

Clarion

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



**When Small Things
Spoil Good Things**

Dathan Pleiter

Servant Leadership in Marriage

Rob Schouten

**A Graduation Reflection
for Christian Families**

Naeem Zafar

What's Inside

Grade 12 graduation is a significant milestone in a young adult's life, doubly so for Christians seeking to find their way in serving the Lord. We are pleased to present a report on the recent graduation ceremony of Guido de Brès Christian High School by Sarah Lanting along with a more general reflection by Naeem Zafar on whether we sometimes let our young graduates go off on their own too early in life. In the spirit of parents engaging with their daughters and sons, perhaps they together could read and discuss the books recommended in this issue as a way to both deepen Christian joy and walk with discernment in a world of mixed messages.

Matthew VanLuik's editorial on avoiding a self-centred (narcissistic) approach to life would also make good fodder for discussion within our families. May the Lord bless our young men and women (together with their parents) as they find their place of service in God's kingdom.

Rob Schouten writes one piece on how to understand the Bible's call to "earnestly desire that you may prophesy" and another on servant leadership within marriage—very engaging material! Clarence VanderVelde's meditation "How's Your Vision?" asks penetrating questions compelling us to consider the true guiding focus of our lives. Dathan Pleiter continues the theme of self-examination with his thoughtful article, "When Small Things Spoil Good Things." You can also find inside a report on the recent Women's Fellowship Day of the Fraser Valley, along with a very practical (as usual) article from Jan DeGelder on the Church Order, this time focusing more in-depth on church discipline.

Recent classes across our federation have seen a number of seminary students examined in one capacity or another and you can catch up by glancing through *Classis Clippings*.

George van Popta presents us with a hymnic rendition of Psalm 45 and Christ For All Ministry updates us on the work the Lord is pleased to do through them in Pakistan and Thailand. Lots to ponder, give thanks for, and be edified by!

Peter Holtvliwer

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Narcissism and the Church

When my wife and I go on holidays, we enjoy going to the ocean and walking along the beach. As we stroll, we often see groups of young women taking photos of themselves and each other in different poses. People used to take pictures to remember their trip, but now the main reason is to share them on social media to gain followers and get as many likes as possible. Some do it to become famous, while others use self-promotion for financial gain. We live in a narcissistic society where many seek attention for themselves.

ELEVATING OURSELVES

Studies show that in North America, people are paying more attention to themselves than ever before. This focus on self does not only damage personal lives but also impacts society as a whole. When we focus on our own needs, we begin to look for the constant approval of others. We want people to like our social media posts and to boost our self-worth with praise. When we do not get this attention, it can lead to feelings of depression or thinking ourselves to be worthless. Being too focused on ourselves also makes it difficult to build and maintain real friendships. Good friendships happen when people truly know each other, not just the highlights, and care for each other, listen, and help out when needed.

Narcissism harms our society by weakening our sense of community. When people focus on themselves instead of caring for others, the community suffers. Even though governments spend more money on social programs, social problems continue to get worse. What society really needs are not more programs but more people who care about one another. Communities—both in society and in the church—are strengthened when people genuinely love, support, and help each other.

It's worth asking: how much does this narcissistic, self-centred attitude in our society affect life inside the church? Whether we realize it or not, these worldly attitudes can subtly influence the attitude of God's people. When we start looking for the attention or approval of others, it changes how we feel about those who don't give us the recognition we want. If our self-worth depends on the affirmation of others, we are bound to feel hurt and disappointed, making it hard to build real relationships. Inside the church, we

become critical and judgmental of others, and it breaks down our sense of community. Just as we see division and polarization in society, the same problems can appear in the church if we are not guided by the Spirit of God.

ELEVATING OTHERS

This isn't a new problem, but social media has exacerbated the problem. Today, many post about themselves online and hope to get attention from others. A long time ago, Peter talked about this, warning that true beauty should not come from outward things, like fancy hairstyles, gold jewellery, or expensive clothes (1 Peter 3:3–4). Peter isn't saying it's wrong to wear nice clothes or jewellery. Instead, he warns against showing off to make others notice and even admire us.

Trying to impress people with how we look is empty and is not the barometer of our real worth. True beauty does not come from outward things. Instead, it comes from your inner self—especially from having a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very valuable to God. A truly beautiful person is not focused on receiving approval from others, but they learn to love and care for their brothers and sisters. Beautiful people are humble, caring more about others than themselves. With a gentle and quiet spirit, a gift from the Holy Spirit, they build strong relationships. They do not cause division; they work to create peace, contributing to a loving and united community, showing the true love of God revealed in Christ Jesus.

Narcissism has no place in the church. Our self-worth can only be found in Christ who came to purchase us with his blood. We have no value outside of our relationship with Jesus Christ. In Christ we become new people, no longer focused on ourselves and our needs but on Christ and his saving work in the church. May a quiet and gentle spirit be present among his people, as we seek to serve one another out of love. 



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How's Your Vision?

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!” — Matthew 6:22–23

What is the focus of your life? That’s what Christ is speaking about when he says that the eye is the lamp of the body. In the context of Matthew 6, Christ speaks about where our treasure is: either on earth, or in heaven. Treasures on earth are material things, or even recognition and praise (vv. 1–18). Treasure in heaven is the heavenly reward received from God for a life lived by grace through faith. Where our treasure is reveals where our heart is (v. 21).

In this text, Christ moves from discussing the heart to discussing the eye. Our heart looks through our eye. Whatever treasure our heart focusses on, our eye will focus on that too.

Today we know that light enters the eye, but in biblical times people thought that light beams out of the eye. That’s why Christ says that the eye is the lamp of the body. Think of the eye as a searchlight which sends out a beam of light to illuminate something. Whoever operates the searchlight moves it around until he has in focus the object of his search. So, our eye will search out whatever our heart is focused on—whether earthly treasure or heavenly treasure.

All this is very important because, if our eye is bad, our whole body will be full of darkness. Then our actions will be wrong. That’s because what we look at will lead to what we do. But if our eye is healthy, our whole body will be full of light. Then our actions will be good.

So, what is your eye focused on—status, acceptance, career, money, or pleasure? Or are the things of God our focus and do we want to live to his glory? Are we seeking treasures on earth or in heaven?

When Christ speaks about a healthy eye, he uses a word that means “single, undivided.” Christ wants us to focus on the kingdom of heaven with undivided eye. We cannot look in two different directions at the same time, or we will end up with blurred vision. It’s noteworthy that Christ speaks about “the eye” in the singular, even though we have two eyes. It underlines the point that we must have focused vision, looking in a single direction.

Since we as Christians are still sinful people, we tend to want to store up treasures both in heaven and on earth. But this results in

half-heartedness in our Lord’s service due to the resulting blurred vision. We must pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten and focus our eyes every day.

The degree to which we have a divided focus is the degree to which we experience a measure of darkness. When we don’t focus on God well, we don’t see our way clearly and will stumble around. But the more we look to God, the more we will be able to go through life in a sure-footed way because we have the light of God on our path.

Sometimes we think we have good vision and are walking in the light, but it isn’t the case. Christ says, “If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness” (v. 23)! If what we think is light in us is actually darkness, then we are really lost. That was the situation in Christ’s day when many of God’s people thought they had the right view on things, but they didn’t recognize Christ for who he is. If that’s the case with us today, we are in darkness and will end up in outer darkness—the darkness of hell.

But when we see Christ for who he is and walk in the light as people focused on the kingdom of heaven, we may look forward to the new earth where there will be no darkness, only light (Rev 21:25; 22:5).

How’s your vision? 

FURTHER READING:

Matthew 6

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. How does Genesis 3:6 illustrate that if the focus of our eye is wrong our actions will also be wrong?
2. How does the example of a pair of binoculars help you understand the point of Christ’s teaching in the text? How do binoculars work?



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"Earnestly Desire That You May Prophecy"

Why This Command **Does Not Mean** What Many Think Today

ROB SCHOUTEN

In many Christian circles today, believers are encouraged to expect God to speak to them directly through prophetic words, visions, impressions, or inner messages. Books are written in the voice of Jesus, leaders recount angelic encounters, and churches are told to “listen for God’s voice” beyond the Bible. When these practices are questioned, one verse is often raised in response: “Earnestly desire . . . that you may prophecy” (1 Cor 14:1).

At first glance, this seems decisive. If Scripture tells Christians to desire prophecy, why should the church today be cautious—or even resistant—toward modern claims of prophetic revelation? The Reformed answer is not to dismiss the verse, but to understand it within the wider teaching of Scripture as a whole. When we do, we

discover that the Bible gives us a coherent and compelling explanation of why prophecy belonged to the church’s foundational period, and why Scripture alone is now sufficient for faith and life.

PROPHECY IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE

The church in Corinth lived during a unique moment in redemptive history. The gospel had been revealed in Christ, but the New Testament had not yet been written or completed. God was still actively revealing his Word through apostles and prophets, and that revelation was being preached, taught, and eventually written down as Scripture.

"You do not keep laying foundations after the building has begun to rise. Once the foundation is complete, the structure grows upward, not downward."

When Paul urges the Corinthians to “earnestly desire . . . that you may prophesy,” he is addressing a church that did not yet possess a completed Bible. The saints in Corinth did not have even one of the written Gospels, never mind four. They didn’t have Acts and the collected letters of Peter, Paul, John, James and Jude. Prophecy at that time was not vague encouragement or personal guidance; it was real revelation from God, given to the church so that it might be instructed, corrected, and built up during the period when Scripture was not complete.

This is why New Testament prophecy carried great weight—and also required careful discernment. Prophecies had to be tested. False prophets were a serious threat. Claims to revelation were claims to speak for God and therefore had to be tested carefully.

CHURCH FOUNDATION—APOSTLES & PROPHETS

The clearest explanation of the role of prophecy comes not from Corinthians, but from Ephesians. There Paul explains why apostles and prophets existed in the first place. He says that the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph 2:20).

This verse is very important. A foundation is laid once. You do not keep laying foundations after the building has begun to rise. Once the foundation is complete, the structure grows upward, not downward.

Paul reinforces this when he explains that the mystery of Christ “was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it

has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph 3:5). Here we see that New Testament prophecy was closely tied to the apostles and served a specific purpose: the once-for-all revelation of the gospel. Apostles and prophets were instruments through whom God unveiled what he had planned from eternity and accomplished in Christ.

This tells us something crucial. Prophecy was not meant to be permanent. It belonged to the foundational period of revelation, the era in which God was giving his Word to the church. Once that revelation was complete and inscripturated, the office of both apostles and prophets came to an end.

