

A CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
TO ENCOURAGE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND UNITE

71 | 18

SEPT 2, 22

Clarion

Worship 101

In the Fruit of the Spirit is Peace

Guido de Bres Christian High School 2022



Clarion

Clarion: a trustworthy and engaging magazine, widely spread and read in Canadian Reformed households and beyond.

To equip God's people for his glory, in faithfulness to Scripture, as summarized in the Reformed confessions, Clarion adheres to the following core values:

Confessionally Reformed
Loving in manner
Attuned to current issues
Readable and Reliable
In Submission to Scripture
Open to constructive criticism
Nurturing Christian living

What's Inside

For Issue 18 let me begin at the end of the magazine where the topic of Jesus's descent into hell is carefully taught to the children in the *Clarion Kids* column (no easy feat!). Just ahead of that you'll find a moving story of coming to faith in Jesus written by a young north African lady who grew up in a nominal Muslim home. May our Lord richly bless the various ministries of MERF and bring saving light to the many millions who only know the darkness of Islam.

Have you "googled" something lately? Odds are you have, even many times a day. Rev. Eric Kampen gives us pause to consider whether there may be a better alternative to finding certain answers in his "Google or God" piece. Rev. Jake Torenvliet shines a light on the preciousness and importance of the weekly Sunday gathering for worship in "Worship 101." We

also have two devotional articles, the first of which is "Trembling at God's Word" by Rev. Gerrit Bruintjes where he unpacks this idea as found in Isaiah 66:2. Rev. Tyler Vandergaag zeroes in on peace in his ongoing series on the fruit of the Spirit and how the Lord Jesus embodies this as well.

That takes us to the opening editorial, in which Rev. Jim Witteveen writes about the reality of conspiracies against God and his Anointed One. We need to distinguish between groundless and often far-fetched conspiracy "theories" and actual plots and plans (for which there are evidence) which in one way or another work against the kingdom of God. Plenty to contemplate here too. May your faith be built up as you read!

Peter Holtvlüwer

519 EDITORIAL Conspiracy Realism

520 TREASURES, NEW & OLD
Tremble at God's Word

521 Worship 101

523 In the Fruit of the Spirit is Peace

526 Google or God

530 Guido de Bres Christian High School 2022

534 MERF NEWS

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: Peter Holtvlüwer
Managing Editor: Laura Veenendaal
Contributing Editors: Eric Kampen, Jason Van Vliet, Matthew VanLuik, Jim Witteveen

GENERAL INQUIRIES

CLARION 8 Inverness Crescent,
St. Albert AB T8N 5J5
Email: editor@clarionmagazine.ca

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACT

CLARION Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB Canada R2J 3X5
Phone: 204-663-9000

WEBSITE clarionmagazine.ca

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Email: Letters@clarionmagazine.ca
Letters to the Editor must not exceed 300 words and are to be written in a Christian manner.

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE

Email: submissions@clarionmagazine.ca
Only articles which agree with Clarion's guidelines will be considered for publication. See clarionmagazine.ca for these guidelines.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

clarionmagazine.ca/subscriptions

2022 SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Regular Mail Air Mail Canada \$49*
\$82* U.S.A. U.S. Funds \$69 \$102
International \$98 \$171
*Plus applicable taxes.

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE

CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
One Beghin Avenue,
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

CANCELLATION AGREEMENT

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.

ADVERTISEMENTS

clarionmagazine.ca/advertisements

2022 RATES

Full page \$434 | ½ \$219 | ¼ \$109 | ⅓ \$54
We reserve the right to refuse ads.

PUBLISHED BIWEEKLY

by Premier Printing Ltd. Winnipeg, Manitoba
Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd. All rights reserved.

No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada.

Canada

Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

GUEST EDITORIAL

Conspiracy Realism

Who would ever want to be described as a “conspiracy theorist”? A conspiracy is defined as “an agreement to perform together an illegal, wrongful, or subversive act.” A conspiracy theory is “a theory seeking to explain a disputed case or matter as a plot by a secret group or alliance rather than an individual or isolated act.” As for the definition of “conspiracy theorist,” the official definition is far less important than the usual characterization of such a person. Conspiracy theorists are generally depicted as oddballs in tinfoil hats, people whose ideas about reality are so far outside of the mainstream as to be worthy of little more than mockery or ridicule. It doesn’t matter the “conspiracy” that is being discussed, the conspiracy theorist will inevitably be linked to people who deny that the earth is round or who claim that the leadership of the world has been taken over by an alien reptilian species. Because, after all, the real truth is so obvious that only someone who is more than a little off-balance could possibly deny it!

Ad hominem

Calling someone a conspiracy theorist is the ultimate debate stopper. In the logic of argumentation, this kind of technique is known as the *ad hominem* fallacy—an attack on the person making the argument rather than an attempt to deal with the argument itself. It’s a matter of guilt by association; questioning or challenging the dominant narrative in one area leads to being lumped in with an undefined group whose views can safely be disregarded without actually dealing with the substance of its arguments.

As Christians, our desire to avoid *ad hominem* arguments should be enough to lead us to avoid using this kind of terminology in a debate or a discussion. Yes, there are conspiracy theories that are not founded in reality, that are based more on flights of fancy than on actual evidence. But, when any particular label is used in the world to bully people into silence and exclude them from discussions, it should give us pause. After all, how do we feel when we’re referred to as “fundamentalists” or “religious extremists”?

Scripture and confession

As we seek to have our worldview formed by Scripture, there is even more reason to reject this kind of characterization of those who argue that conspiracies are both a historical and present-day reality. God’s Word makes it clear that conspiracies

in high places are very real indeed: “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel [or conspire] together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, ‘Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us’” (Ps 2:3, 4).

