inclusive language. Based on factors 1) and 3) above, it can easily be argued that the NIV11 finally offers English-speaking Christians a much needed, high quality, *gender-accurate* translation, which narrows the gap between how Christians normally speak and comprehend English words and phrases, and how the Bible they use reflects such normal use of English.
19. Some of the changes were made out of a concern for clarity. An example of such a change can be found in Philippians 4:13, which seeks to avoid a common misunderstanding. In the NIV84 it reads: "I can do *everything* through him who gives me strength." A careful study and exegesis of this passage will show that Paul does not claim the ability to do anything he puts his mind to. Rather, having just spoken about being content in all circumstances, he declares: "I can do *all this* through him who gives me strength" (NIV11).
20. The NIV11 also provides greater accuracy in relation to Messianic texts, more accurately translating the original. One example is the citation of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2.
21. The NIV11 continues the NIV tradition largely unchanged apart from many small improvements. Not all translation decisions in the NIV11 will meet with everyone's agreement. The examples given by the CBT are a case in point. Complete satisfaction has never been accomplished with any translation, and never will.

The NIV compared to the ESV

22. The only change considered by the CBT to be truly objectionable is the over-application of gender-inclusive language in a small handful of texts, namely, Philippians 1:14, 1 Timothy 2:12, 2 Timothy 2:2, and James 3:1. It should be noted that the question of gender-inclusive language is a matter of degree, for as noted by the CBT report, also the ESV uses a great deal more “gender-neutral” language than did the RSV or the KJV.
23. Based on this objection to gender-inclusive language, the CBT now recommends the ESV, a translation based largely on the translation tradition of the RSV, the very version which General Synod 1995 judged to be inferior to the NIV.
24. Missing in the CBT report is a general discussion of the readability of the NIV11 as compared to the ESV. In our judgment, this is a glaring omission. Some, who have tried to use the ESV for family worship and personal devotions, have found it lacking and laborious. In readability, the NIV11 is superior to both the ESV and NIV84.¹
25. One of the principles applied in the NIV11, as in the ESV and other modern translations, is that if the wording in the donor language is not gender-specific, then it should not become gender-specific in the receptor language. A comparison shows that the NIV11 has been much more successful in applying this principle than the ESV.

Pitfalls of the ESV

26. The ESV may be more appealing to a generation that grew up with the RSV. Upon a close comparison with the RSV, though, one can easily come away with the impression that the translators actually took the RSV, updated archaic pronouns, made more responsible text-critical choices, and made more orthodox translation choices where appropriate. If this is so, it is more of a recension than a translation. One source suggests that the ESV is essentially a moderate revision (six percent) of the RSV.
27. On account of its formal equivalence translation paradigm, the ESV is full of archaisms, awkward language, obscure idioms, and irregular word order.² This translation, then, functions well as a supplement for Bible study, “but is not suitable as a standard Bible for the church.”³

28. Dr. Mark Strauss provides a thorough critique of the ESV, divided into eleven broad categories, as follows: “(1) ‘oops’ translations, (2) idioms missed, (3) lexical problems, (4) exegetical errors, (5) collocational clashes, (6) archaisms, (7) inconsistent gender-language, (8) awkward and unnatural style, (9) word-order problems, (10) run-on sentences, and (11) mis-translated genitives.”⁴
29. For each category, Strauss provides numerous examples. These alone explain why those who have been largely satisfied with the splendidly readable NIV have found reading the ESV problematic to the point of annoyance and distraction.
30. “Asking the simple question, ‘Would anyone speaking English actually say this?’ is a good test for standard English. This simple question could transform our Bible versions and bring them in line with the finest translation practices used around the world. We must remember that the ultimate goal of Bible translation is not to give our students a ‘crib’ on their weekly Greek and Hebrew assignments, but to clearly and accurately communicate the meaning of God’s inspired and authoritative Word.”⁵

In conclusion

We appreciate the work that the CBT has done for the churches, and do not suggest that the mandate that they were assigned was easy to fulfill. We also sensed from the report that the members of the committee, themselves, were quite appreciative of many aspects of the NIV11, and would have liked to stay the course.

At the same time, we are convinced that it is important for the churches to be aware of what is at stake, and the far-reaching consequences that will result, if General Synod adopts the recommendations of this committee. The churches would be told to stop using the NIV, after almost two decades of being well-served by it. A disconnect would develop between English usage in preaching, prayer, Bible study, and everyday conversation, and the English usage of the Bible translation that is chosen. Many church members would undoubtedly continue using the NIV for personal and family devotions and study, while the translation used at church on the Lord’s Day would be different.

The best course of action for the churches seems to be, in our opinion, that General Synod leaves it in the freedom of the churches whether to (continue to) use the NIV, either the 1984 or 2011 edition; also that the CBT be

given the mandate, as in the past, to continue to receive, evaluate, and pass on suggestions for correction and improvement to the CBTNIV, for example, in passages where gender-inclusive language is applied to passages pertaining to the special offices of the church.