PROPHECY—IN SCRIPTURE ALONE

This brings us directly to the sufficiency of Scripture. The Reformed confession does not teach that God has stopped working, stopped guiding, or stopped comforting his people. It teaches that God has finished speaking in the way he once did.

Holy Scripture, we confess, “fully contains the will of God” (Article 7, Belgic Confession). Everything necessary for salvation, faith, and Christian life has been given. To seek new revelation today—whether through prophecy, visions, or inner messages—is to say that God’s Word in Scripture is not sufficient—a position that ultimately has affinity with Roman Catholicism.¹

Because of their conviction about the sufficiency of Scripture, Reformed churches do not expect prophecy to continue. There is

¹ The Roman Catholic Church teaches that God’s revelation is handed down in two ways: through Sacred Scripture and through Sacred Tradition. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, these together form “a single sacred deposit of the Word of God” entrusted to the church (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sections 80–82). Reformed churches reject this two-stream view and confess that Holy Scripture alone fully contains the will of God and is sufficient for faith and life (Belgic Confession, Article 7).



only one place to hear the Word of God and that is in “the holy and divine Scriptures” (Article 3, Belgic Confession).

CONTEMPORARY CLAIMS

Seen in this light, modern prophetic movements take on a different character. Todd Bentley claimed angelic visitations and direct messages from God, presented as guidance for the church. Rick Joyner describes visions that interpret history, the church, and spiritual reality in ways Scripture itself does not. Sarah Young, in *Jesus Calling*, presents inner impressions written in the first person as the voice of Jesus speaking today.

These figures—just a few in a large crowd—differ in tone and intention, but they share a common assumption: that God continues to give revelatory content beyond Scripture. This assumption directly contradicts the biblical teaching that apostles and prophets belonged to the church’s foundation, and that the foundation has already been laid.

Even in some conservative evangelical circles, some argue that prophecy continues but as a non-binding and fallible utterance, distinct from the authoritative prophecy of the apostles. But this distinction is not found in the Bible. In Scripture, to claim “a word from the Lord” is to claim divine authority. To label prophecy as non-binding and potentially incorrect does not protect the church from error; instead, it removes the biblical safeguards required to test a true prophet.²

The issue in all discussions about prophecy is authority. Once believers are trained to expect God to speak beyond Scripture, Scripture itself becomes one voice among many rather than the final Word of God.

THE ONGOING PROPHETIC CALLING OF EVERY CHRISTIAN

Notwithstanding all that has been said thus far, Reformed believers do confess that every Christian has a prophetic office. Lord’s Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that Christ is our chief Prophet and Teacher and that all believers share in his anointing. Because we belong to Christ, we too are prophets, priests, and kings.

The catechism explains what this prophetic calling means: as prophets we are called to “confess his Name.” The church does not receive new revelation from God, but it does proclaim the revelation God has already given. The prophetic task of believers is therefore not to add to God’s Word but to speak that Word faithfully in every sphere of life.

This prophetic calling is exercised throughout the life of the church. When the Word of God is preached, when elders apply Scripture in pastoral care. When parents teach their children the promises of the gospel, when Christian schools instruct the next generation in the truth of God’s Word, when believers bear witness to Christ in their daily work and relationships, and when Christians

² For a prominent contemporary defense of the view that New Testament prophecy is fallible, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), ch. 53, “The Gift of Prophecy.” Similar arguments regarding the “continuation” of prophecy are found in Sam Storms, *The Beginner’s Guide to Spiritual Gifts* (Zondervan, 2002) and Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God* (Zondervan, 1996). These positions generally rely on a distinction between “canonical” (authoritative) and “congregational” (fallible) prophecy, a distinction that is notably absent from the New Testament itself.

address the authorities with scriptural truth, the church is carrying out its prophetic calling.

This kind of prophecy is very different from the claims often heard today. It does not arise from private impressions, visions, or inner messages. It arises from the Word that God has already spoken and recorded in Scripture. The prophet in the church of the new covenant is therefore not someone who announces new revelations, but someone who faithfully repeats and applies the revelation God has already given.

Far from silencing the church, the sufficiency of Scripture strengthens this calling. Because God's Word is complete, believers can speak with confidence—not of their own ideas, but of the truth God himself has made known. The church does not wait for new messages from heaven. She already possesses the Word of the living God and is called to proclaim it.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GUIDANCE

As Reformed believers, we often pray: “Lord, show me your will.” We ask for wisdom in our work, for solutions to troubled relationships, and for direction in our decisions. Some may wonder: “If God has finished speaking in Scripture, does our prayer for guidance mean nothing?” While we believe that God certainly hears such prayers and answers them, we must be clear that he does this in two ways.

First, there is the revelation of Scripture. This is God's authoritative and sufficient Word. It is the lamp to our feet and light to our path. It tells us what to believe and how to live. It is the boundary within which every Christian must live their lives of faith. As we pray, God gives us his Spirit through whom we can better understand Scripture. The Holy Spirit does not guide us by adding new chapters or verses to the Bible. Instead, he grants us the “spiritual wisdom and understanding” for which Paul prayed (Col. 1:9–10), so that we can discern the application of already known truth to our lives.

Second, there is providence. This is God's active governance of our lives, where he uses the realities of our world to point us toward his will. He does this in many ways:

- *Through the events of our lives:* We might find a door unexpectedly slammed shut, forcing us to abandon a path that was not for our good, or a door that suddenly opens, providing a clear way to serve him.
- *Through the people around us:* Consider the counsel of a wise friend, an elder, or your godly spouse, through whom God often holds up the mirror of Scripture to our blind spots, helping us see what we were too distracted to notice on our own.

- *Through our own conscience:* As we saturate our minds with Scripture, the Holy Spirit begins to sharpen our moral instincts. We find our desires shifting, our peace growing as we choose the path of obedience, and our hearts becoming more inclined toward the things that please him.
- *Through the work he has put in front of us:* We often waste time hunting for secret messages about our future while ignoring the responsibilities already sitting on our desks and in our homes. God's will is not a puzzle to be solved in the shadows; it is usually found in the faithful, day-by-day execution of the roles he has already given us—as a parent, a neighbour, an employee, or a student.

In short, praying for guidance does not mean we are hoping to hear a voice from heaven. It means we are looking to our Father, asking him to use the Word he has already given and the providence he is already orchestrating to sharpen our judgment and direct our steps. We do not need a new oracle for our decisions, because we have a Saviour who is already guiding us along the path of his will.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The desire for prophecy often grows out of understandable longings: certainty, immediacy, reassurance, and personal direction. But Scripture does not promise to satisfy every curiosity or answer every “why” or “what now?” Instead, it promises something better: a trustworthy Word that anchors us to Christ.

The Bible does not clear up all the questions of our hearts, but it gives us enough light to walk by faith. It fully contains the will of God “and all that man must believe in order to be saved” (Article 7, Belgic Confession).

When Paul told the Corinthians to desire prophecy, God was still laying the foundation of revelation. Now that the foundation is complete, God calls his church not to seek new words, but to listen carefully to the Word he has already given. To honour Scripture is not to silence God. It is to believe that in Scripture God continues to speak to his people in every generation. 



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When Small Things Spoil Good Things

DATHAN PLEITER



Picture this: you are holding a hand-sized burger at your favourite restaurant. The cheese is melted, the sauce glistens, and you lean in for the first delicious bite . . . only to chew a hair donated by the cook.

Or imagine uncorking your favourite bottle of wine. You let it breathe, as the sommeliers advise. You lift the glass and take the first sip, savouring the notes—*vanilla from the French oak. Perhaps a hint of black cherry . . . maybe even cloves.* Nope. That’s a fruit fly! The sensation unravels in a moment, spoiled by something small but equally impossible to ignore.

SMALL BLEMISHES, BIG IMPACT.

It does not take much to spoil something good. However sound, well-kept, or pleasing the rest of a thing may be, the presence of

a single blemish can ruin everything. This experience is familiar to us: the hair in our burger, the fly in our wine, the stain on our dress or blazer, the raspberry seeds lodged between our teeth. It is so common that the author of Ecclesiastes uses this experience to teach us about the power of folly: “Dead flies make the perfumer’s ointment give off a stench; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor” (Eccl 10:1).

Small blemishes have a big impact. A solid reputation can unravel with one moral lapse. Years of respect earned through intentional leadership can be undone by thoughtless words. This is the power of foolishness, according to the Bible. A small fly causes the whole thing to stink.

We are aware of the power of moral lapses, but what about more subtle blemishes in character? It is easy to excuse unwise character

traits as simply part of who we are. We view them as something that shouldn't detract from our otherwise godly Christian walk. But as the hymn writer and preacher John Newton showed, this is far from the truth.¹ In his letter "Blemishes in Christian Character," Newton uses a series of caricatures to help us identify in ourselves these seemingly small but powerful blemishes in character.² Readers familiar with Sinclair Ferguson's podcast, *Things Unseen*, will recognise some of the portraits presented.

MR. UNBENDING

First, meet Mr. Unbending (Newton's *Austerus*). If you need clarity in defending the faith or someone to stand firm against ungodly influence, Mr. Unbending is your man. His love for the Word and his desire to keep the Word central make him leery of anything "new." His answers at Bible Study show that he is biblically well-grounded and delights in the promises of God, but if you say anything he deems "wrong," you will hear about it.

That's the fly. While he talks about amazing grace, he lacks it. There is little gentleness in the way he speaks of others, especially those with whom he disagrees. He loves speaking the truth, but not always as one who has been humbled by it. Consequently, as Newton says, "there is a harshness in his manner which makes him more admired than beloved."³ Apart from the relatively small circle who know him well, many find him unloving, dogmatic, and unreasonable. He lacks the "tender heart" and "humble mind" that the Christian ought to have (1 Pet 3:8).

MRS. OUTGOING

If you are visiting church for the first time, you're bound to be welcomed by Mrs. Outgoing (Newton's *Humanus*). She welcomes everyone as Christ welcomed her, with warmth and kindness. She is sociable, selfless, and has a deep love for Lord and those around her.

Yet, her relationships only go so deep—and with good reason. For all her warmth, she lacks restraint. She does not always weigh what should be spoken and what should be withheld. To paraphrase Newton, if you entrusted her with your money, it would be safe, but if you entrust her with what's on your heart, eventually everyone will hear of it. It's not intentional or premeditated, but unfortunately, it's inevitable. Sadly, this prevents her warm friendliness from being

truly powerful. She can't carry other people's burdens, because they don't feel safe pouring out their hearts.