In Matthew 12 we’re told about the climactic way in which this conspiracy played out in leading to the death of our Saviour, as “the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him” (Matt 12:14). And in Acts 23 we learn that the conspiracy continues, as the servants of Christ become the intended victims of those who follow in the same line of conspirators, who seek to destroy them; in this case, “the Jews made a plot [or: conspired] and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul” (Acts 23:12).

Acknowledging the existence of conspiracies is even a part of our Reformed confession; when we pray, “Your kingdom come,” we are asking the Lord to preserve and increase his church, to destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against him, and every conspiracy against his holy Word” (LD 48). There is an overarching conspiracy at work in the world, and there has been since the serpent first approached Eve in the Garden of Eden. It is a conspiracy that takes many forms and includes many players, including some who may even be unwitting pawns of the evil one. Their immediate goals may differ, but they all have one thing in common: they are united in their effort to dethrone the King of kings.

Therefore, we must be “conspiracy realists.” The wicked continue to conspire together as they have throughout history, often from positions of power and influence. But in the end, acknowledging the existence of conspiracies does not mean that we live in fear or that we fall into despair. These conspirators may cause a lot of damage along the way, but every conspiracy against the LORD and his Anointed is doomed to fail. We are assured in Psalm 2 that “he who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD holds them in derision.” He has set his King on Zion, his holy hill. He will bring to naught every conspiracy against his holy Word; and thus, we can be confident, because we take refuge in him. ☑



Jim Witteveen *Missionary in Brazil*
Sent by the Aldergrove Canadian
Reformed Church
jim.witteveen@protonmail.com

Tremble at God's Word

“But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.” (ISAIAH 66:2)

Isaiah 66:2b is one of the simplest statements of God's expectations. The LORD says that he will look with favour on the person who is humble, contrite in spirit, and trembles at God's Word. Let us briefly consider what it means to tremble at God's Word.

The Word of God is his self-revelation to humanity. In his Word he reveals who he is, what he does, and his will for the world and for humanity. We come to know God through his Word and how to live before him. Therefore, how we treat his word is of utmost importance.


To tremble at God's Word is to have a deep respect for his Word. Such respect will lead to a genuine desire to hear his Word, understand his Word, and eagerly see it fulfilled. Anything less will lead to great fear. Sadly, when humanity treated God's Word callously and with contempt, they fell into sin and faced death. We see this in the very beginning.

God commanded Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen 2:16-17). Simple and clear. In knowing and keeping these words, there was eternal life. To hear and fear God's Word, Adam and Eve should have known this command inside and out, perhaps even have it memorized.

But, when Satan came and questioned Eve about God's Word, she either did not know it or did not respect it. First, she made God's Word say less than he said. Eve responded to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. . .” (Gen 3:3). Notice, she drops the word “surely.” The NET Bible comments, “Her words do not reflect the sense of eating to her heart's content.” Rather than delighting in the fullness of what God gave in his Word, she minimized God's Word. Second, Eve added to God's Word by saying God said they were not to touch the tree, lest they die. However, God did not say anything about them touching the tree. She had added an extra rule that God had not given and *attributed it to God*. In responding to Satan, Eve both took away from God's Word and added to it.

God tells us: I will look with favour on the one who trembles at my Word. We must eagerly hear the Word, prayerfully ask God to help us clearly understand it, and then be fearfully passionate to follow it. His Word is our life. If in time of persecution, all you had left of the Bible was a burned fragment that read, “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not. . .”—would you know how it finishes?

Lack of trembling is further shown when we add to God's Word or take away from it. We make the Bible say less than it says when we ignore clear commands in Scripture or disbelieve clear promises. We make the Bible say more than it says when we use it to explicitly defend a way of life or faith that might be wise, but is not clearly commanded by God. As we hear and use God's Word to find and order life, marriage, family, and church, do we clearly know what is negotiable and non-negotiable? Do we know where we are resting firmly on the clear Word of God?

We have been given the Word of Life in the incarnate Word Jesus Christ; let us tremble before God's Word. 

For Further Study

1. Read John 8:21-30 and Ezra 9 (notice v. 4).
2. Do you have a deep reverence for God's Word and a fear at seeing it misused or abused?
3. In what ways might you be stretching or adding to God's Word? When do you find yourself doing this? What are you fearing might happen if you don't?
4. What passages of Scripture do you ignore or might you be minimizing? Why?
5. Can you trust that God's Word is enough for salvation?



Gerrit Bruintjes Pastor
Bethel Canadian Reformed Church
Toronto, Ontario
gbruintjes@gmail.com



Worship 101

BY JAKE TORENVLIET

The first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism famously asks: “What is the chief end of man?” As in: for what purpose, or why did God create you? Answer: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

Hardwired for worship

Our first parents were created for the sole purpose of glorifying—worshipping—the Creator God. Every moment of every day. Seven days a week, whether they were building cities, raising families, creating culture, cultivating the garden, having dominion over creation, or resting. Even after Adam and Eve rebelled and fell into sin, the “chief end” remained. As image-bearers of God, the hardwiring for worship, though tainted and corrupted, remained. But instead of worshipping the Creator, fallen humanity turned to the worship of created things, leading to disastrous consequences (Romans 1:23–25). As C. S. Lewis observed in *Mere Christianity*:

What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could be “like gods”—could set up on their own as if they had created themselves—be their own masters—invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside God, apart from God. And out of that hopeless attempt has come

nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.

The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.

That is the key to history. Terrific energy is expended—civilizations are built up—excellent institutions devised; but each time something goes wrong. Some fatal flaw always brings the selfish and cruel people to the top and it all slides back into misery and ruin. In fact, the machine conks. It seems to start up all right and runs a few yards, and then it breaks down. They are trying to run it on the wrong juice. That is what Satan has done to us humans.