Resources consulted and recommended

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Gordon D. Fee & Mark L. Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.

Andreas J. Koestenberg & David A. Croteau, Editors, *Which Bible Translation Should I Use? A Comparison of 4 Major Recent Translations*, Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2012.

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Rodney Decker, "An Evaluation of the 2011 Edition of the New International Version," Themelios, Vol. 36, No. 3, November 2011. <http://thegospelcoalition.org/theme->

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Mark L. Strauss, "Why the *English Standard Version* (ESV) Should not become the Standard English Version," San Diego: Bethel Seminary, undated. <http://zondervan.typepad.com/files/improvingesv2.pdf>

Video

Dr. Douglas J. Moo on the NIV11 <http://www.niv-cbt.org/niv-2011-overview/video-featuring-dr-moo/>

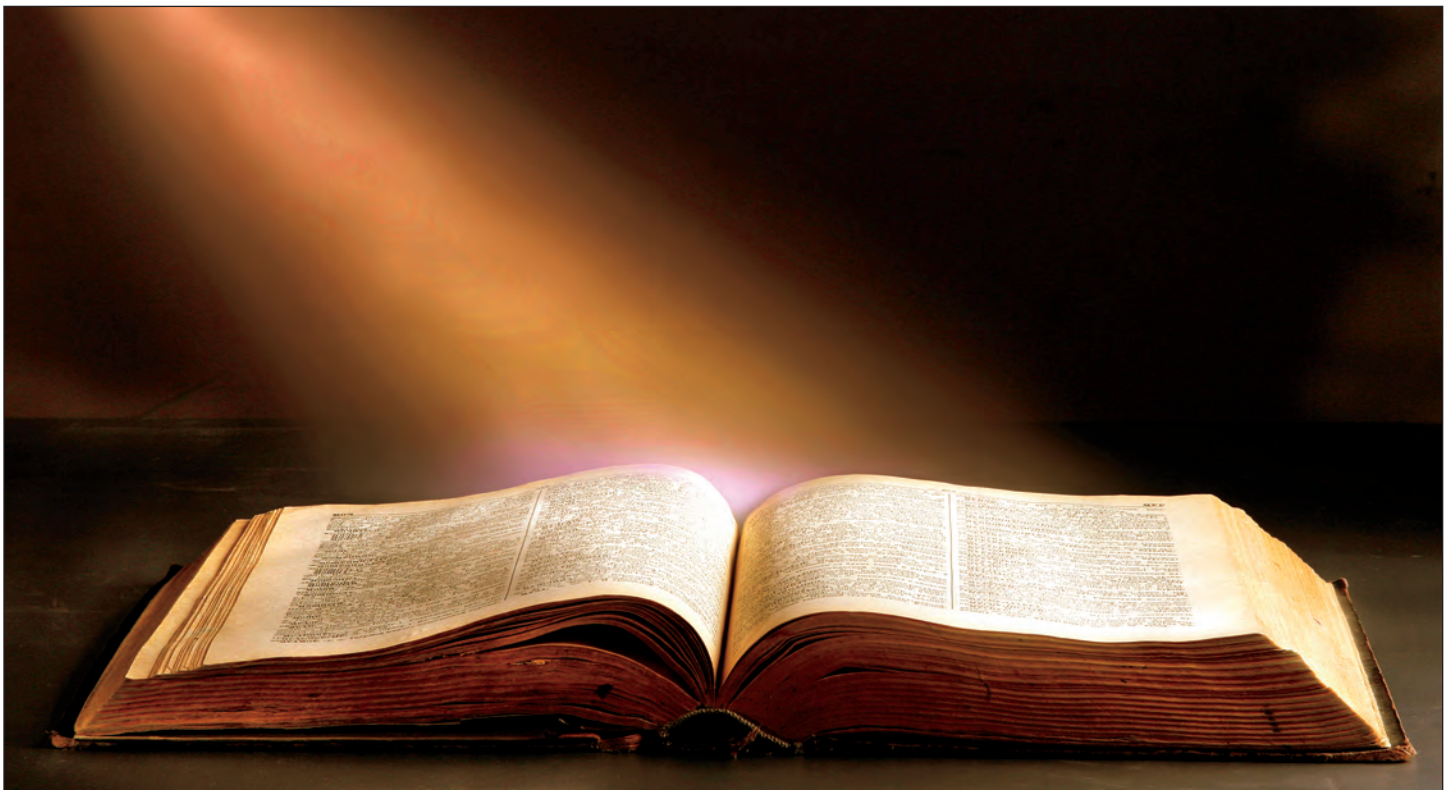
¹ This impression is supported by the article by Mark Strauss referenced in the CBT report on page 164.