It is a small fly, but it still stinks.

MR. HURRY

Mr. Hurry (Newton's *Volatilis*) has a thousand things on the go. He's active on several committees, involved in community projects, and serves as an office-bearer. He loves to help, which is exactly what he does. When someone is in need, filled with sympathy, he promises help. His heartfelt sincerity gains people's trust.

But—and there is a "but"—despite his sincerity, he's not reliable. His intentions often shift because he is drawn to many, even competing things. Newton says, "but for want of method in the management of his affairs, he is always in a hurry, always too late, and has always some engagement upon his hands with which it is impossible he can comply."

He promises to visit, to help, to serve—but fails to follow through. Often it is because something else took first-place or because he double booked himself, again. Despite his heartfelt care, he neglects Christ's words to "Let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no', 'no'" to the detriment of those around him. Like a stain on a blazer, it's hard to ignore.

MR. DISCONTENT

You sometimes meet Mr. Discontent (Newton's *Querulus*) in the parking lot after church. He spends much of his time decrying the "management of public affairs," whether of government, school societies, church leaders, or anything else. According to him, there is much that is amiss.

He's often not wrong, but he has acquired the habit of dwelling on what is mishandled and mismanaged. He gravitates to public affairs as easy fuel for his fire. But nothing constructive comes from it. As Newton states, he wastes his God-given time.

The problem is that the odor of his protests permeates the air long before his graces do. After a few minutes' conversation, people sometimes walk away, not always because he is wrong, but because he is wearisome.

What is more troublesome is that his talk distracts his heart from what truly matters. It robs him of the peace of God, which belongs to those who set their minds on whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable and praiseworthy (Phil 4:8). If he spent

¹ While Newton is famous for his Olney collection of Hymns, particularly *Amazing Grace*, one of his most profound contributions to Christianity is his pastoral letters. Newton was a prolific letter writer and many of his pastoral correspondences have survived to bless modern audiences. See, for example, Reinke, T. *Newton on the Christian Life: To Live is Christ*. (Crossway, 2015, pp. 23-25). For an excellent biography, see Aitken, J *John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace* (Crossway, 2007).

² Newton, J. *On Christian Blemishes*. Available at: <https://placefortruth.org/on-christian-blemishes/> (Accessed: April 23, 2026). There are three other caricatures, Prudens, Cessator, Curiosus. I have omitted these for the sake of brevity. All of Newton's caricatures are masculine in the original letter. I adjusted *Humanus* to include female audiences.

³ Newton, *On Christian Blemishes*.

more time in prayer and less time voicing his opinions, then he could have a transformative impact on the world he so desires to reform.

Interestingly, John Newton gives *Querulus* (Mr. Discontent) no commendation. Perhaps that is itself a lesson. Left unchecked, this spirit can truly take over. The graces of God in his life are clouded by the air of critique and discontent.

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

These are powerful caricatures. Taken together, they force us to take a good look in the mirror. Most contain something noble and worthy of our imitation, but in every case a small flaw distorts the whole. Newton further observes that these things, “hardly deserve a severe censure, [but] are properly sinful,” being contrary to holiness.

Not only that, but these small things hinder our witness. Rather than adorning our lives with the gospel, they leave a poor impression on those around us—both within the church and beyond it. People cannot always see past the blemish, or the odour that causes a stench.

Maybe we need to ask, *what blemishes are in my life that undermine the potency of God’s grace working in me?* Remember, a little folly is powerful.

Yet, recognizing and acknowledging these tendencies need not drive us to despair. It presents us with an opportunity to return to the unblemished one, Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter says that we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, “like that of a lamb *without blemish or spot*” (1 Pet 1:19).

The sweetness of the gospel is that Christ’s goodness and perfection cannot be spoiled or corrupted. His godliness is not fragile like our own. When Christ stood trial, no fly, hair, or stain could be found. He is the unblemished Lamb who sacrificed himself, wholly, as “a pleasing aroma to the LORD.” It is in the wholeness of his perfection, that we find the redemption for our many, many imperfections.

If one small fly can spoil a bottle of wine, the smallest drop of his grace can rescue and transform our spoiled lives. Isn’t that the sweetest note of all? 



Dathan Pleiter

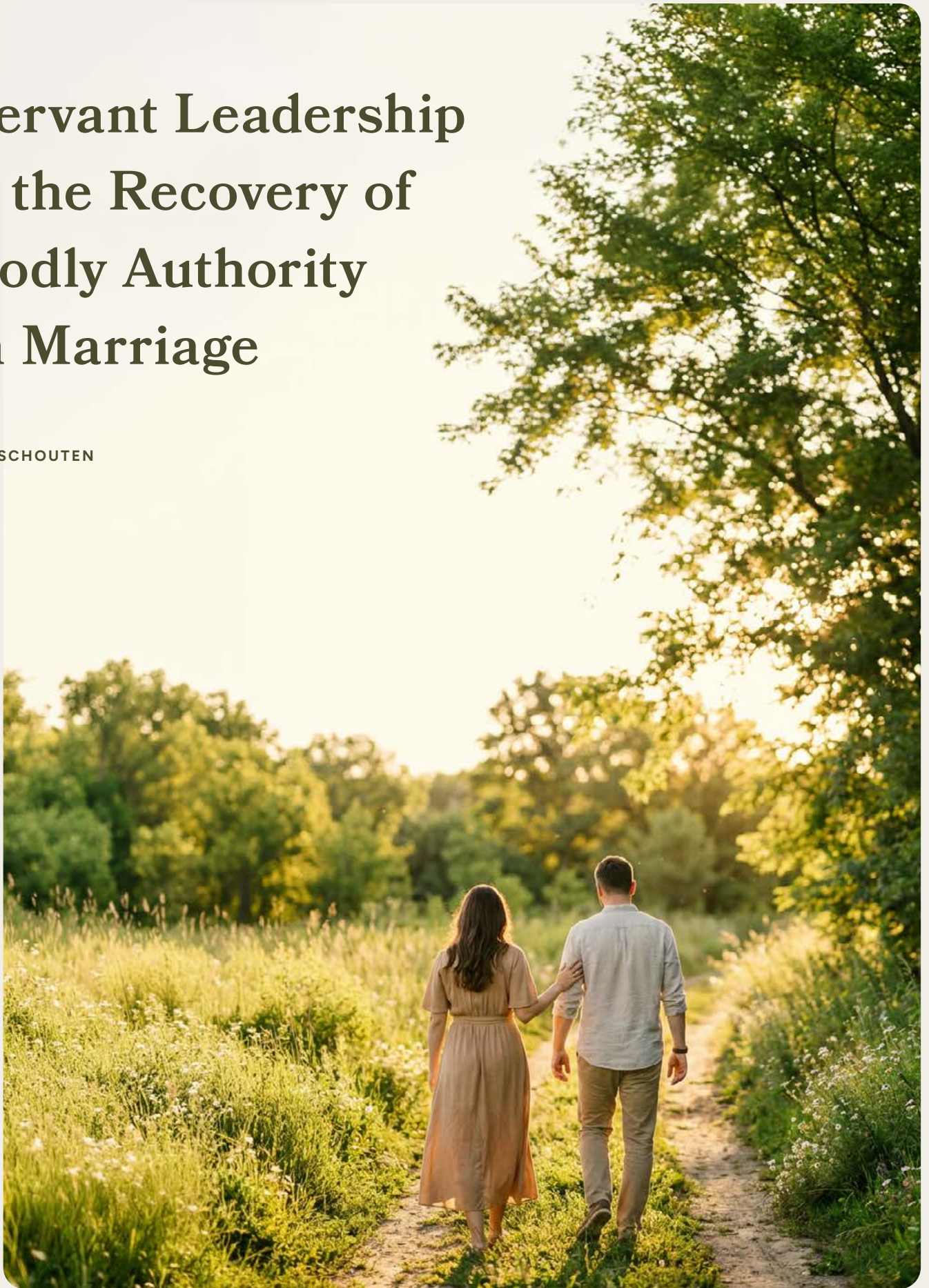
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Servant Leadership & the Recovery of Godly Authority in Marriage

ROB SCHOUTEN



In today's church, few biblical teachings generate as much discomfort—or as much confusion—as the husband's role as head of the wife. Even in conservative pulpits, the topic is often introduced with hesitation and surrounded by disclaimers. Fearing the misuse of authority, many pastors rush to emphasize what headship is *not*, without ever clearly teaching what it *is*. But when Scripture speaks of a husband's headship, it does so without embarrassment and with a clear purpose: to reflect the wise, loving authority of Christ over his Church. If we are to honour God's design and bless his people, we must recover a positive, biblically grounded understanding of what it means for a husband to lead with real, Christlike authority in the home.

THE BIBLE TEACHES REAL AUTHORITY

The dominant tone in contemporary sermons about marriage is often cautionary: "Yes, the husband is the head, but let's be clear—this does not mean domination!" While it is wise to guard against domination, we must not stop there. Scripture does not merely warn about the misuse of authority—it commends its proper use. And when biblical headship is never positively defined, it becomes suspect by default: something to explain away, not embrace.

Yet Scripture speaks clearly: "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph 5:23); "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (Eph 5:22); "... the head of a wife is her husband" (1 Cor 11:3). The husband's role is not merely to serve or to set a good example. He is commissioned to lead with real, accountable authority. Christ is not merely the Church's helper or moral example. Much more, he governs, commands, protects, teaches, and disciplines. If the husband's headship is patterned after Christ's, then it must include actual decision-making power, initiative, and responsibility to set direction.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP & AUTHORITY

The phrase *servant leadership* comes from Jesus himself (Mark 10:42–45), and it expresses a profound truth. Jesus redefined leadership as something exercised not for self-exaltation, but for the good of others. But in much modern usage, the term has drifted from its biblical roots. It now often functions as a euphemism—a way to avoid talking about *actual* authority. The result is that "servant leadership" becomes leadership in name only: non-directive, self-effacing, and ultimately unclear.

But Jesus never diluted authority—he purified it. He condemned abusive power, not rightful leadership. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). He commands. He protects. He governs. And yes, he stoops to

serve—but he never serves in *submission* to the church. He lays down his life *as Lord*, not as a follower.

So too in marriage. The husband's call is not to abandon authority for servanthood, but to *exercise* authority through servanthood. His leadership is not harsh or self-serving—but neither is it optional or symbolic. It involves real initiative, real direction, and real responsibility—for the spiritual and physical well-being of his wife and household.