As image-bearers of God, the hardwiring for worship, though tainted and corrupted, remained

Redeemed for worship

But the Bible has far more to say. History isn't merely history; it is redemptive history! From out of the mass of fallen humanity, God, who is rich in mercy, has saved and redeemed a people for himself. In Jesus Christ, God reconciled a people to himself. By his Spirit he has given these same people new hearts so that he can be embraced in faith, hope, and love (see Ezekiel 36; John 3, Ephesians 2:1-10), so that he can be worshiped in spirit and truth (John 4:24). But the best part about all of this is that this is a gospel story about you and me! In this act of redemption, we now begin to experience the "chief end of man." By grace, we can glorify, worship, and enjoy God. In his book *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*, the late preacher A. W. Tozer summarized it like this: "Worship is man's full reason for existence. Worship is why we are born and why we are born again. Worship is the reason for our genesis in the first place and our regeneration that we call regeneration. Worship is why there is church, the assembly of the redeemed."

The struggle is real

This puts so much of life into the right perspective, doesn't it? The Christian life is to be a life of gratitude while worshiping the Triune God. Every moment of every day. This is real fullness and joy. This is what we were created to be and do! As 1 Corinthians 10:31 encourages believers: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

But the truth and sad reality is that we still often fall into old ruts and patterns of sinful worship. Too often we think we can still run our lives "on the wrong juice." As a result, we find ourselves spiritually exhausted, empty, or broken. Our relationship with God becomes strained—from our end anyway. Our relationships with others are also negatively impacted.

Grace for the journey

Of course, this only highlights one of the things that makes Sunday such a wonderful blessing. As we journey through this life, we are privileged to be called by God each week to gather for corporate worship with fellow believers—the assembly of the redeemed. As we gather for worship, we can expect that the Holy Spirit will (re)tune our hearts to sing God's praise. He gives grace for the journey. We can bask in the warmth of God's steadfast love toward us. We can celebrate our redemption from sin through song and prayer. We can be refreshed in the fullness and richness of relationship with God and his people. Small wonder, then, that the author of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 10:23-25: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Let's take those words to heart. As we become accustomed once more to the regular patterns of weekly corporate worship, let's not take these things for granted. And let's endeavour to encourage others to join us in worship. There really is no better place to be on a Sunday! 📖



Jake Torenvliet *Pastor*
Redemption Canadian Reformed Church
Flamborough, Ontario
jacobtorenvliet@gmail.com

In the Fruit of the Spirit is

Peace

A white swan is swimming on a calm lake. The water is still, reflecting the swan and the surrounding trees. The background is a soft, misty landscape with trees and a light sky, creating a peaceful atmosphere.

TYLER VANDERGAAG

“Peace be with you. . . . Peace be with you. . . . Peace be with you.” (JOHN 20:19–26)

Sometimes we can have the appearance of peace in our lives. Everything can look calm on the outside, but inside our hearts are in turmoil. In truth, peace is a bit like joy. It seems so hard to come by and so fleeting. Yet, when we look at the gospel, when we understand who Jesus is and what he has done for us, the Spirit cultivates a deep and lasting peace in our hearts and moves us to pursue peace with others too.

Jesus’s peace

Three times in John 20, the risen Lord Jesus says, “Peace be with you” (vv. 19, 21, 26). “Peace” or “shalom” (in Hebrew) was the customary greeting in those days. We say, “Hi.” They said, “Shalom, peace.” Now peace—not hi—is what his disciples needed to hear and have, especially on that first Easter Sunday. They had heard that Jesus had risen from the dead. Peter and John

There is nothing more beautiful,
more wonderful or so sweet as the peace
Jesus proclaims!

saw the empty tomb and at least John believed (John 20:8). Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene. And yet they were afraid. We find the disciples behind locked doors for fear of the Jews (v. 19). The fear of man consumed them and drove out any peace, any joy of the resurrection.

Now really, if there was anyone to fear, it should've been the risen Lord, not the Jews! They had violated their covenant of friendship with him (Ps 55:20). They had hung him out to dry, had denied knowing him, and had abandoned him on that God-forsaken cross. So, Jesus has every right to stick it to them, to get even with them. That's what we'd do if a friend betrayed us or—if you don't like confrontation—you'd just avoid and ignore that person at all costs. Pretend they don't exist.

But, thank God, the risen Lord Jesus is not like us! He's filled with the Spirit. He doesn't avoid those who stabbed him in the back. He doesn't wait for them to come to him, he goes to them. But does he go in with guns a-blazing and his anger hot? No! "Peace be with you!" Those are the first words out of his mouth and before he says anything else he says it again: "Peace be with you!" And again, when Thomas is with them the following Sunday: "Peace be with you."

Now the kind of peace Christ brings is the peace of being in a restored relationship with God. Sin had shattered our peace with God. Our sin was—and still is—a slap in the face to God. Our sin made it impossible for us to walk with God like Adam once did in the garden of Eden. This wasn't something that the Lord God Almighty was pleased with. He's a God of peace. And so, despite the broken and shattered peace caused by our sins, the Father of Peace sent the Prince of Peace to restore our peace with God.

Prince of Peace

And just like the joy that was set before him, the Prince of Peace would stop at nothing to achieve this restored relationship with God. He made every effort to obtain it. He left no stone unturned in his peace-making effort. He did this knowing full-well how much it would cost him. To procure our peace, "he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5). That's just what he did. He went to the cross to obtain that peace for us. He did this, no doubt, in the power and strength of the Spirit. Rather than shy away from the cross, he embraced it knowing the peace that would come out of it and the joy of seeing his people forgiven, living in God's wonderful peace! Through his blood, shed on the old rugged cross, we have shalom—peace with God! What a Saviour! What a glorious Prince of Peace we have in the Risen Lord Jesus!