² Mark L. Strauss, "Why the *English Standard Version* (ESV) Should not become the Standard English Version", 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, 2. The reader is encouraged to read this critique, which can be downloaded in PDF format at <http://zondervan.typepad.com/files/improvingesv2.pdf>.

⁵ Ibid, 32.





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Prophetesses, Then and Now (Part 2 of 3)

Besides the prophetess Deborah, discussed in the previous article, we also meet other prophetesses on the pages of Scripture such as Huldah, Anna, and Miriam. Let us consider these now and ask: what is their significance and what is the message for us today?

Huldah and others

When King Josiah heard the words of the Book of the Law that had been discovered in the temple, he tore his clothes for he realized that the Lord's anger against Jerusalem must be very great "because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us." The king therefore commanded Hilkiah, the high priest, and others to go and inquire of the Lord about what is written in this book "for me and for the people and for all Judah" (2 Kgs 22:13). This was a matter of national significance. They went to the prophetess Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14; the parallel account is found in 2 Chron 34).

This sequence of events underlines the sad state of affairs in Judah. The priests had just rediscovered the Book of the Law, probably Deuteronomy. How could it have been so neglected? The king was subsequently shocked that God was angry with his nation because of their sins of forsaking the Lord and serving other gods (2 Kgs 22:17). When God needed to be consulted, the normal priestly means of revelation for matters of national importance, the high priestly Urim and Thummim, was to be used (cf. Num 27:21). This did not happen. Instead those sent by the king went to the prophetess Huldah. Why they did not go to Jeremiah or Zephaniah is not known. Perhaps they were not in Jerusalem or perhaps they were known as doomsayers and the hope was that Huldah would give a more favourable prophecy. In any case they went to "the prophetess Hulda who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper

of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District" (2 Kgs 22:14). This last detail probably indicates that they visited her at her home.

Huldah's answer seems to have been given quickly and directly. It is noteworthy that in her response she says four times: "This is what the Lord says" or something similar (2 Kgs 22:15-20). Let there be no mistake about it, this message comes from God! And the message is clear. God is "going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read" (2 Kgs 22:16). The reference could be to the covenant curses for disobedience mentioned in Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 28:15-26; 29:25-28). The prophetess confirmed the words of the newly found Scripture as the very Word of God. She also prophesied that Josiah would not see the disaster that God would bring over Jerusalem (2 Kgs 22:23).

What is their significance and what is the message for us today?

Clearly the times were desperate and as in the critical days of the judges when God used Deborah, the Lord now also used a woman. There are some similarities with Deborah. Besides the context of critical times, it is noteworthy that neither Deborah nor Huldah projected themselves into the public square. People came to them and sought them out – Deborah under her palm tree and Huldah at her home. These prophetesses did not seek the limelight. This reticence stands in stark contrast to men who were called to be prophets. Prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel publicly and unasked proclaimed the Word of God. The prophetesses exercised their God-given task in such a way that they did not impede or obstruct male leadership.

Another example of a prophetess is Isaiah's wife. She is called a prophetess (Isa 8:3), but it is not possible to

determine whether she was called a prophetess because she was married to a prophet or because God had given her the office of prophetess. Some have suggested that her designation prophetess is due to the fact that the child she will bear is literally a prophecy, an incarnation of God's Word so to speak. After all, the child's name "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz" forms the prophecy which Isaiah spoke for it means "quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil." God's explanation of the name was: "the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria" (Isa 8:4).

Prophetesses were quite rare in Israel

There are also references to the false prophetess—Noadiah (Neh 6:14), and those against whom Ezekiel prophesied (Ezek 13:17-23). However, since they are not God's prophets, they need not detain us.

Moving to the New Testament, Anna comes to mind. We read in Luke 2 that when Jesus was presented in the temple "there was also a prophetess Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (v. 36-38). It is clear from this very brief reference that Anna's identity as prophetess meant being in constant devotion in the temple. She did not go out on the streets to prophesy as prophets would normally be expected to do. Through the prophetic gift she recognized the Messiah in the temple and publicly praised God and spoke to all who yearned for the coming of the Messiah. At this very important occasion and a critical juncture in God's self-revelation to his people Israel, God made sure that besides Simeon (Luke 2:25-35) also a woman was there at Christ's presentation in the temple. No part of God's people is excluded from meeting the Saviour. Both male and female are represented.

We now go back to the Old Testament and meet a different type of prophetess in Miriam.



From http://christianimagesource.com/miriam_song_g163-miriam_song__image_5_p830.html

Miriam

After the Israelites had successfully crossed the Red Sea and the Lord had drowned the pursuing Egyptian forces, "Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea'" (Exod 15:20-21). Miriam is identified as "the prophetess." What does this mean?