When we reduce leadership to nothing more than "serving," we hollow out the very structure Scripture gives us. We no longer form men who die to themselves *in order to lead*—we form men who aren't sure they're allowed to lead at all. And the result is not humility, but absence.

True servant leadership doesn't erase authority. It redeems it—making it strong enough to bless, wise enough to guide, and sacrificial enough to resemble Christ.

GUARDING AGAINST ABUSE

It is wise and necessary for pastors to warn against the abuse of authority in marriage. Scripture itself does so. But when those warnings become the *main* message—or the only message—the effect is not clarity, but erosion. Over time, people begin to associate any exercise of authority with potential harm. The result is predictable: authority becomes suspect, headship becomes embarrassing, and the biblical design is quietly abandoned in practice.

Of course, for some women, this is not just a theoretical concern. They have experienced real harm under husbands who used the language of "headship" to justify control, harshness, or neglect. These are grievous distortions of God's design—and Scripture does not excuse them. Such abuse is not headship; it is sin. Churches must confront it plainly, protecting those who are harmed, and disciplining those who misuse authority in the name of Christ. The call to recover godly leadership must never become a cloak for tolerating cruelty. But precisely because abuse is so destructive, we must teach what *true* headship looks like—so that neither error nor silence prevails.

Imagine if every sermon on parenting began with, "Now of course, parents must never provoke their children to anger." That's a real scriptural command (Eph 6:4), and an important one. But if that warning were always front and center, while the actual duty of parental discipline was rarely taught, we would raise a generation of parents unsure of how to exercise their God-given role—and a generation of children who think all correction is suspect.

The same distortion is happening in many teachings on marriage. The danger of authoritarianism is acknowledged—rightly so—but the beauty and necessity of godly authority is left unspoken. As a result, the church produces neither tyrants nor leaders, but passive men and confused families.

True servant leadership doesn't erase authority. It redeems it—making it strong enough to bless, wise enough to guide, and sacrificial enough to resemble Christ

Biblical correction always comes in two parts: it warns against distortion, and it affirms God's design.

If we do only the first, we fail to equip God's people. In our fear of abuse, we may end up withholding the very truth that protects and strengthens marriages.

NEGLECTING HEADSHIP BRINGS HARM

When the church avoids teaching about a husband's authority, the effects are not neutral—they are damaging. Men, lacking a clear picture of what godly headship entails, often default to one of two extremes: *passivity* or *overcorrection*. Some drift into indecision and inertia, unsure whether they're even *allowed* to lead. Others, frustrated and untaught, fall into controlling patterns that reflect cultural caricatures more than Christ.

Meanwhile, many women are left with mixed signals. They're told to "support" their husbands but are given no clear framework for what that support looks like in relation to biblical submission. Without a robust understanding of headship, submission becomes little more than emotional encouragement or domestic cooperation.

The result is confusion—especially when a wife wants her husband to lead but doesn't know how to respond when he tries. This lack of clarity breeds dysfunction. Marriages lose their structure. Families lack moral direction. And both husbands and wives are left spiritually undernourished, wondering what went wrong.

The solution is not to abandon headship—but to teach it rightly. Husbands need to know that leading does not mean dominating. It means initiating, deciding, protecting, and taking responsibility—for the good of their wives and families. Wives need to be encouraged not only to support their husbands emotionally, but also to follow them practically, trusting that God works through the order he designed.

Only when both roles are taught and embraced can a marriage reflect the unity, love, and purpose of Christ and the Church.

A DEEPER DISCOMFORT

At a deeper level, the hesitation to teach headship plainly is often rooted in a broader discomfort with the idea of *ordered relationships* within creation. In a culture that exalts autonomy and flattens all distinctions, the biblical pattern of authority and submission feels strange—maybe even threatening. But Scripture presents it not as a relic of patriarchy, but as a reflection of divine wisdom.

The apostle Paul doesn't ground marital roles in temporary social structures, but in creation itself: "The head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor 11:3). In Ephesians 5, he goes further, showing that the one-flesh union of husband and wife was designed from the beginning to display the mystery of Christ and the Church. This means headship and submission





are not just practical arrangements—they are symbolic realities, embedded in creation and fulfilled in redemption.

To consistently downplay or sidestep this pattern is to flatten the relational contours God has woven into marriage. And when those contours are erased, the gospel portrait begins to blur. Marriage ceases to proclaim Christ's loving leadership and the Church's trusting response. It becomes just another partnership—equal in status but undefined in shape.

We must not let cultural discomfort rewrite God's design. The order built into marriage is not arbitrary—it is meaningful. And when rightly lived, it reveals the beauty of Christ's covenant love and the glad surrender of his redeemed people.

PREACH GOD'S WHOLE COUNSEL

The Bible's vision for marriage is both beautiful and bold. It calls husbands to exercise real authority—not for their own sake, but for the good of their wives and the glory of Christ. It calls wives to respond to that leadership not with resentment or suspicion, but with trust and joyful submission. This design is not a concession to ancient culture—it is a witness to eternal truth. It reveals, in living form, the love of Christ and the life of the Church.

Yes, we must warn against abuse. Yes, we must reject every form of selfish domination or coercion. But we must not stop there. If we teach only what headship isn't, and never what it is, we rob the church of truth it needs, and we rob marriages of the clarity they were meant to have.

Preachers must speak with both courage and compassion. We are not free to rewrite God's Word or to remain silent about what it plainly teaches just because culture finds it uncomfortable. If we withhold this teaching, we do not protect the church—we impoverish it. Families are left without guidance. Men lack conviction. Women are left wondering what to expect and how to respond. And the church loses one of the most powerful pictures of the gospel that God has given.

It is time to recover what Scripture plainly teaches: that husbands are called to lead—not harshly, not weakly, but with the wise, sacrificial, steadfast authority of Christ himself. And it is time to proclaim this truth not with apology, but with



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For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. Ephesians 2:18



Christ For All Ministry
Report from Chairman
Naeem Zafar

I am grateful for the opportunity to continue serving the Lord. While I have been working to provide for my family, I have also remained faithfully involved in serving through CFAM over the years.

By God's grace, we have achieved several important milestones.

We have successfully established a Sunday School program syllabus, a youth program, and we continue to develop and strengthen our discipleship program. It is all because of the grace of God. I am also thankful for the strong support from our churches, congregations, and business partners.

At this point, many communities, especially in Punjab, Pakistan, are contacting us to partner with CFAM. In addition, we are now receiving requests from other provinces to minister among Hindu and other communities, to evangelize and share the Gospel. This clearly shows that CFAM is expanding not only in Punjab but also into other regions.

In this season, we remain committed to teaching the sound doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For example, in our recent leadership training course, we focused on building strong biblical foundations. Children continue to learn from the Book of Genesis, which is essential for understanding the Gospel as they grow and later participate in youth leadership training. There is much more to share, but we must also address other important matters, which you can read in the messages from other directors.

Christians in Pakistan continue to face serious difficulties, including threats to their lives. In recent months, some have been killed. Women and young girls are also being targeted, facing ongoing risks, including forced conversions and other forms of persecution. Above all, we give all glory to God for His faithfulness. We are thankful that we have also successfully established a teachers' training program, which will further strengthen the ministry for years to come.



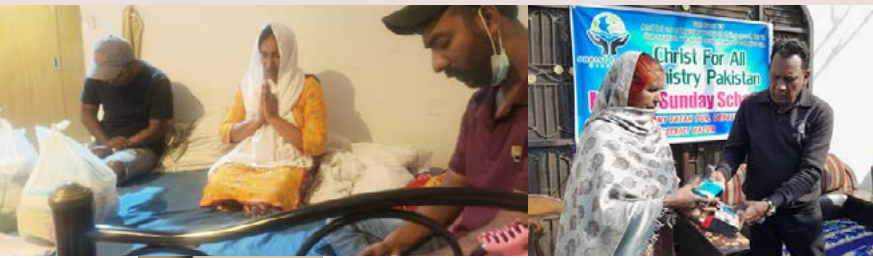
Teacher Esha has faithfully and dedicatedly served at the Bricklin Sunday School for the past five years. Through her commitment and love for the children, she has played an important role in helping them learn about God, His Word, and the hope found in Jesus Christ.



The Bricklin community greatly needs this support so that their children can hear the Gospel, grow in their understanding of God's truth, and learn about the hope found in Jesus Christ.



We are thankful to God for the opportunity to share the Book of Genesis with members of other communities in Canada. Today, I had the privilege of sharing the Gospel with Vickram and giving him a copy of Genesis so that he could learn how God created the universe and understand the foundation of God's plan for mankind. Today is the day of Salvation.



Regular visits to Bricklin and local churches remain an important part of our ministry, as we seek to encourage, disciple, and strengthen fellow believers.



**Message from CFAM Treasurer,
Josh Poppe**

Since our last newsletter earlier in 2026, we have been busy, and God has continued to bless CFAM. We have three main areas of ministry to report from. Pakistan has always been our main focus, and we have been able to continue supporting and blessing many children and families there.

Our Sunday schools, youth discipleship programs, and Bible studies continue to be held and are very well attended. We opened a second sewing center, training people how to sew and make some income with these skills. This training was well received and has been a blessing to this community. Bibles and audio Bibles are being distributed, and our leaders there continue to hand out booklets of the Bible books of Genesis and John as introductions to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We continue to work alongside the CRWRF in Thailand with food distribution and financial support to Pakistani refugees hiding there. We also continue to hold Bible studies there, and we support families with English lessons.

In Canada, the Board is busy with planning, fundraising, and providing any support we can to our persecuted brothers and sisters in Pakistan and Thailand. We are also busy reaching out to churches, businesses and individuals as we look for partners in this work. We are very thankful for the wonderful support we do receive, with many prayers being offered up and many gifts being shared.

We kindly ask that you continue to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Pakistan and Thailand, and also for our team in Canada as we carry out this work. Please also prayerfully consider giving financially, as the needs continue to grow along with the ministry. Your faithful prayers and support enable us to continue sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, strengthening believers, and providing practical help to those who are suffering. Thank you for standing with us in this important ministry.



Our Bible classes continue to teach the Book of Genesis to youth, parents, and participants from different age groups.



Project Thailand: Bringing Hope and Support

We are thankful to God for the opportunity to serve Pakistani Christian refugees in Thailand, providing food and rental assistance to approximately 100 families.