Now, if you've ever shattered the peace and harmony between you and a person you love—maybe you said something that you wish you could take back, or you did something you wish you could undo but never can—it often weighs on your soul. You long for renewed peace, for that relationship to be made whole once again. Often in this world, it's near impossible to restore the peace you've broken with another, but sometimes it happens that peace prevails and is renewed. And how wonderful that is! How beautiful! How sweet! Well, that's just a small taste of the joy that ought to well up in our hearts, at the peace we now have with God in Christ! You've done things, I've said things, that should make it impossible for us to ever live in peace with God again. We slapped him in the

face far too many times. We've been self-righteous, complacent, prideful, ungrateful. Yet, Jesus says, "Peace be with you. . . . Peace be with you. . . . Peace be with you." There is nothing more beautiful, more wonderful; there is nothing so sweet as the peace Jesus proclaims! May it never grow old or leave our hearts cold! The Prince of Peace—through the Spirit of peace—has given us unmerited, undeserved peace.

Our peace

Now, because the Spirit is at work in our lives, there ought to be a peace deep within, a peace that transcends our circumstances, our trouble, our fear, a peace that flows from and is rooted in the Prince of Peace. He's made our peace *with* God for us! And when we embrace Christ in faith, the Holy Spirit cultivates the "peace of Christ" so that it rules in our hearts above all else (Col 3:15). We see a beautiful illustration of this in John 20 with the disciples. Their door was locked as fear gripped their hearts. Then Jesus came. He proclaimed his peace, and their fear turns to joy: "The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord" (v. 20). Suddenly their fear of the Jews was gone! They had true peace, lasting peace that no amount of trouble or hardship could steal away!


Perhaps the best way to cultivate this Spirit-filled peace is to ask God for it. That's the simple advice of Paul in Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." What a promise! Whatever you are afraid of or worry about, whatever keeps you up at night or fills you with anxiety, whatever it is, dear child of God, take it to the Lord in prayer. Pray for the Spirit to cultivate the peace of God in your heart!

Be a peacemaker

Now, the peace in the fruit of the Spirit is more than the peace of Christ that rules in our hearts. Peace in the fruit of the Spirit also

has to do with making peace with others. In Galatians 5:15, Paul had already warned against biting and devouring one another. And if you look at the acts of the sinful nature, many of them have to do with the opposite of peace: "enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy" (Gal 5:20-21). In place of this, Paul calls God's people to a life of Spirit-filled peace with each other.

This isn't something that happens naturally. This is the challenge of being a church community. We all have different views on things, different perspectives and approaches. It's so easy to become like the Galatians and "bite and devour one another" (Gal 5:15). But when has this ever helped? Instead, filled with the Spirit, we must cultivate an atmosphere and community of peace. At least three times in the New Testament we're called to "make every effort" to pursue peace (Rom 14:19; Heb 12:14; 1 Pet 3:11). The Greek word for "make every effort" comes from the verb "to persecute." So, this is a divine call to pursue peace with the same vigour and determination that Saul had when he persecuted the church. We must leave no stone unturned in our peace-making efforts. That's what the Prince of Peace did for us! And in the power of the Spirit, that's what we're called to do as well.

This means taking ownership of our own faults and failures. It means avoiding words that can create misunderstanding and division. It means thinking of others as better than ourselves. It means being quick to say sorry, to bite our tongues, avoid gossip, and keep the confidence of others (C. Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit*, 66). Oh, may the Spirit work powerfully among us so that peace will prevail within our walls! Yes, may the Spirit truly cultivate peace in our hearts, in our homes, in our marriages and families, in our church communities and beyond! 



Tyler VanderGaag, Minister
Canadian Reformed Church
Taber, AB
tyler.vandergaag@gmail.com