It is possible that Miriam received revelation from God (cf. Num 12:2, 6) as one would expect from a prophet (cf. Exod 7:1-2), but Scripture nowhere indicates that she publicly proclaimed new prophecy. The public prophetic act of this prophetess was singing with a musical instrument and exhorting praise to God. There are also indications elsewhere in Scripture that praising God and declaring his great deeds does indeed constitute prophesying. It is this activity that best defines her prophetic office. (Think of our prophetic task as confessing God's name in the Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 32.)

We see this close relationship between singing and making music and prophesying elsewhere as well. Take, for example Saul. He met a procession of prophets with musical instruments prophesying and the Spirit came on him and he prophesied as well (1 Sam 10:5-11). This prophesying

can best be understood as praising God. Another example that can be mentioned is when David set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of music in the temple. This ministry is then described as “the ministry of prophesying” and the singers are described as prophesying when they thank and praise the Lord (1 Chron 25:1-3). Consistent with the nature of this musical ministry, the leaders of the temple song are called seers or prophets (1 Chron 25:5; 2 Chron 35:15) and the poet Asaph is also called a seer or prophet (2 Chron 29:30).

So Miriam’s prophetic task was seen in her music and singing ministry – an activity also associated with Deborah, the prophetess, when she with Barak, sang a song extolling God’s deliverance (Judg 5:1). And like Deborah, Miriam as prophetess gave needed leadership to Israel, along with Moses and Aaron (Micah 6:4). Her leadership was for the women of Israel since they were the ones who followed her (Exod 15:20). In his sermon on Micah 6, Calvin notes that even though Miriam was a woman, God gave her this leadership role “in order that she might strengthen women.” In his commentary on this passage, he notes that “it was an extraordinary thing, when God gave authority to a woman. . . no one may consider this singular precedent as a common rule.”

Declined the call to the Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario to serve as co-pastor:

Rev. Nick Smith

pastor of the United Reformed Church of Nampa, Idaho

Called by the Barrhead Canadian Reformed Church

Rev. Marc Jagt

of Taber, Alberta

CHURCH NEWS

In Conclusion

In conclusion: when considered over against the number of male prophets and the aggressive way in which they functioned, prophetesses were quite rare in Israel. God only raised them up in the most critical or dire circumstances and in this way highlighted the dearth of male leadership. The existence of female prophets in Israel did not signify divine endorsement for prophetesses as a normal model for God’s people. At the same time, the appearance of prophetesses did underline that God is sovereign and in special circumstances he can equip women with the prophetic office as well. There is absolutely nothing inferior about women as such that would prevent him from doing so. But it was not the normal role which God had in mind for women in ancient Israel.





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The focus of his doctoral studies was Christian liturgy and worship (Doxology), including a dissertation on “Musical Instruments and Musicians in the Worship of the Canadian Reformed Churches.” The dissertation is available from the Theological Research Exchange Network (www.tren.com). The author receives no proceeds.

Musical Instruments and Musicians in Worship in the Bible: The New Testament

In the last two articles, we gave our attention to the Old Testament data on musical instruments and musicians in worship. Right from the beginning, musical instruments and musicians made an integral contribution to human life and culture. King David organized and supervised the ministry of music and song by appointing a generous tithe – more than ten percent – of Levites to this ministry, giving them specific instructions, and providing them with the resources they needed to fulfill their task. Musical instruments, furthermore, were the tools – the temple implements – which David gave the Levites to carry, lift up, and enhance the holy song of God’s people for the worship and praise of God. They were fittingly called, therefore, *the LORD’s instruments and instruments of sacred song*.

In Jesus Christ, Old Covenant worship reaches its fulfillment

The musicians were expected to make music that was loud, moving, and impressive – even fearful, for they were wielding instruments of power. When musical instruments came to life and voices of joy and gladness sang, when the Levitical musicians had work and their mighty Selahs punctuated the people’s praise, that was a sure sign of the health, vigour, and strength of God’s beloved nation!

New Covenant fulfillment of Davidic worship

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the inauguration of the New Covenant does not represent the complete abolition of Old Covenant worship, resulting

concurrently in the complete abandonment of musical instruments and musicians. Rather, in Jesus Christ, Old Covenant worship, including the Davidic ministry of liturgical music and song, reaches its fulfillment. Jesus declares in his Sermon on the Mount: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt 5:17). After his resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus tells his confused disciples: “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). When he receives from the Lord God the throne of his father David (Luke 1:32), Jesus sings God’s praises using psalms composed by his father David. “He says, ‘I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises’” (Heb 2:12; Ps 22:22; cf. Rom 15:7-13).