Donations are accepted via: Cheque, E-transfer or Secure online donation. Make cheques payable to Christ For All Ministry and mail them to 26929 16 Ave, Aldergrove, BC. V4W 2S3, E-transfer to donate@christforallministry.com Secure online donation via our website: www.christforallministry.com Ph: 6046008851, 6048076415 If donating by e-transfer, please include your email or mailing address so we can send your tax receipt.



Photo taken during teacher training with our teachers and directors on May 23, 2026.



Mehwish Tahseen
CFAM Director

This year, the first batch of our Sewing Centre successfully completed six months of training and received their certificates. We thank God for the dedication of these women, who worked diligently to learn valuable skills that can help support their families and communities. We are also grateful for our sewing teachers, whose faithful service and commitment made this program possible.

In addition, we organized a training program for Sunday School teachers and held a combined fellowship and certification event. We thank all the teachers who continue to serve faithfully, helping children grow in the knowledge of God and His Word. We believe that women are an important part of God's creation and play a vital role in passing on the faith to future generations. Through teaching their children and sharing God's truth in their homes and communities, they help ensure that the message of Jesus Christ continues from one generation to the next. As Scripture says, "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts" (Psalm 145:4).

I am thankful to be part of CFAM and to serve on its board. It is a privilege to witness how God is working through His people to bring hope, discipleship, and practical support to those in need.

At the same time, Christians in Pakistan continue to face many challenges. Recent legal changes have increased concerns among Christian families, especially regarding the safety and future of their daughters. Yet we stand firmly on God's promises and trust in His protection. The Lord says, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."



Photo taken during teacher training.



This is our second sewing center following the pilot project. By God's grace, we have been able to establish another center, and it has been warmly received and is bearing good fruit. We give thanks to the Lord God for providing this opportunity and for His continued blessing over this work.



Naeem has been working on the Sunday School booklet over the past months and has recently completed it. The booklet has now been translated into Urdu by our team in Pakistan and handed over to the teachers for use with children and parents in Sunday School ministry.



Ken Bulthuis
Director CFAM

This year, we were unable to hold our International Food Festival due to several ongoing activities, and we decided not to proceed with the event. However, starting next year, we plan to begin a Morning Prayer Partner Gathering at Langley Canadian Reformed Church. The sign-up sheet will be sent next year, and we encourage you to feel free to fill it out and join us. Please feel free to contact us for more information.

Our annual fundraising dinner will continue as scheduled in October. We would love to see you all there. It is always a special time of fellowship as we remember our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His body for us and called us to remember Him in gratitude and unity.

Please do not miss this opportunity to join us.

Our Audio Bible project has been very successful among the Pakistani Christian community. Through this ministry, we are reaching people who may not be able to read the Word of God but have a strong desire to listen to it. We were also able to provide Audio Bibles to children at a blind center. There are still many villages and rural areas where our team desires to visit and share the Gospel. Your support helps make this outreach possible and allows us to continue expanding this project. At times, we also distribute printed Bibles where needed, especially in partnership with local churches.

The ministry continues to be actively involved in many projects, as you have read in the earlier messages. We are deeply thankful for your partnership and support. We kindly ask you to continue praying for us as we serve our brothers and sisters in Pakistan and Thailand. Your prayers and support are a great encouragement to us, and we are truly grateful.



CFAM Fundraising for Audio Bible



Andre Luiten
Advisor to Board CFAM

I am grateful to serve as an advisor with CFAM. It is a blessing to see how the Lord has grown this ministry over the years, especially in the past five years, during which we have experienced significant expansion. I have recommended to the board the consideration of adding another director to help share responsibilities and ensure continued healthy growth without placing an excessive burden on current leadership.

Naeem continues to work faithfully in both supporting his family and serving full-time in the ministry. I have also witnessed how his family has grown and been blessed over the past ten years at the Langley Canadian Reformed church, alongside the ongoing development of the ministry.

I would like to extend an invitation to anyone with a heart to serve to prayerfully consider getting involved in this work. We are especially looking for volunteers from different churches who have a desire to support persecuted Christians. Your role could include helping raise awareness within your local church, supporting the ministry, and distributing newsletters to church mailboxes.

Please prayerfully consider this opportunity. If you are interested, feel free to contact me by phone at **778-870-4600** or email: **andreluiten47@gmail.com**

Prayer Request: Pray for persecuted families in Pakistan and Thailand, asking for God's protection and provision. We welcome volunteers from your church to serve as CFAM representatives. Please prayerfully consider supporting this work.



Waiting With Eager Longing

Our Lord Jesus is Coming Soon!

"Are we so happy on this earth that we really do not need Jesus to come back quickly? . . .

Could it be that some of us try not to think very often of Christ's return because for various reasons we are terrified of Judgment Day?"

These are just two of the striking questions posed by speaker Marian VanLaar to about 100 rapt women at the annual Fraser Valley and beyond Women's Fellowship Day, held this year in Lynden. It is said there is strength in numbers and you could feel the truth of that as women from nearly a dozen churches spread throughout B.C.'s Lower Mainland, Vernon, and Lynden came together in early May to worship, sing, be edified in the Word, and rejoice in the company of like-minded Christian women.

DISTRACTING "URGENCIES"

Gathered in the pews, we listened to Marian remind us of the urgency of Christ's return, something we often forget in the day-to-day busyness of our lives. When was the last time you prayed for Christ to come back and put an end to the world we live in? Does that sound odd to your ears or strange on your tongue? It shouldn't! God is pleased to use our prayers to speed Jesus's second coming. In a time where we are especially prone to want everything right now, without delay, what could we possibly want more than the swift arrival of perfection, healing, and joy beyond measure?

We have urgency so tightly wound into our culture that "nervous systems dysregulation" is now a buzzword. Just think—we have AI to summarize messages and emails because we can't be bothered



to read through them ourselves. We have fast food and drive thru options because we don't have time for sit down meals and devotions around the table. We have high-speed internet because who has time to wait for information to load?

These things aren't sinful in and of themselves, but if we allow them to distract us from what our true hope and expectation should be, then we have lost sight of the goal. Our urgency should not be for the things of this life, but for the glory of God and the fullness of the next.

After the speech concluded, the air was charged with the desire for the return of Christ. We broke into groups where thoughtful discussions on how this should affect our daily lives took place.

Where are we failing to hail not only the destruction of the evil in the world around us but also an end to the earthly things we may have grown attached to? Are we afraid of Judgment Day? Are we so distracted by the comforts and ease of our current state that we do not spare a thought to the glory that awaits us? Are we so busy planning next week, next year, or the next five years, that we forget about our eternal future? What are we doing within our homes, our church communities, and our neighborhoods to hasten the Kingdom of the Lord and the return of Christ?

Turning to the Word, we can clearly see God teaching us to cry out, “Maranatha, come Lord Jesus!” with fervent longing. In 2 Peter 3:11–12a we read, “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.”

FELLOWSHIP & THE FUTURE

After our hearts and minds had been refreshed with renewed yearning, it was time for fellowship—and what better way to spend time together, reconnecting with old friends and making new ones, than around a long-held tradition of soup and buns? It was a joy to see so many women sitting together, young and old, sharing memories, hearty conversation, and good food. Finally, after filling our bellies, it was time to fill the room with laughter as the day’s entertainment was a large game of Dutch Bingo that ended with more than half the attendees on stage!

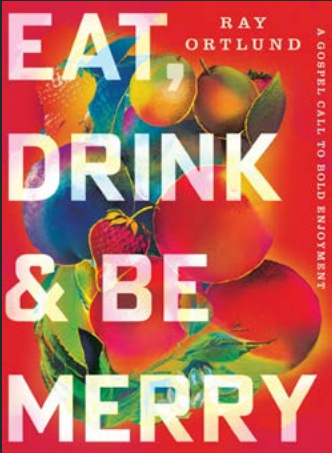
Emcee Chloe Kingma closed the day with a letter from the Women’s Saving Action, calling us to remember in our prayers (and budgets!) that the Ontario seminary library books, learning resources, and teaching tools have been funded by the WSA for years and our continued support is still very necessary. It felt fitting that a letter from this women-led group was read at a Women’s Fellowship Day centered around the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the letter stated, “There’s something very special about a group of women uniting together, wanting to support the men and leaders of their churches in a tangible way, recognizing that a theological seminary would be a necessary, lifelong blessing for their sons, families, and their churches as a whole.” Those men stand at our pulpits fulfilling God’s calling to speed the coming of Jesus Christ through prayer and petition.

May our hearts be filled with eager longing, our hands be busy with Kingdom work, and our minds be waiting eagerly for Jesus’s return. Maranatha! 🕊

Shana Veldman

Lynden, Washington





Double Joy

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry – A Gospel Call to Bold Enjoyment by Ray Ortlund. Crossway, 2026; Paperback, 138 pages, \$22.95 CDN.

Life can be like a roller coaster ride, with exhilarating moments of thrills and joys followed by deep descents into somber valleys, levelling out to flat even stretches, only to go up and down again. This metaphor is a visible demonstration of the push and pull of the opposing forces of righteousness and evil; living in a good creation which still groans under bondage to sin.

Christians and non-Christians alike experience this challenging ride and try to make sense of it, adopting coping strategies along the way. Ray Ortlund—theologian, pastor, and mentor—takes a crack at this topic in his latest book with the seemingly Epicurean title *Eat, Drink, and Be Merry*. Ortlund explores the possibility that the pursuit of joy in this life need not be an escapist way to drown out today's troubles “for tomorrow we die.” Rather, the Christian discovers a double joy in not only experiencing life's wonderful moments and godly pleasures, but also savouring them as a sweet encounter with what God has offered as a blessing in this life, with an abundance more to follow in the next.

With Ecclesiastes 11:9–10 as a jumping-off point, Ortlund starts this ride with grandfatherly exuberance, encouraging young people to boldly embrace what God provides in this life to be used for his glory. His orthodox Anglican training comes out in his references to Stott, Packer, Lewis, and others as he unpacks these verses and

lays them out as the antidote for a dour Christian life that is skeptical and pessimistic about life and what it has to offer.

In seven easy-to-read chapters, Ortlund sprinkles in his life experiences and raises a banner for living a cheerful Spirit-filled life, foreshadowing a joy-filled eternity with Christ. At the same time, he is true to the text, setting a parameter of accountability to the Lord along the way. To enter the joy of your Master, you must seek his joy!

This hand-sized paperback is a suitable gift for young people standing on the threshold of opportunities and wondering how to engage with what the world has to offer while living in a godly and expectant way. It could be a great book study for a high school Careers class. It is also small enough to sneak in as a stocking stuffer for that family member or friend who generally sees the glass as half full and the world as mostly a miserable place to be. To double your joy, read it for yourself and then pass it along! 