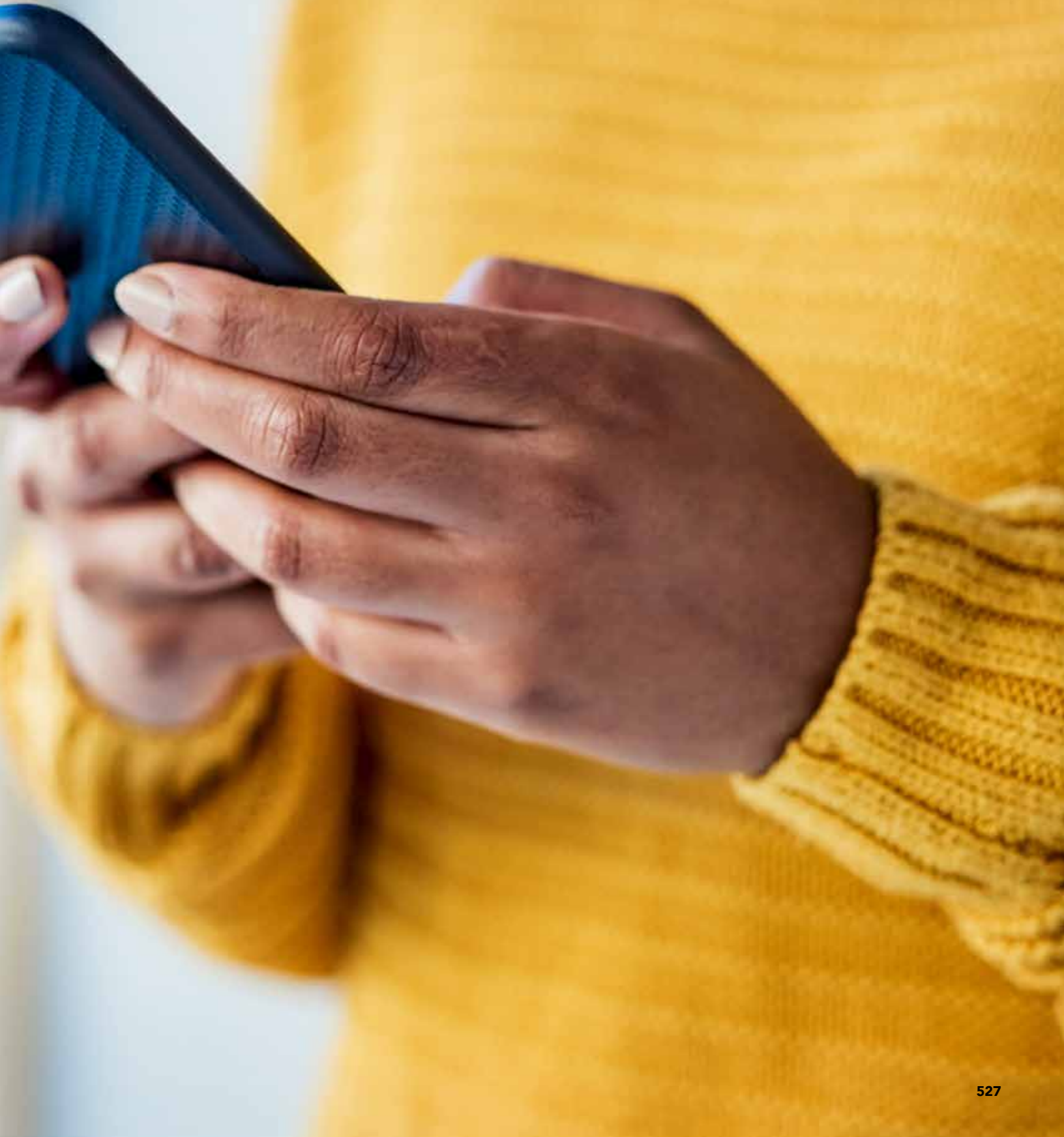
Google or God?

ERIC KAMPEN

Google mania

Google it! How often don't we use that phrase when discussing a matter? Within moments of saying it, someone will have done exactly that and tell you what they found. There is an amazing amount of information accessible at our fingertips, or, if desired, by means of voice activated searches. With our hand-held devices always connected to the Internet, it only takes moments to produce results.





How quickly do we ask Google rather than God?

Truly, we depend on our devices. They are ready to serve us at our beck and call. At the same time, we also seem ready to serve them at their beck and call. Many react instantly when they hear their phone ring or ding to indicate an incoming call or message.

The ubiquity of our devices and their dominance in our lives is evident even when you watch people in a restaurant. In many cases, rather than looking at and talking with their fellow diners, attention is on the phone. A father with children hitting the teenage years recently related how he now understood the concern of parents with teenagers about the obsession with and the attachment to their devices. He thought it was fitting to call this a pandemic, as people are always googling, always watching YouTube videos, always paying attention to everyone's posting on social media and sharing links to videos and blogs.

Google wisdom

While it is concerning that such an inordinate amount of time is spent on electronic devices, the specific concern I wish to address is the way so many turn to Google for direction and guidance on the issues of the day and the issues of life. As was mentioned, in many discussions someone will say, "Google it." Usually, you don't have to say it, for someone has already done it. From Facebook and other social media posts, it is obvious that some spend a great deal of time researching on the internet. Google is the lamp that lights up their path, and they readily share the latest wisdom and insight they have found on their favourite websites or blogs. Others are encouraged to follow the links to read what is found there, watch the latest video, or listen to the latest podcast. All this searching for answers with Google, however, seems to come at the expense of searching for answers with God.

Not Web but Word

Of course, it is not possible to simply type in some words in some search engine and get an answer from God. There is, however, a way to get answers from God by searching his Word. In Psalm 119:9, it is said that a youth can keep his way pure by

guarding it according to God's Word. Later in that same Psalm, it is confessed that God's word is a lamp for our feet (v. 105). God's Word, after all, is the essential tool of the Holy Spirit to work and strengthen faith (cf. Romans 10:14-17; 1 Peter 1:23-25; see also LD 25:65, CD I 3; III/IV 6, 17; V 14). Paul writes to Timothy that, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16, 17).

This emphasis on the Word of God was necessary in Paul's days. There may not have been social media to distract, confuse, and mislead people, but there were other "media" tugging on their hearts. In his first letter to Timothy, he instructed Timothy to warn people not "to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. . . . Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions" (1 Tim 3:4-7). Just after his words about Scripture being God-breathed in his second letter to Timothy, Paul mentions how there are many competing for the attention of God's children, eager to scratch itching ears, to tell them what they want to hear (cf. 2 Tim 4:3, 4). As God's children, we should be searching the Scriptures to deal with the issues before us day by day, rather than sites on the web. We need to go to the Bible, not blogs.

Search Scripture carefully

Searching Scripture is not simply a matter of typing in some words in your Bible app, or, if you are old school, using a concordance. To be sure, you can find words fast enough, but words are used in different contexts. One needs to run a mental scan on what Scripture teaches, keeping in mind where information is found within the unfolding of the history of salvation. You may even have to go to a commentary which goes into considerable detail, or a book that elaborates on an issue at some length. Wikipedia can be great for an introduction to a

topic, but it is not in-depth scholarship. Tweets may sound clever and profound, but they are not the fruit of in-depth reflection on an issue. A person who lives by tweets is in danger of looking like a bird brain when discussing a topic.