Pauline Use of Psalmos and Psallo

The Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, translates “psalm” with the Greek word *psalmos*, which means “song of praise, psalm, . . . music made with an instrument.”¹ This word is defined as the state of “plucking” a bow or of “playing” a stringed instrument.² This is the same noun that Paul uses in Ephesians 5:19-20 in his exhortation to believers about being filled with the Holy Spirit. In this passage Paul uses the verbal form of this word, *psallo*, which means “sing, sing praise.”³ Paul writes there: “Speak to one another with psalms (*psalmois*), hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music (*psallontes*) in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

A closer look at the verb *psallo* suggests that its meaning includes the aspect of instrumental accompaniment. This word originally meant “to touch,” then “to pluck” the string, leading to the definition: “to play a stringed instrument.”⁴ In the New Testament context, this word means: “strictly, *strike the strings* of an instrument; hence, *sing to the accompaniment of a harp*; in the NT *sing praises*.”⁵ If one should ask why Paul would command the believer to sing to the accompaniment of musical instruments “in your heart,” as the NIV translates, it could be pointed out that the

The sound of musical instruments and songs is everywhere in the eschatological worship before God, for David's royal Son Jesus Christ is sitting on his throne!

Greek phrase *tei kardiai* can also be rendered “with your heart” (ESV) – that is, *with all your heart*, or *with your heart fully engaged*. This phrase “refers to ‘singing aloud’ (cf. 1 Cor 14:26) and collective singing in the assembly: [it] refers not to inwardness but to full participation.”⁶ Furthermore, the fact that Paul also uses the word *adontes*, “singing,” in combination with *psallontes*, “making music with instruments,” strengthens the case; for otherwise readers would be left wondering why Paul would use the word *psallontes* in addition to the word *adontes*, if both words mean the same thing. Paul, then, is undoubtedly espousing Davidic-style worship along the lines of Psalms 33, 98, 144, and 150, as cited in the last article.

Pauline use of musical instruments

When Paul uses musical instruments to illustrate his point concerning edifying speech in the church in 1 Corinthians 14:7-8, furthermore, in no way does he condemn or revile musical instruments. On the contrary, he states that the members of the church should produce edifying, intelligible speech, just as musical instruments such as harps, flutes, and trumpets should produce clear, distinct notes and sounds. Paul also tells the believers that the great resurrection of the dead at the return of Jesus Christ will be announced by the trumpet (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16). Arguably, Paul is assuming the presence and playing of musical instruments among the assembled believers.

Musical instruments in the Revelation to John

In the Revelation to John, which begins dramatically with a voice that sounds like a trumpet (Rev 1:10; cf. 4:1), the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders play harps (Rev 5:8); angels blast trumpet-calls (Rev 8-11); and the worshipping multitude around God's throne, whose sound is “like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder,” resembles the sound of “harpists playing their harps” (Rev 14:2). The sound of musical instruments and songs is everywhere in the eschatological worship before God, for David's royal Son Jesus Christ is sitting on his throne!

Preliminary summary of New Testament on musical instruments and musicians in worship

Old Covenant worship, including the Davidic ministry of liturgical music and song, reaches its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Jesus sings God's praises with the music composed by his father David – the Psalms. The Greek word by which Jesus himself designates these songs, *psalmos*, actually means “song of praise, music played with an instrument.” Paul calls upon believers to speak such songs to one another with music, *psallontes*, that is, to the accompaniment of instruments. He also assumes the believers' acquaintance with a variety of musical instruments like those that had been used in Old Testament worship when he uses the sound of musical instruments as an illustration for edifying speech in the church, and when he offers comfort concerning the resurrection of the dead. Finally, as David's royal Son takes his throne in the Revelation to John, the mighty sound of musical instruments and songs powerfully emanates from God's presence through all creation!


¹Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel and Katrin Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003).

²Gerhard Delling, “Psalms,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 8:491.

³Horst Balz, “Psallo,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 3:495.

⁴Delling, “Psallo,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 8:490.

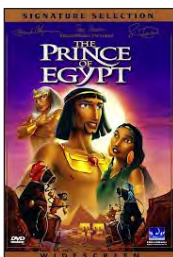
⁵Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

⁶Balz, “Psallo,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:495. 

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Media Studies at our Schools?

Media Studies is a touchy subject. When I sat in a movie theatre once to watch a free preview of *The Prince of Egypt*, just being there produced discomfort. From youth, I had learned that a theatre is not the place to be. Who knows what other wickedness was shown on that screen at other hours? If seen, was I sending a message that it was OK to be there, that movies were OK as a medium, and that their message could be accepted along with the medium? Seeking to still my discomfort, I asked someone who appeared knowledgeable what the movie's message was. None, he said; it's just entertainment. I was not convinced; vaguely, perhaps, because of Marshall McLuhan's notion that "the medium is the message." *Wikipedia* explains this as meaning "that the form of a medium (an animation) embeds itself in the message, creating a symbiotic (mutually beneficial) relationship by which the medium influences how the message is perceived." Thus, the animation influenced my understanding of the Book of Exodus, rather than letting Scripture interpret Scripture. I was in trouble, but soothed my conscience thinking that 1) I had a free ticket, 2) I knew the Bible, and 3) I would write an article recommending people not to go and see it. Despite my advice (and probably because I just missed *Clarion's* deadline), the movie did well: It grossed nearly \$220 million worldwide in theatres. Media Studies in school explores (and, in many contexts, celebrates) challenges (and opportunities) in this area.