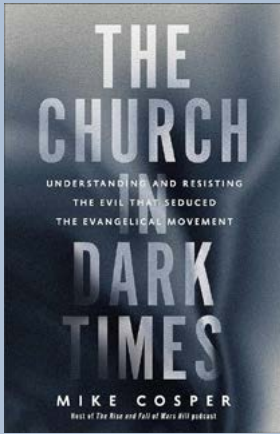


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READ AND SEARCH OLD VOLUMES

of **Clarion**



What's Wrong with Evangelicalism?

The Church in Dark Times: Understanding and Resisting the Evil that Seduced the Evangelical Movement by Mike Cospers. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2024. Paperback, 224 pages, \$23.84 CDN.

There have been various efforts to diagnose evangelicalism's ailment. In 1994, Mark Noll argued that *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* was that there wasn't much of one. In 2008, Michael Horton put his finger on what he called *Christless Christianity*. Last year, Joe Rigney assigned blame to *The Sin of Empathy*. It seems many have a sense that something isn't right in evangelicalism, but they can't agree on exactly what it is. Mike Cospers adds another voice to the discussion.

Cospers is especially known for his podcast, *The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill*. For those just tuning in, Mars Hill was a Seattle megachurch pastored by Mark Driscoll. It fell under the weight of scandal in 2014–2015. Cospers created his podcast to document the grim stories of spiritual abuse.

This book emerges from the shadows of Mars Hill, as well as other churches which ended in scandalous ignominy. This is Cospers's effort to understand why these stories keep happening and what can be done to resist the forces behind them. He writes, "I want to look beyond the specifics of any individual (or their pathology) to the ideological and spiritual architecture they have in common" (p. 7). To achieve this he relies on the insights of Hannah Arendt, the journalist famous for writing about the "banality of evil" she witnessed at the 1961 trial of Nazi Adolf Eichmann.

In her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt defined ideology as something that "can explain everything and every occurrence by deducing it from a single premise" (quoted on p. 32). According to Cospers, ideology is a "totalizing way of accounting for history" (p. 32) structured as a story. Ideology is "the evil that seduced the evangelical movement." Ideology has manifested itself in different forms. For example, Mark Driscoll's form was masculinity. His ideological story was that "The church failed to reach a generation of people because it lost all the men." This ideology enveloped everything at Mars Hill.

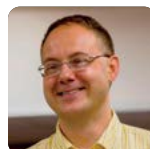
Though much of the book is philosophical and sociological, eventually Cospers concludes that "seen through the lens of worship . . .

ideology is idolatry—falsely ascribing worth of things that cannot satisfy" (p. 187). He writes that we need something better than what ideology offers: to come home to God. We ought to "worship the living God and . . . see his beauty revealed in the face of Jesus" (p. 188).

Cospers also argues that dissuading evangelicalism from ideology will require "virtuosity," which means "to speak to and evoke the passions and desires of the crowd, regardless of our message or medium" (p. 173). Evangelical believers must speak, tell stories, and do it excellently. Regrettably, this leaves one with the impression that some technique or method will invariably be the means of spiritual revival.

The Church in Dark Times gets you thinking. One can stand off at a distance and comfortably arm-chair quarterback the problems over there in evangelicalism. However, what about ideology in our Reformed churches? Historically, a case could be made that the notion of ourselves as true church (vs. every other church which is not) had an ideological character. It was a black and white perspective with no room for nuance. But the book suggests another area in which ideology could perhaps lodge itself among us: mission or vision statements. Cospers says, "Ideology is what appears whenever someone claims to have a simple, all-explaining idea that can change the world. In our churches, this is often referred to as a mission statement" (p. 56). As someone who has championed the idea of Reformed churches having such a statement, this challenged me. I need to think about this further and perhaps I'm not the only one.

One last thing to mention: on page 171, Cospers quotes a figure from the world of wrestling and the quote includes blasphemy. I don't know why Christian writers do this and Christian publishers allow it. It seems yet another symptom of *The Church in Dark Times*. 📖



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Excluded from the Fellowship of Christ

In this article, we will have another look at the regulations the churches have adopted about “Christian Discipline” in Articles 67 and 68 of our Church Order. In the previous article, the focus was on how the members of the congregation must be involved in the discipline process. This is so important that Article 67 rules that a consistory may *only* deal with any matter of discipline when it has determined that private admonitions have remained fruitless.¹ It is not just the concern of the office bearers when the holiness of God’s church and the salvation of the unrepentant sinner are at stake. Discipline must be rooted in and start with the communion of saints. Yet discipline by the consistory is an important element to consider, with the understanding that discipline by the consistory can only work properly when the active participation of the congregation functions well.

When the consistory gets involved in a discipline matter, it does so as the official body that is authorized to make the decision to suspend someone from the Lord’s Supper, and eventually to exclude him or her from the fellowship of Christ. Jesus Christ gave the administration of the keys of the Kingdom to the elders in the church. Discipline and excommunication happen in his name. This means that something is happening that will have eternal consequences (see 1 Cor 5:4–5, Matt 18:18, John 20:23). These consequences are so serious and far-reaching that it can never be the responsibility of just one or two elders. All the shepherds of God’s flock together are the acting and judging body. This of course does not mean that the Lord is “automatically” bound by what the church decides—consistories can also err. In the end, every consistory decision will always be subject to God’s Word as the final rule and judge.

CARING SHEPHERDS

One safeguard here is that the consistory cannot base its decisions on the report of private admonitions. It does have its own responsibility to verify the facts. To do due diligence and act justly, impartially,

and fairly, the consistory must spend time thoroughly investigating the accusations. This would include hearing the one who has been accused. He or she is entitled to a fair hearing and must be allowed to give a full account of his or her version.

The actual facts and circumstances, the true course of events, must be established beyond any doubt. This is the LORD’s own instruction in Deuteronomy 17:4 and Leviticus 19:15. Only then is the way open for ongoing admonitions by the elders, and—if there is no evidence of repentance—the decision to suspend the unrepentant sinner from the Lord’s Supper. It goes without saying that all of this should be carefully recorded in the minutes of the meetings and communicated in writing to the sinner in a timely fashion.

The heading of Article 68 is “excommunication,” but it is not only about this final step of excluding someone from the fellowship of Christ and his kingdom. It also includes the steps and stages that lead to this, if there is no repentance. Excommunication is called “the ultimate remedy.” This expression is used in the Form,² but unfortunately not in our Church Order. That would have been helpful as a permanent reminder that the purpose of church discipline is not to get rid of difficult people, but to reconcile the sinner with the church, his neighbour, and God. A church that does not apply discipline may look merciful, but it’s not. By letting an unrepentant, hardened sinner go their chosen way without admonition, they show that they don’t really care for their salvation.

PROVISIONAL EXCOMMUNICATION

The first disciplinary step is suspension from the Lord’s Supper. There is more to it, but it is named after the most visible part. The point is that the “rights” someone has in the covenant community are not taken away, but are suspended. He cannot exercise those rights. Beside participation in the Lord’s Supper, it also includes answering the questions at baptism, voting for office bearers, and being nominated for office. This measure is hopefully temporary,

¹ The only exception mentioned in Art. 67 is when “the sin committed is of a public character.” I will not discuss this aspect. Many have tried to give a definition of what constitutes a public sin as distinct from a private sin, but that has proven to be very difficult.

² *Book of Praise*, Winnipeg, 2014, pp. 613–615

because it is used with the hope that the “ultimate remedy” can be avoided.³

This step is not mentioned in the Bible. The biblical command is to remove the evil from the congregation, but the details of the procedure are not prescribed. Zeal for the holiness of the congregation can therefore make room for patience, while urging the sinner to repent. This is possible, based on God’s gracious patience with each one of us in our reconciliation in Jesus Christ. This implies that suspension from the Lord’s Supper should not be just a formal pit-stop on the way to real excommunication. The serious intention of this suspension is to create more time for urgent appeals, with admonitions from God’s Word. This step is sometimes called “excommunication minor” or “provisional excommunication” to stress the seriousness of what is happening. It is not without reason that the Form speaks about “continuing” and “many” admonitions.

Yet, patience is not unlimited. A provisional excommunication is just that: provisional, temporary. Every situation is different, and thus Article 68 rules wisely that it is up to the consistory to determine the time between the various steps. But one cannot remain part of the congregation but suspended from the Lord’s Supper forever. Eventually it must come to the moment that either the sinner repents or hardens himself in his sin. In other words, this either leads to applying Article 69 of the Church Order (Repentance) or the second part of Article 68.

DEFINITIVE EXCOMMUNICATION

When it becomes clear that there is continued hardening in sin, and consistent refusal to listen to admonitions, it must come to the “excommunication major” or “definitive excommunication” step. This second disciplinary step begins with involving the whole congregation. Again, the considerations of the consistory are decisive to determine when that time has come. Outside pressure in the form of church members who challenge the elders (e.g. “when are you going to do something about this?”) should be ignored. Nevertheless, involving the congregation by means of public announcements does bring the matter to a decisive stage: it is time to reach for the ultimate remedy for the salvation of the sinner.

This stage is marked by increasingly intense involvement of the congregation, as the moment of excommunication comes closer. This is done by means of three public announcements, to be made before the actual act of excluding the sinner from the fellowship of Christ and from his kingdom. Article 68 gives a brief description

of how these three announcements should differ. But the best way to get a good understanding of the severity of what is happening is a careful reading of the form.

Article 68 does not indicate that excommunication shall take place with the use of the form adopted for that purpose. I am not suggesting that consistories will (or should) try to get away with making up their own forms, but it is remarkable and somewhat puzzling that it isn’t specified, especially since, for all other occasions for which liturgical forms are adopted, it is mentioned explicitly that those forms shall be used.⁴

With these three public announcements the consistory is increasingly mobilizing the congregation for the salvation of the sinner. The first announcement is a call to pray for him, without knowing who he is. Then, when the name is made known with the second announcement, it urges the congregation not only to pray, but also to reach out in love to the person. And finally, when the date is set and announced for the excommunication to take place, the need for prayer and loving admonitions are impressed on the congregation as even more urgent.

THE JOY OF REPENTANCE

Yes, discipline is the official responsibility of the elders. But it is not just a “clergy” matter. On the contrary: Article 68 does not stress without reason that *the excommunication may not take place without the cooperation of the congregation*. Consistory and congregation share the responsibility for maintaining the third mark of a faithful church.