Speaking of tweets, the LORD addressed that problem through the prophet Isaiah. During the reign of king Ahaz, when people were not listening to God's Word but following false prophets and teachers who scratched their itching ears, Isaiah prophesied, "And when they say to you, 'Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,' should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony!" (Isa 8:19-20.) To apply this to the topic at hand, there is so much nonsense on the web, so much chirping and muttering. We should go to the testimony of God instead.

Searching the Word, turning to God, not Google, is also being true to our spiritual roots in the Reformation. One of the *sola* statements associated with the Reformation was *sola Scriptura*—only Scripture. God's people are people of the Book. When we speak about an issue, we should be able to say, "This is what Scripture says," and then refer to a relevant passage. If we feel the urge to speak out about a matter, our point should give evidence of having searched God's Word rather than the Web.

Suggestions

Earlier in this article, mention was made of the way one father referred to the obsession with electronic devices as a pandemic that had hit his family too. Even the slightest exposure to social media makes clear it is not just a problem for teenagers. These devices are a reality of life. The challenge is to let them be our servants rather than us being their slaves. How do we bring that about? I offer a few suggestions.


First, it should be recognized how easily devices that can be helpful in running our lives begin to run our lives. Our goods become our gods and enslave us. In this case, it will be evident in how quickly we turn to our devices for answers. We can gauge

their hold on our lives by asking ourselves how much time in the day is spent looking down at our devices. How quickly do we ask Google rather than God? Keep in mind that we are speaking here especially for guidance on the issues of the day and of life. Take the time to let one's fingers run through the pages of Scripture rather than scrolling through web pages. Run to the Bible rather than blogs. Let thinking be governed by our confessions rather than subtly reinforced by computer algorithms that are designed to scratch itching ears.

Second, when there is some time to fill, rather than seek amusement by watching videos, scrolling randomly, or catching up on what's posted on the various apps, open a Bible app and read Scripture. This suggestion may be radical, seeing we read Scripture at set times in our schedule. But God's children are to be people of the Word.

Third, perhaps consider going on a fast from your device in terms of seeking your guidance, responding only to actual calls or texts. This would automatically result in a fast on forwarding links to Google-sourced "wisdom." Fill the available time by reflecting on what God's Word says about the issues.

Not Google but God

Finally, seeing that this article may not reach the eyes of all who might really benefit from it, share this article, and let it be a conversation starter with your family and friends. Then challenge each other to work on ways that a servant in your life does not become your master. When it comes to guidance for our lives and the issues of the day, it should not be wisdom from the Web through Google, but wisdom from the Word of God. 



Eric Kampen Minister
Canadian Reformed Church
Orangeville, Ontario
rev.e.kampen@gmail.com



Guido de Brès

Christian High School 2022 Commencement

STEPHANIE SIKMA

It is safe to say that the crowd seated in Redeemer University's auditorium in Hamilton, Ontario the evening of Tuesday, June 28, 2022 felt an extra tinge of excitement that they could be there in person to witness the commencement of 109 students from Guido de Brès Christian Highschool. After two years of pandemic disruption, the opportunity for friends, family, and teachers to gather together and celebrate and give thanks for the graduands was that much more relished. Prior to the official start of the ceremony, the joyful atmosphere was further enriched by songs of praise sung by Megan Bax, Nyansha Kasweka, and Andrea Tel.

Mr. Bert Knol, the Chairman of Guido's Board, opened the evening and informed the graduands that each one of them is

a star. Not of the celebrity variety, but as children of God who shine because of and for Christ. Reading from Philippians 2, Mr. Knol encouraged the class of 2022 to continue on the path taught to them by their parents and teachers by shining their light in the darkness. With parting words of congratulations, the floor was then passed to Guido's principal, Mr. Jason Heemserk.

Real world lights

Always a realist, Mr. Heemserk quoted from 1 Peter 5:10, "After you have suffered a little while . . ." and related it to how students might feel about the ordeals of high school; waking up early to go to school, following a set schedule, and labouring under the direction of others. Though, he did insist that along the way

Ontario Secondary School Diplomas

Cole Lammert Alkema
 Darren Robert Bartels
 Gavin Benson Bartels
 Isaac Derek Bartels
 Karly Faith Bartels
 Levi William Bartels
 Reese Joelle Bartels
 Tyler Derek Bartels
 Jessica Amanda Beijes
 Anya Jayden Blokker
 Cameron Christianna Blokker
 Reuben Caleb Bontekoe
 Alexis Kennedy Bos
 Lily Kerin Bos
 Reuben James Bos
 Ariel Renae Bosch
 Taylor Selena Bosch
 Kailey Kimberley Ann Buikema
 Zachary Marc Buist
 Renata Adrianna Datema
 Sean Mitchell de Jonge
 Evan Franklin DeBoer
 Leanne Gerry DeBoer
 Caleb Johnathan DeHaan
 Nicole Louise DeJager
 Sierra Tiana deJager
 Jenna Nicole Dekker
 Claire Evelyn DeVries
 Elora Geraldine DeVries
 Connor Hayden Dykstra
 Liam Peter Feenstra
 Eliana Rae Gansekoele
 Aaron John Harsevoort
 Aidan William Hart
 Devon Hendrik Heeg
 Simon Jason Heemskerck
 Seth Steven Heikamp

