

faith in **focus**

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of New Zealand

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How best to learn from the
internet today

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Editorial

When considering how best to learn from the internet, there are people eminently better suited to writing this editorial. One reason for that would have to do with the fact that I am not a big fan. It can be such a waste of time and a hinderance to productivity.

When it comes to the Internet, my two pet peeves, are people wasting excessive time on social media and people not reading books because the internet has become their source for everything they need to know.

It has become so ingrained in people that they need to check their smart phone for the latest on Facebook, iMessage, Snapchat, every spare minute of the day. I see a lot of this in the city; people having smoko – cigarette in one hand and a phone in the other. People even walk down Lambton Quay in Wellington looking at their phone as if it were a navigational tool – without watching where they are going.

Then there is surfing the net. There are people addicted to the Internet who just mindlessly browse looking at all sorts of things.

It is fair to say, that having access to copious amounts of information and filling your head with facts about all sorts of meaningless things, is not edifying, morally or intellectually.

However, there are a great many good and edifying things that are to be found on the net. There are many biblical and excellent websites and blogs that are available to the Christian. Our Reformed brethren around the world have provided, for our edification, all sorts of articles, devotionals, Bible studies, reviews, news, books, etc, that we may use.

A few years ago, a minister from a French-speaking reformed denomination in Québec, Canada, started translating some articles from *Faith in Focus* for their readers. Not only was this exciting, but it showed that the Internet, with all its pitfalls, has much value for the building up of the body of Christ and for the glory of God – part of our chief goal.

Our contributors provide some very practical insights into Internet use and learning. Being such a big subject, I have included some extra articles which I hope you will find edifying.

Mr Andrew de Vries advises us on how not to get blogged down.

Mr Berwyn Hoyt looks critically at Internet learning.

Mr David Murray, a pastor, professor and author, emphasises the obstacles to personal devotions in the digital age.

Mr Ron Snoek, reviews *The Next Story – life and faith after the digital explosion*, by Tim Challies.

Mr Danny E Olinger, editor of *New Horizons*, reviews *iPod, YouTube, Wii Play*, by D Brent Laytham.

Mrs Sally Davey recommends D.A. Carson's *The Intolerance of Tolerance*.

Mr Andre Holtslag responds to an article from *Christianity Today*.

Mr Peter Kloosterman writes his second instalment of *The Root and Fruit of Missions*.

Mr Greg Forster reviews the latest Disney film *Frozen*.

Mrs Harriet Haverland and her team of gleaners provide news from the churches, etc.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of NZ unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

NB: In line with common publishing practice *Faith in Focus* reserves the right to publish the names of all contributors with their articles, unless compelling reasons are given to the editor for not doing so. This applies to both print and online versions.

Don't get blogged down!

Andrew de Vries

In the interests of open disclosure, I must confess to being a bit of blog junkie. I can easily fritter away a lunch time on chasing down the next free book offer (that I will probably never read) or scouring the opinion pieces of six different people on whatever the 'hot issue' of the day is in the blogosphere. So it was timely for me to be asked to write the present article. I needed something to keep me from getting 'blogged' down in this brave new world of social media. Whether you are just starting out surfing the blogosphere, or whether you are an old timer, you need to be aware of the following if you are going to make the most of your experience.

Every man and his blog

It seems that these days every man, woman and child feels they need to have a blog to vent, express, or share their daily insights with the world. We should not conclude from this that all these people have something wonderfully enriching and encouraging to contribute to the global Christian community. The first thing we've got to recognise about the blogosphere is that while it is wonderful that everyone can express their opinions, not all opinions are of equal worth. Some opinions are ill-informed, poorly thought through, and some are downright dangerous. The question you need to ask is 'Am I reading something from a person who has some expertise on their subject matter and who actually has something worthwhile to say?'