This picture of a praying and admonishing congregation throughout the discipline process makes clear that the call to repent goes out till the very end. During the whole process, confession of guilt and repentance remain possible at any time. When that happens, it will end the procedure. Even after the excommunication has become a fact, the call for repentance remains. Those who return to Christ will find the door of the church open. That’s why we have also Article 70 in our Church Order! 



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³ Compare it with what the CO regulates in Art. 71 as “suspension and deposition of office bearers.” A suspended office bearer is still an office bearer but is not allowed to act as one. Only a deposed office bearer is no longer an office-bearer.

⁴ See Art. 56 (sacraments), Art. 3 (ordination), Art. 63 (marriage), and Art. 70 (readmission).



Guido de Brès Commencement 2026

The Guido de Brès Christian High School graduation was truly an event that celebrated the goodness and faithfulness of God in the lives of 119 Grade 12 students who have come to the end of their four years of high school education and are about to continue on the paths set out before them outside the walls of Guido.

Mr. Marty Schulenberg, Chairman of the Board, started the evening reflecting briefly on Hebrews 11. He talked about faith and how we as Christians are saved by God's free gift of grace, by faith alone. We were reminded of the life of Guido de Brès himself, and the faith he had. He ended by encouraging the graduands to "live faithfully in a world that is not"—not in isolation but surrounded by the community of believers.

Principal Jason Heemskerk reflected on how often we can be encouraged to "change the world!" However, reflecting on 1 Thessalonians 4, he pointed out how we are encouraged to make it our ambition to lead quiet lives. While this may seem passive, it is not. By making it our ambition to lead quiet lives, we are examples to the world around us, and we really *are* shouting from the mountaintops although it may not always seem like it. While leading quiet lives for God, the students were encouraged to be mindful of their own church/business/family and the promises that God has given to them, and to lean into those promises.

FIXED ON THE FUTURE

Dr. Will denHollander then spoke on the theme of "Looking Forward with Longing." He spoke about how often we don't look far enough into the future, and we have a sort of "tunnel vision." We were reminded that this earth is not our eternal home, and that we should not be trying to make this our "forever home." Men and women of faith in Hebrews 11, like Abraham and Sarah, are examples of people with eyes firmly fixed in the future, on the promises of God. We were urged to "open our eyes wider," to take up our cross and follow Jesus, and to remember that "there are far better things ahead than you will leave behind."

It was time for each of the students to walk across the stage to receive their diplomas. There was an opportunity then to recognize

the specific achievements of a number of students. Eight students were acknowledged for their exceptional academic achievements. Eleven students received the Blue and Gold Graduation Award, recognizing their participation in extracurricular activities throughout their four years of high school.

A few students were individually recognized for their exceptional work. Kendra VanMiddelkoop received the Academic Athletics Award, and Ruby Kirk was recognized for completing the most amount of volunteer hours in the graduating class over her high school career and received the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students. Levi Wynia received the Governor General's Bronze Medal for maintaining the highest grade average in his last two years of high school. Finally, the Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff Student-of-the-Year Award was given to Gabe denHollander, a student who clearly demonstrated, in and outside of the classroom, what it means to live a life for Jesus at Guido.

VALEDICTION

Hannah Lanting, the valedictorian, then delivered an address on behalf of the graduating class. She included some reflections from teachers about the graduating class as well as some humorous visualizations, comments on overall class dynamics, and highlights from class experiences. The graduating class overall was seen as a class full of laughter, a group of unique individuals with unique gifts and talents, a grade who, for the most part, got along well. Hannah brought an end to her speech by urging the class to recognize the hand that God had in each of their lives up until this point, and to continue to do so.

The evening ended with a beautiful musical performance from some students, then prayer and the exit of the graduates to receive congratulations from everyone who came out to support them. The evening was filled with joy and praise, and God's grace and faithfulness were so evident throughout. All glory, honour, and praise belong to our God! 

Sarah Lanting

Hamilton, ON



GUIDO DE BRÈS CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

GUIDO DE BRÈS AWARDS

Callie Bartels
Jill Buitenhuis
Emma Bosch
Morgan DeKlerk
Kendra DeWit
Laila Heyink
Madison VanMiddelkoop
Levi Wynia

ACADEMIC ATHLETICS AWARD

Kendra VanMiddelkoop

BLUE AND GOLD GRADUATION AWARDS

Marieka Da Silva
Shane DeJager
Morgan DeKlerk
Kendra DeWit
Rowan Jagersma
Ruby Kirk
Hannah Lanting
Ashley McNeil
Brennan McNeil
Robert VanDasselaar
Madison VanMiddelkoop

THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S BRONZE MEDAL

Levi Wynia

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER AWARD FOR STUDENTS

Ruby Kirk

THE DR. F. G. OOSTERHOFF STUDENT-OF-THE-YEAR AWARD

Gabriel denHollander

A Graduation Reflection for Christian Families

NAEEM ZAFAR

Graduating from high school is an important time for parents and families across the country. For some parents, it is their oldest child graduating. For others, it is their second or third. Each graduation marks the beginning of a new chapter in a young person's life.

At this stage, parents begin to hear their children's future plans. Each student has unique dreams, goals, and career interests. Some choose college or university, while others learn a trade or enter the workforce. Many feel they are ready to make their own decisions and live independently and may leave their childhood home to study in another city or country as they pursue their goals, wanting to build their future in their own way.

Sadly, many students struggle with their Christian faith during their college or university years. Some encounter secular ideas and new pressures, while others begin to question their beliefs as they search for evidence and answers to difficult questions. Some continue attending church yet still struggle with doubts in their hearts.

LEAVING HOME AT 18?

This raises an important question: Why do so many young people leave home at the age of 18? Is this a pattern taught in the Bible? Is it part of the Christian faith? Or is it mainly a result of government policies, modern culture, and society? These are important questions that Christian parents and churches should carefully consider.

Let us consider what the Bible says about when a child should leave the home of his or her parents. Scripture does *not* give a specific age when a son or daughter must leave home. Instead of age-based direction, the Bible emphasizes maturity, responsibility, marriage, honouring parents, and following God's calling.

Whether a young person stays at home, moves away for school, starts a career, or gets married, the decision should be guided by God's wisdom rather than by culture or society. The Bible calls believers to honour their parents, grow in maturity, and follow God's calling instead of simply doing what the world expects.



Consider what Genesis 2:24 says: “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” This is the first biblical principle about leaving home. In Scripture, leaving one’s parents is closely connected with marriage, not simply with reaching a certain age.

Jesus confirmed this principle when he said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife . . .” (Matt 19:5–6). Jesus repeated the teaching from Genesis, showing that marriage establishes a new family.

PREPARING CHILDREN FOR A FALLEN WORLD

When God created Adam, the Bible does not tell us his exact age. However, Adam was created as a mature adult, able to speak, work, name the animals, receive God’s commands, and respond responsibly. He lived in a perfect world, in the garden of Eden, where he had direct fellowship with God and was given the ability

to choose between obedience and disobedience. Even in that perfect environment, Adam chose to disobey God. His sin brought the Fall, and because of it, all humanity now lives in a world affected by sin, suffering, and death.

If Adam, a mature man living in a perfect world, could fall into sin, how much more should we prepare our children to live in today’s fallen world? Should we expect an 18-year-old to face life alone simply because society or government defines adulthood that way? Or should Christian families follow God’s wisdom rather than the expectations of modern culture?

God has given parents the responsibility to teach, guide, and prepare their children to know him and walk in his ways. A child does not stop needing parental love, wisdom, and spiritual guidance simply because of age. God spoke through Moses, saying: “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at



home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut 6:6–7).

GOD’S WORD AS GUIDE

So, what should Christian families do? They should seek God’s will in every area of life rather than simply follow the pattern of the world. We should “not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will” (Rom 12:2).

If modern culture teaches that every young person should leave home after high school, ready or not, Christian families should ask whether this idea comes from Scripture or from society. God’s Word, not cultural pressure, should guide our families. God has entrusted parents with the responsibility to raise their children in the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord—teaching, encouraging, protecting, and preparing them for a life of faithful service to him.

KNOWING GOD AS OUR FATHER

Today, many people in the world are moving further away from God. The truth about God has become hidden behind many layers of human ideas, traditions, philosophies, education, and other influences. As a result, many people have eyes but do not see, and ears but do not hear the truth of God’s Word.

Many people do not understand that God is our loving Father in heaven. They do not accept that through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ, God has made a way for us to become his

children through adoption. Notice that Jesus directed his followers to pray to God as “Our Father in heaven” (Matt 6:9). From the beginning, God created us for a relationship with himself. We are not merely physical beings living in a material world; we are spiritual beings created by God, called to know him as our Father.

Yet many people, including many children, grow up without understanding who God truly is. The voices of culture, religion, education, entertainment, and worldly thinking often drown out the truth of God’s Word. As a result, many children and families struggle to see their identity and purpose through God’s perspective.

For this reason, we must return to God’s Word, the Bible. It reveals who God is, who we are, and how we are to live. When parents teach their children the Scriptures, they help them see through the confusion of the world and understand their true relationship with their heavenly Father.

JESUS, THE PERFECT EXAMPLE

Therefore, we should carefully consider the example of Jesus. When Jesus was twelve years old, he was found in the temple, his Father’s house, listening to the teachers and asking them questions. Yet after his parents found him, he returned home with them and willingly submitted to their authority (Luke 2:51).

After this event, the Bible tells us very little about Jesus’s life until he was about 30 years old, when he began his public ministry (Luke 3:23). But during those years, we trust that Jesus lived in obedience to his heavenly Father and honoured his earthly parents. When his public ministry began, his mission was clear: to reveal

"The central question is not whether a young person should study or work elsewhere, but whether he or she has first been grounded in the knowledge of God and continues to receive biblical encouragement and support from the family and the church."

the Father, proclaim the Kingdom of God, and call people into a restored relationship with God.

Jesus never sought His own will. Instead, he lived to accomplish the will of his Father (John 6:38). Jesus is the perfect example for every Christian family. Children should be taught to know God, to love him, to honour and obey their parents according to his Word, and to grow in wisdom and maturity. Parents have the sacred responsibility of disciplining their children so that God's purposes become the highest priority in their lives.

THE FATHER'S WILL

But what is the Father's will for every believer? God has entrusted his people with the ministry of reconciliation. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation . . . We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Cor 5:18–20).

Just as Jesus came to do his Father's will, Christian parents are called to prepare their children to do the Father's will as well. Our greatest goal is not merely to help our children build successful careers or comfortable lives, but to raise disciples who know their heavenly Father, follow Jesus Christ, and faithfully proclaim the message of reconciliation wherever God calls them.