Emmalyne Jantine Helder
 Gabriel Frederick Holtvlüwer
 Olivia Gerda Hordyk
 Kyla Marika Jagt
 Lydia Jajou
 Zion Gerrit Jans
 Kaitlyn Nadine Jongbloed
 Matthew Kyle Jonker
 Norah Hendrika Jonker
 Justin Hendrik Kampen
 Taylor Mackenzie Kampen
 Djese Ilunga Kasweka
 Hailey Jay-Lynn Kelly
 Kaitlyn Dawn Kiers
 Colm Jesse Kingma
 Meah Gabrielle Knecht
 Kaitlyn Joy Kuizenga
 Lydia Diane Lanting
 Mark David Leistra
 Annika Maria Lof
 Marissa Leanne Lof
 Joel Marinus Louwerse
 David John Ludwig
 Amber Caroline Mans
 Evan Reed Muis
 Jonah Preston Nash Onland
 Bradley Sean Petter
 Lydia Gerda Pierotti
 Miriam Anita Poort
 Amy Joanneke Ravensbergen
 Miriam Shalom Roukema
 Jordan Anthony Luke Schipper
 Anthony David Schouten
 Emily Sarah Schulenberg
 Nathaniel Pieter Schulenberg
 Quinton Blake Schulenberg
 Tara Leanne Schuller

Scott Mitchel Schutten
 Zoe Christiane Schutten
 Violet Janice Schwantz
 Kendra Grace Sieders
 Mya Lynn Sieders
 Landon Philip Sikkema
 Leah Grace Smid
 Jonathan Asher Smith
 Abby Amanda Spoelstra
 Tyler John Stegenga
 Ryan James Stel
 Alayna Marie Struyk
 Kendra Joy Tenhage
 Levi Henry Tenhage
 Katie Rianna Tomlin
 Dylan Henry van der Velde
 Matthew Christian Van Raalte
 Shaelan Mariah VanAndel
 Casey Logan VandeBurgt
 Caleb Cornelis Vandenbeukel
 Levi Nelson VanderBruggen
 Corey Martin VanderLaan
 Brooke Lynn Vandervelde
 Caleb William VanderVelde
 Chelsea Claire Vanderwal
 Austin Robert Van Egmond
 Ava Elise van Popta
 Morgan Mackenzie VanPykeren
 Daniel Bernard VanRaalte
 Malia Taryn Van Veen
 Sydney Ryan Van Veen
 Tijuana Marie Versteeg
 Keegan James Vis
 Leanna Jane Vos
 Luther Jackson Wieske
 Jonathan Thomas Wildeboer

Award Recipients

Guido de Brès Awards

Anya Blokker	Miriam Roukema
Emmalyne Helder	Emily Schulenberg
Kyla Jagt	Ava van Popta
Amber Mans	Sydney Van Veen

Academic Athletics Award

Anthony Schouten

The Guido de Brès Christian High School Participation Awards

Cole Alkema	Nicole DeJager	Djese Kasweka
Tyler Bartels	Jenna Dekker	Mark Leistra
Leanne DeBoer	Simon Heemsker	Chelsea Vanderwal

The Governor General's Academic Medal

Emmalyne Helder

The Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students

Jenna Dekker

The Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff Student-of-the-Year Award

Mark Leistra



there is joy and reward in learning. Having reached the end of their high school careers, Mr. Heemsker suggested that students might be posed the question, "Are you ready for the real world?" A world in which you wake up early, commute to work, and abide by someone else's schedule and expectations . . . sound familiar? The point was aptly made that high school is no less the "real world" than the life that comes after high school, be that post-secondary education or the workforce. Above all else, what makes life "real" is that, wherever the graduands may find themselves, there is a task in Christ that makes every

moment in life relevant. No matter what we do with our lives vocationally, the calling to follow Christ instills purpose and leads us to a life of joy with God forever.

These biblically grounded words of encouragement were followed by a worship song performed by Jenna Dekker, after which Rev. John Louwse had the pleasure of addressing the class, including his son, Joel. Expanding upon the words of Philippians 2, Rev. Louwse assured the graduands that "their future looks bright." Rev. Louwse encouraged each young person to "remind yourself of who you are—the Father's children




of light." In the darkness of this world, we are called not to merely glimmer, but to shine brightly and, in doing so, direct others to Christ just as the brightest constellations guided people to safety in times past. All this is possible only by holding fast to the light of this world—our Lord Jesus Christ.

Awards & valedictorian

In the glow of these edifying words, the program moved on to the presentation of the Ontario Secondary School Diplomas, which were received so enthusiastically that one young man was compelled to do a back flip. Various graduates were then highlighted for awards. The Guido de Brès Awards for Academic Achievement went to Anya Blokker, Emmalyne Helder, Kyla Jagt, Amber Mans, Miriam Roukema, Emily Schulenberg, Ava van Popta, and Sydney Van Veen. Anthony Schouten earned the Academic Athletics Award for being on two or more sports teams while achieving a high academic standing. School Participation Awards were earned by Cole Alkema, Tyler Bartels, Leanne DeBoer, Nicole DeJager, Jenna Dekker, Simon Heemsker, Djese Kasweka, Mark Leistra, and Chelsea Vanderwal. The Governor General's Academic Medal, given to the student with the highest

academic average over the last two years of high school, was awarded to Emmalyne Helder, of whom it was joked that she is so wonderfully able that she doesn't even need Hermoine Granger's Time-Turner pendant. Jenna Dekker received the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students for an astounding 980 volunteer hours. And finally, the Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff Student-of-the-Year Award went to Mark Leistra, a kind and gifted student who can, among other things, complete a rubik's cube behind his back, blindfolded, in a little over two minutes.

The awards were followed by Simon Heemsker's Valedictory Address, which gracefully employed the metaphor of crossing a river to describe the unique challenges and gains that the class of 2022 faced in their four years of high school. Following the Valedictory Address, Cameron Blokker and Alexis Bos sang a song of praise after which all those gathered could sing and pray together to conclude the program. It was a blessing to see this group of covenant children reach this milestone in their lives after an unusually difficult couple of years. As Simon put it: through every rapid, rest stop, smooth or rough sailing, by God's grace they arrived at the shore of adulthood. 



www.merf.org

MERF News

Middle East Reformed Fellowship—“Declaring the Whole Counsel of God”

July 2022



Safe in Christ's Hands A Testimony



Issa-almasih online Arabic program - "Sayings of Jesus the Christ"

My mother is the second wife. When my father's first wife learned that she could not bear children, she encouraged him to take a second wife. In fact, she introduced my mother to him. They are very close friends. My father respects and loves them both equally. He often says that he is the happiest husband and father in the whole world. I have an older sister and two younger brothers. We feel like we have two mothers, and love them both so much.