influence of mass media and popular culture by examining media texts such as films, songs, video games, action figures, advertisements, CD covers, clothing, billboards, television shows, magazines, newspapers, photographs, and websites; differentiating between fact and opinion; evaluating the credibility of sources and recognizing bias; and being attuned to discriminatory portrayals of specific individuals and groups (such as women and minorities). Gasp. That's quite a mouthful.

It's not without issues, either. Are students constructing meaning? To help wrap their brain around part of reality would be OK, but might they also need a norm to distinguish between that reality's wisdom and folly? If schools are to explore the impact and influence of mass media and popular culture in a host of media texts, how much time would that take, is that the school's task, and aren't there better things for the equipping Hebrews 13:20-22 speaks of? It reads: "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." We can embrace the notion of developing abilities in differentiating and evaluating bias, as 1 John 4:1 encourages us to test the spirits, but whence the politically correct attunement to specific discriminatory portrayals of women and minorities? Media Studies also wants students to develop skills through opportunities to view, analyze, and discuss a wide variety, and opportunities to create different types of media texts. It is not only a mouthful and without issues, but a tall order as well.

Jane Tallim, Co-Executive Director of Media Awareness Network presents a simpler definition of Media Literacy. To her, it is "the ability to sift through and analyze the messages that inform, entertain and sell to us every day. It is the ability to bring critical thinking skills to

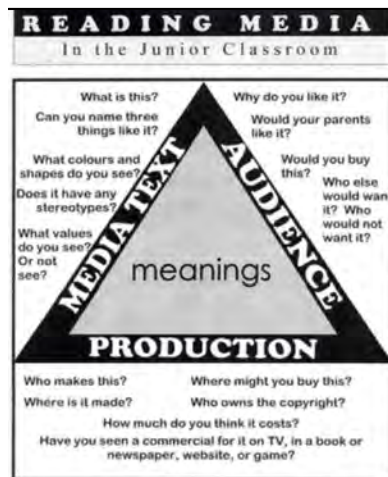
Definitions and issues

Media Studies or Media Literacy is an integral part of the Ontario curriculum. The Ministry of Education Language document speaks of students learning to construct meaning through the media languages of images, sounds, graphics, and words; exploring the impact and

bear on all media.” It seems to cover the same ground, as it implies making sense of reality (constructing meaning), developing skills, and discernment (critical thinking). Issues remain, however. In her *Media Education: Make it Happen* (www.mediaeducation-week.ca/en/101_download.htm), she gives a glimpse of the critical thinking she has in mind. Among others, she advises to keep things positive

(“Playing on negative themes will be counter-productive to helping students develop critical thinking”) and not to moralize (“Kids will reject messages if they are being preached to instead of being empowered to reach their own conclusions”). However, sometimes things aren’t positive, and sometimes moral norms must be stated.

The same elements of developing skills, critical thinking, and constructing meaning are present in other approaches to Media Literacy, such as in the postmodern Media Triangle of Eddie Dick of the Scottish Film Council. It intends to guide the deconstruction and analysis of media texts through three aspects: The text, the audience, and the producer. Each of these three aspects holds or reflects beliefs, values, rules, or assumptions about reality, and the three aspects together generate meaning. This particular application shows questions that may help junior students discuss and analyze a media text (say, *The Prince of Egypt*, or a cereal box) for its values, beliefs, rules, and assumptions and then try to find useful meaning in it for themselves. Our postmodern context holds that beliefs, values, and meanings can legitimately vary, and that there is no absolute standard: Something may be valid or true for you, but it is up for discussion to see whether it is also true for me. However, submitting the construction of meaning to the moral standard of Scripture is to acknowledge that this is God’s world, which may generate tension with Tallim’s advice to keep it positive and not to moralize. With this addition, the triangle can help develop a discerning Christian attitude, and a search for godly actions or decisions.



The Media Triangle

Ask: How does Scripture teach us to discern in connection

In short, Media Studies activities include watching, listening, reflecting, writing, organizing ideas, expressing opinions, engaging socially and politically, and developing critical thinking in the context of media. The latter should include an evaluation for wisdom or folly with a firm moral yardstick.