This article does not argue against higher education, learning a trade, beginning a career, or answering God's call to live and serve in another place. Many young people pursue these paths, and each family should seek God's wisdom according to his Word. The central question is not whether a young person should study or work

elsewhere, but whether he or she has first been grounded in the knowledge of God and continues to receive biblical encouragement and support from the family and the church.

Adam was created as a mature man. Jesus Christ, the second Adam (1 Cor 15:45), began his public ministry at about 30 years of age (Luke 3:23), demonstrating mature manhood and years of complete obedience to the Father's will. Before beginning his ministry, Jesus submitted to his earthly parents, learned the trade of a carpenter, and faithfully fulfilled his responsibilities.

Likewise, the biblical examples often used to support early independence do not establish that principle. Joseph did not leave home to pursue education or independence; he was sold into slavery by his brothers. Daniel did not leave home by personal choice; he was taken captive to Babylon. Timothy was first taught the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother before being mentored by the apostle Paul. These examples show that God's sovereign calling, not society's timetable, directs the lives of his people.

Christian parents should not measure success by the age at which their children become independent, but by whether they have been raised to know their heavenly Father, follow Jesus Christ, stand firm in his Word, and faithfully carry the ministry of reconciliation wherever God calls them. 

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CLASSIS CLIPPINGS

Editor's note: What follows are clippings from the press releases of recent classes across the federation, for the interest of our readers. Each press release can be found in full at canrc.org.

CLASSIS PACIFIC WEST – APRIL 23, 2026

A proposal was received from the Surrey Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church to receive concurring advice of Classis Pacific West to establish pulpit fellowship with the local churches of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada (RPCC) in our region. These include the following churches: Vancouver Reformed Presbyterian Church (Rev. David Matthess), West Vancouver RP Mission Church (Rev. James Zhou), and Nissi RP Mission Church (Kevin Jia), which currently meets in the Maranatha church building. After some discussion, the proposal was retracted by Surrey Maranatha. An amended proposal may be brought to a future classis.

CLASSIS PACIFIC EAST – JUNE 4, 2026

The form of subscription was read and Rev. Marc Vermeulen, who was recently ordained as missionary of the Vernon Canadian Reformed Church, affirmed his agreement and signed the form.

A letter was received from the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER) requesting that classis inform the CER of contacts maintained by classis or by churches within the classis. The CER will be informed.

A proposal was received from the church at Aldergrove regarding the Regulations of Classis Pacific East (revised December 2025). The proposal was adopted.

A proposal was received from the church at Aldergrove requesting concurring advice in order to grant Rev. Johnathan Kruis of the RPCNA permission to preach on their pulpit. The proposal was adopted.

CLASSIS ALBERTA – JUNE 11, 2026

In accordance with Article 44 of the Church Order, the chairman asked the churches whether the ministry of office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of major assemblies are being honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church. Eight churches answered, “Yes, yes, and no.” Four churches indicated they would be appealing a decision of GS 2025. Concurring advice was given to one church in a matter of discipline. A church was given the opportunity to explain their answer to the above questions, and the churches had an opportunity to interact with the explanation.

Classis has appointed Calgary to inform the Committee on Ecumenical Relations of the contact that the churches in Classis Alberta have with other Reformed churches.

In closed restricted session, classis discussed Neerlandia Council’s request for approbation of their decision to dismiss Rev. F. Emadjeu according to Article 11 of the Church Order. Classis decided to approbate Neerlandia Council’s decision. The deputies of regional synod gave concurring advice. The chairman addressed Rev. Emadjeu and the body, and led in prayer.

CLASSIS ONTARIO WEST – MAY 20 & JUNE 3 & 4, 2026

Classis examined brs. Albert Bijker, John Moesker, and Aaron Westrik, each having completed the second year at the seminary (CRTS). With gratitude, classis granted each permission to speak an edifying word in the churches for a period of 36 months. Classis gave a 12-month extension to br. Hongdi Chen’s permission to speak an edifying word in the churches, and the same to br. Raoul Kingma and br. Adam Werkman, graduates of CRTS who each are pursuing doctoral studies with a view to thereafter entering the ministry. Brother Arco Klapwijk, a seminary student who has completed two years of study at CRTS, sent a letter to classis attesting (with

supporting documentation) that he had been examined at a classis in our sister churches in South Africa to speak an edifying word in that federation, and requesting to speak an edifying word in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Classis accepted this as sufficient to give him permission to speak an edifying word in the CanRC for 36 months.

On June 3–4, 2026, Classis examined brs. Jonatan Boon, Hongdi Chen, Klaas Cho, Jarrell Lemos, and Marco VanRenssen, each having completed their studies at CRTS and each desiring to be declared eligible for call. With gratitude, classis declared each eligible for call for a period of 36 months after each promised not to teach or promote anything in conflict with the doctrine of the Word of God, as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity.

Ecclesiastical Fellowship

Upon recommendation from the classical inter-church relations committee, classis amended the regulations to ensure that each classis would decide whether the Acts or a portion thereof could be sent out to neighbouring classes and presbyteries of other federations with whom we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship and/or contact.

Classis adopted procedures for how to deal with requests for concurring advice for pulpit fellowship with Churches with which we do not have Ecclesiastical Fellowship, and for how to keep the Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER, appointed by general synod) abreast of the ecumenical contacts of Classis Ontario West.

Fund For Needy Churches

Having received a report from the ad hoc committee appointed by a previous classis re: financial support for the Church of Grand Rapids, classis decided to dissolve the ad hoc committee, to not pursue the mandate given to this committee, and to request the church for administering the Fund for Needy Churches (Ancaster) to propose an expansion of its mandate to include the matter of inquiring about financial sustainability of needy churches.

Committee of Appeals

Classis appointed br. Frank Oostdyk as the convener for the recently established Committee for Appeals. To address evident misconceptions about the role of this recently established committee and about the process to be followed in submitting an appeal, classis decided, via its press release, to

- point to the section of its regulations called “A Committee for Appeals”
- highlight that the task of the Committee is not to compose appeals but to review submitted appeals prior to the classis and thus “to ensure that all relevant materials are available for classis.”

CLASSIS CENTRAL ONTARIO – JUNE 12, 2026

The Form of Subscription was read aloud by the chairman and then signed by Rev. Bryn McPhail.

The classis moved into closed session for the reporting, discussion, and prayer of each of the following church visits: Bethel Canadian Reformed Church, Blessings Christian Church, Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church, Jubilee Canadian Reformed Church, Mercy and Redemption Canadian Reformed Church and Unity Canadian Reformed Church. These reports were received with thankfulness.

A letter was received from Bethel-Toronto seeking concurring advice regarding preaching access according to CO Art. 50. Classis gave concurring advice. A letter was received from the Committee on Ecumenical Relations regarding ecumenical relations within this classis. A response with information will be sent.

CLASSIS NIAGARA – MAY 20 & JUNE 17, 2026

When the credentials were examined and found to be in good order, a special welcome was extended to the delegates from Smithville Hope, who were attending for the first time since the institution of the church. Revs. Bouwman, Wynia, and Kampen were seated as advisors.

Classis proceeded to the licensure examination of Br. Tyler Witthoeft (as per CO Art. 21). After the necessary documentation was found to be in order, Br. Witthoeft presented a sermon proposal from Matthew 6:25–34 and was subsequently examined in doctrine and creeds (topic: sacraments). With thankfulness, Classis judged that Br. Witthoeft had sustained his examination. After he promised not to preach and teach anything contrary to God’s Word as summarized in our confessions, he was granted permission to speak an edifying word in the churches.

Still in closed session, church visit reports to the churches of Attercliffe, Dunnville East, Dunnville West, Grassie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara South, Smithville, and Spring Creek were received with thankfulness.

Classis proceeded to the preparatory examination of Br. Noah Holtvlüwer (as per CO Art. 4.B.1). After the necessary documentation was found to be in order, Br. Holtvlüwer presented a sermon proposal on Isaiah 12:1–6, which Classis, in closed session, deemed sufficient. He was then examined in Old Testament exegesis (Jonah 1:1–16), New Testament exegesis (2 Peter 3), and Doctrine and Creeds. With thankfulness, classis judged that Br. Holtvlüwer had sustained his examination. After he promised not to preach and teach anything contrary to God’s Word as summarized in our confessions, he was declared eligible for call within the churches for a period of three years. 

A Wedding Song

A Hymn on Psalm 45



1. My heart is stirred with - in me; my tongue is swift to sing,
 2. Take up your sword, O cap - tain; ride forth in maj - es - ty,
 3. Your throne will stand for - ev - er; in jus - tice you shall reign.

a song of no - ble splen - dour in hon - our of the king.
 in truth and hum - ble jus - tice go on to vic - to - ry.
 You love all that is right - eous and hate all e - vil gain.

With skill - ful hand I'm writ - ing, moved by your maj - es - ty,
 Let na - tions fall be - fore you, let foes be pierced and slain—
 So God has rich - ly blessed you with joy a - bun - dant - ly.

to tell your match - less glo - ry to all who hear and see.
 your sharp - est ar - rows strik - ing the hearts of e - vil men.
 Your robes are rich with fra - grance; your courts are i - vo - ry.

You are the most ex - alt - ed, your lips with grace are crowned,
 Let all the peo - ples trem - ble and bow be - neath your feet,
 The min - strels play their tim - brels, sing songs with heart and voice—

and God has blessed you rich - ly— his fa - vour knows no bounds.
 for right - eous - ness and splen - dour in you are made com - plete.
 A joy to all who hear them; they make the king re - joice.

4. O princess, hear him calling—forget your former land.
 The king beholds your beauty, so take him by the hand.
 The richest gifts are offered, the people seek his face;
 and daughters of the nations will bring him gifts of grace.
 With joy the royal princess stands radiant by his side,
 as all the courts delight in the beauty of the bride.

5. All glorious is the princess within her royal room;
 her gown with gold is woven, her face with bridal bloom.
 In robes of finest linen she goes to meet the King;
 her maiden friends attend her, and songs of joy they sing.
 They, entering the palace in gladness and delight,
 are filled with celebration for love's resplendent rite.

6. Your sons will rise as princes and rule throughout the land;
 you'll make their names enduring, established by your hand.
 The nations will remember and praise your name always;
 they'll sing your fame forever, through everlasting days.
 So now we bless Messiah, our Bridegroom and our Lord:
 exalted King eternal, be evermore adored!



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