My parents do not practice Islam, other than participating in formal occasions, like the circumcision of my two brothers and attending

weddings and funerals. At home, we were never pressured to pray or fast. Occasionally, my father does go with his brother or other friends for prayer in the mosque.

He is a secondary school teacher of history and sociology and very open-minded. Over the years, he repeatedly told us that Jesus ("Issa") is his "favorite man of religion." He often spoke of him as "a true prophet of love and peace."

Who is Jesus?

Since I was about seven years old, I have been fascinated by my father's statements about Jesus, made on so many occasions.

Once, when I was 14 years old, my other mother, complained at supper time about what she heard from the loud-speakers of the neighborhood mosque. She was upset about what the imam said about women. I do not remember the details, but it was something about women's dress and not working outside of their homes. (She and my mother never had jobs outside the home, but they always looked after older women who were sick, lonely or poor.) My father reacted by saying the neighborhood mosque preacher was ignorant, like the religious teachers in the days of Jesus. He said that unlike them,

Jesus cared about women and defended them. As a teenage girl, this got me thinking even more about Jesus.

About 6 years ago, at the age of fifteen, I asked my father to tell me more about Jesus. He smiled and said that he didn't know enough, but that long ago he had heard messages on the radio about the good character and good teaching of Jesus. He added that what he heard was very different from what Muslim people assume they know about him. Then he said that from time to time he visits websites on the internet and listens to other messages – some good and some bad. He said that a good one



Dardasha 7 Arabic program - "Please Understand Me"

provides the exact teachings of Jesus from the Gospel ("Injeel").

Finding Out

So, I did my own personal research. For many months, I visited websites and listened mostly to Islamic preachers. When Jesus was mentioned, most spoke negatively of Christian beliefs, but said nothing about Jesus himself. This reminded me of what my father had said -- that they are ignorant about Jesus. So, after weeks of listening to and reading the gospel on my own, "I

found out that Jesus is our divine Savior." I became a follower of Jesus and told my family.

My father told me and the whole family that he was happy for me to have these beliefs, but urged us all not to talk to anyone else about it. One of my cousins is my closest friend. One day I told her that "I now pray to Jesus." She was surprised and a bit worried. She told her father, who spoke to my father about it. He suggested that my father convince me to meet with a certain Islamic scholar. My father said it was up to me.

Holy and Heavenly

One evening, we were visited by an imam who was a college teacher. Right away, my father informed him that I am free to believe what I want. The imam strongly disagreed and spoke negatively about what he said Christians believe. I pointed out that some of what he said was not Christian at all. He

politely replied that at least some Christians believe that it is OK for women to engage in extramarital sex. I answered that this is not the true teaching of Christ in the gospel.

He then said that there are different gospels, but refused to name a gospel that supported his claims. Then he added that as a woman I would not be able to understand what he was talking about. After that, he harshly demanded that I listen to his advice and follow only what Islam says and nothing else. When he spoke like that, my other mother got angry and defended me, telling him, "She is honest, intelligent and old enough to decide for herself." My father agreed and further said to the imam that "Jesus' teaching and attitude about women is holy and heavenly."

Now, not only do I know that my father and the whole family respect what I believe, but even my uncle says that he will not

"I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken."

— Psalm 16:8

be upset if his daughter believes the same, as long as we keep quiet about it.

Prayer & Praise

Please pray for the protection and spiritual growth of this North African young lady and for her family and many others like them in the Arab and Muslim lands needing Christian fellowship. Praise God for MERF's media ministries in Arabic, Farsi and other languages. They bring the gospel of Christ to shine saving grace to many hungry souls, prepared by the Holy Spirit. Pray for their nourishment and growth in fellowship with other believers.

METF-Canada

Thank you for your faithful support! Please make cheques payable to METF-Canada and send them to the address at the bottom of the page.

Online donations can be made to Middle East Reformed Fellowship (Canada) Inc. through www.merf.org/support

e-transfers:
merfcanada@gmail.com



Dardasha 7 online Arabic program - "Girl Talk"

CLARION KIDS

AMANDA DEBOER

LORD'S DAY 16

Someone who died on a cross was declared guilty by God. The Lord Jesus died for our sins on a cross. This was the only way our sins could be paid for. Now we do not have to pay for our sins. And this is only because God wanted to do this for us. How good he is! And so, Jesus's death should change us. God's people should be different. This means that Satan and sin cannot be in charge of us anymore. Instead, we have the Holy Spirit in us. Now we can say no to doing wrong. We should fight Satan and sin. Why? So that we get to go to heaven? No. We cannot do anything to go to heaven anyway! Jesus did it all! We fight against Satan and our sinfulness to thank God that Jesus died on the cross.

Draw a line to show a changed heart or a heart that is not changed.

Our heart is changed

- We are not bothered by our sin
- We are bothered by our sin
- We fight against sin to thank God for sending the Lord Jesus to die on the cross.

Our heart is not changed

Crossword Puzzle

You will need to read Lord's Day 16 to find the answers to this puzzle!

Down:

1. Jesus was ____ to show that he really died
2. He descended into ____
4. Our death puts an ____ to sin

Across:

3. He has ____ me from the anguish and torment of hell