Merits

Developing critical thinking is central to Media Literacy. This also lies at the core of the unity of purpose between home, church, and school: We strive to develop the talents of the students so that they acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for a life of responsible Christian stewardship. Such stewardship requires discernment and action. Solomon prayed for a discerning heart (1 Kings 3:9) and connected sound judgement and discernment to life (Prov 3:21-22); the Psalmist sought discernment to understand God’s statutes (Ps 119:125); Paul spoke of spiritual discernment and having the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:13-15), of being filled with the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ (Phil 1:9-11), and of seeking and practicing whatever is excellent or praiseworthy (Phil 4:8-9). The consideration of what Media Studies may entail in this light helps to more consciously develop such discernment, mind-set, basis, and encouragement for action and students may also be better equipped to make godly choices for media consumption.

Elsewhere, Jane Tallim offers *Ten Good Reasons for Teaching Media Education*. Some of these are valid and have merit, with or without some modification. It encourages young people to question, evaluate, understand, and appreciate their multimedia culture, teaching them to become active, discriminating media consumers and users; it prepares students for a workforce that increasingly demands the use of sophisticated means of communication; it helps young people to see themselves as active citizens and potential contributors to public debate (ARPA. . . , ks); and it helps children critique media representation, teaching them to distinguish between reality and fantasy, and between media and real-life roles and expectations (and between wisdom and folly, ks). Finally, in the area of information technology, it assists children in developing critical thinking skills, strategies for optimizing Internet searches, evaluating and authenticating information, and examining issues of plagiarism and copyright.



Demerits?

On some elements, Tallim's merits should at least be questioned. She celebrates that Media Studies is good bringing the world into the classroom as a perfect bridge for subject integration because of its "immediacy and relevance to traditional subjects." However, teachers should not do so willy-nilly; they should conscientiously screen any media for suitability before sharing them with the class. It is great that Media Studies supports Multiple Intelligences and promotes analysis and management of information, but what if notions of current pedagogy and student-centred learning become the justifying context of the choices the teacher would make? The fact that something *can* be done does not by itself justify that it *is* done; and while it is sound to start teaching kids where they are at, this cannot by itself justify indiscriminately bringing current youth culture into the classroom. Minimally, we should apply the brakes here.

Submitting the construction of meaning to the moral standard of Scripture is to acknowledge that this is God's world, which may generate tension with Tallim's advice to keep it positive and not to moralize

The direction in the Ontario Ministry's curricula for Media Studies should make us raise questions as well. It has defined the parental role as that of "important partners" in education, and increasingly tends to present itself as the primary partner. Our schools have a limited and serving role to help the parents in their primary role as educators. Government expectations could upset the proper balance between home and school, and even undermine

the unity of purpose between home, church, and school—for instance if the school fails to guard the media it introduces, to define sin as the root cause of discrimination, or to acknowledge that parents make different choices about when children must to turn the TV off, choose what music to listen to or what movie to watch, and what Internet sites (not) to go to. Aside from principle-setting Sunday preaching, it may be better for the school to identify the issues to the parents and facilitate a forum (like a PTA meeting) in which this can be explored together.

Conclusion

In conclusion, several of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes Media Studies presents can be taught as incidental and purposeful aspects of lessons across the curriculum. Some schools may choose to put Media Studies as a separate subject on the curriculum, while others will keep it integrated in other subject areas. Either way, the development of Christian discernment can be facilitated. This can be done by consciously discussing media texts with reference to the *Media Triangle* or other models – as long as the moral check with *Scripture* is fully integrated. The school should not take a lead role in telling parents what to do or what standards to set for their children's media exposure, either directly or through their children – but it is clear that our communities do well to give this some careful thought. Are we and our children sufficiently armed with the armour of God to handle the message of the media – as McLuhan suggested elsewhere?

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Arthur Kingma akingma@echs.ca

C

Farewell to the VanWoudenbergs

December 30, the last Sunday in the year of our Lord 2012, saw the Emmanuel Guelph congregation having to say “Farewell” to its beloved pastor and teacher of twelve years. Indeed, God had been very good to us in allowing his servant to faithfully work here for exactly twelve years. For it was on the very first Sunday of 2001 that Rev. VanWoudenberg began his ministry in our midst.

Farewell service

It is at times such as this that we take some moments to reflect on what God has done in those dozen years. The reflection began already in the afternoon service, where Rev. VanWoudenberg chose as his farewell text Titus 2:11-14. He explained to us that in his letter to Titus, Paul was instructing Titus as to what he should teach. And in this particular passage Paul is explaining to Titus, and also to us today, that he should preach the grace of God. This is what is taught each and every Sunday. As our minister explained, God’s grace is the why behind everything we do and as such it is the key to understanding why we live the way we do. Specifically in this passage God’s grace teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness. We should never live as though God does not exist even though the world pushes us in that direction. God’s grace helps us overcome the temptation to do so. This grace conversely teaches us to instead say “Yes” to lead upright, self-controlled, and godly lives. It even teaches us to say yes with zeal while we wait for the blessed hope; namely, the hope we have in Christ. Rev. VanWoudenberg reminded us of the great comfort that we have in Christ: We have hope because we can look back to Christ and see the redeeming work which he has accomplished and we can look forward to Christ and know his return is coming! It is with this perspective that we approach a New Year, also when we part ways as minister and congregation, and further for the duration of our lives. Thus as our beloved pastor taught us: Let us live in anticipation, focus on our Saviour, together awaiting the blessed hope.



Photo: Josina Groeneveld

Farewell evening

On the eve of that same Sunday, the congregation assembled again to wish Rev. VanWoudenberg and his family a very fond farewell. Through presentations of song and speech we wished to express our thankfulness to him and his family for all the work and love they put into their time with us in Guelph. One of the highlights of the evening was a photo presentation showing just how this family touched the hearts of everyone. In pictures we remembered events such as baptisms, weddings, professions of faith, building a church, a manse, and splitting into two congregations. We also remembered those who have gone on to glory before us. Through all these events we could remember how God blessed our minister with excellent leadership and pastoral care. And as was mentioned during the evening, we could be thankful for how Rev. VanWoudenberg visibly and humbly put his heart into his work. We are thankful for all Rev. VanWoudenberg has done and we thank God for providing so many gifts to us through him and his family.

Just before the close of the evening, Rev. VanWoudenberg was given an opportunity to say personal words of farewell. In his own way he was able to leave us all first with a smile and then with encouragement. Emmanuel is the name of our congregation, he reminded us, and we can with that confession move forward. Indeed God is with us! In Guelph and also in Dunnville. To him be praise. Emmanuel!



Letter to the Editor

I read with interest Rev. T. Lodder's article "Of Songs, Wives, and Catechism Students: The *Book of Praise* at General Synod 2013." I appreciated the overview of the Report of the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*, even if I did not agree with all of the conclusions and suggestions.

Specifically, I would like to counter one suggestion; namely, that we should replace the word "maintains" with the words "supports, provides for, and cares for" when speaking about the husband's duties to his wife. After all, writes Rev. Lodder, "a Christian husband maintains his vehicle, not his wife."

The word "maintains" actually contains rich layers of meaning. The relevant dictionary definition is "to keep in existence or continuance; preserve; retain" which, indeed, might be more appropriate for automotive care. But the origin of the word is from the Anglo-French *meinténir*, which means "to practice habitually." This in turn was derived from the Latin *manu tenere* – to "hold in the hand." This is a beautiful image that is entirely appropriate to marriage – we are to hold on to our wives and care for them habitually. In fact, some of us husbands could probably spend less time maintaining our vehicles and more time maintaining our wives.

Kent Dykstra
Cloverdale

Response

Let me begin with a correction. I did not suggest that the word "maintain" should be replaced with "supports, provides for, and cares for." That would make the question a little too wordy. I suggested that "maintain" should be replaced with a word that more fittingly reflects the biblical mandate of the duties of a Christian husband toward his wife.

I doubt whether most people are aware of the Anglo-French and Latin roots of "maintain." But even if they were, I would still not agree with my good brother Kent. For even the etymological origins he cites, "to practice habitually" and "hold in the hand," do not match the "beautiful image. . . entirely appropriate to marriage" that he sees in this word. Also, often etymology has little or no bearing on current usage.

Maybe when the marriage form was written in its present redaction, people still understood it to mean "to provide with livelihood, to furnish with means of subsistence," but even this is the ninth definition of twelve in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Fact is, most of us don't use that word, or understand it, that way. Unbelieving guests at our weddings are even more puzzled, and amused.

I'm thankful, brother, that we agree on one very important point: some of us Christian husbands really should spend less time maintaining our vehicles and more time supporting our wives!


Dr. Theo Lodder

Re: Article by Rick Ludwig (Feb. 8, 2013) "Is Christian Burial Going Underground?"

How timely and fitting Mr. Ludwig's article was. We buried our loved one (my husband) Tom Hansma on February 5, 2013.

Just as you wrote so eloquently, we had the body of our loved one present at the funeral. That was my husband's wish. Not to honour the man, but Jesus Christ the risen Saviour and Shepherd.

Whenever we attended a memorial service where the body had been buried beforehand he would say: "There is something missing here." At the grave side many members (church family) were present to witness the sowing of the seed. As they drew near it was as if they surrounded us with loving arms. I will never forget those loving arms, together with prayer, song, and profession made before the Almighty God. Praising him with one accord, you faithful servants of the Lord. We truly were lifted up in prayerful respect. God is our Rock but the communion of saints is our "Stepping Stones."

With Christian greetings,
Greta Hansma-nee Zeldenrust
Chilliwack, B.C. 



*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*