The fact that blog pages can be written by anyone and everyone is also one of the wonderful strengths of the blogosphere. To have a voice in previous ages, you needed to have a big ministry, or be a well-known theologian, or know someone in high places who could broker your book deal. But now, ordinary people have a voice through their own blogs. Ordinary believers struggling through unique circumstances are able to testify to God's faithfulness and goodness in such situa-

tions. One of the most moving blog pages I have read is by Greg Lucas. He wrote of his experience as a father with a son who was non-verbal and severely autistic¹. I distinctly remember reading one account where he spoke of steeling himself for the battle of bathing his 17 year-old son. It was always a heated battle, but on this occasion his son willingly got in the bath and began to relax. Greg wrote of the profound thankfulness to God for that precious moment. This ordinary believer influenced my theology of thankfulness in a more significant way than most of the theologians I had ever read. It is the personal aspect of the blogosphere that makes it so helpful to many.

The illusion of understanding

One of the things that make blog pages relatively appealing is their brevity. You can read for twenty minutes, and in that time you will have been able to glean the thoughts of four (or more) different bloggers on any particular issue. You might conclude that with this breadth of reading of different bloggers from different theological traditions that now you have mastered your topic and will be the fount of all wisdom. This is, of course, a complete illusion. You can seldom get a solid understanding of any topic from such brief reading. Usually the blog opinion is only the tip of the iceberg on a multifaceted and complex issue. You would never claim to have really understood an issue because you have read the letters to the editor in the Saturday paper. Blogs are much the same.

Once we grasp that this is the genre that we are dealing with, then blogs can be used with profit. Blogs can be very good primers for getting you started on thinking about theological or ethical issues. They can whet your appetite for more, and as long as you go on with your digging and meditating and investigating, you will be sure to profit. Last year I was reading some blog interactions on a debate about sanctification. Some were arguing that sanctification occurs by simply remembering your justifica-

“ Blogging is to writing what extreme sports are to athletics: more free-form, more accident-prone, less formal, more alive. ”

tion. Others were arguing that growth in godliness has a number of scriptural motivations. This led me to *Holiness* by JC Ryle and *The Hole in Our Holiness*, by Kevin De Young. These books may not have been part of my reading diet if not for the helpful prompting of the blogosphere.

Natural resources

The blog page is a natural go-to site for resources. Resources for Christian living abound. There are resources for pre-marital counselling, Bible reading programmes (the blog is where I found my all-time favourite Bible reading programme, the '*Kingdom Bible Reading Plan*²'), free and cheap books to be downloaded (www.challies.com is a great site for pointing these out), podcasts galore, theological journals, and of course wonderful church magazines (*Faith in Focus* back issues can be read back to 2002!). Clearly, many useful resources can be obtained. You can even sit in on a Christian conference overseas for free. Of course, there is a need to be discerning in this area.



The other word of caution is that as Christians we need to be disciplined with the management of our time. With so many blogs and resources at our fingertips we can be unwise and fritter away countless hours when our time could be better spent elsewhere (Eph 5:15-16). One solution if you are ill-disciplined in this regard is to install a programme that blocks particular web pages at certain times of the day³. Another remedy is to adjust the way you approach blog pages. Learn to approach them in the way that a male approaches shopping⁴. When a male goes to the shops to purchase a new pair of jeans, he is not there to try on every possible pair in the shopping centre. He is not going to get distracted by the sale on at the homeware store next door. He is not going to broaden his search to include the purchase of a new beanie and a pair of gloves. No, he gets the jeans, preferably the first pair that fits, and then he gets out of there as quickly as possible. It's a good way to approach blog pages. Know what you are looking for in terms of the subjects you are interested in. You don't have to read every article of your favourite blogger, you don't have to follow every link, you don't have to wade into every debate. Know what you are searching for, and when you have found it, read it and digest it, and then get out of there!

Big brother is not watching

Bloggers do not simply share resources and keep us up to date on current issues around the globe. Bloggers provide us with teaching and instruction. Bloggers teach us about the trinity, they make pronouncements about the biblical posi-

tion on homosexuality, they urge us to adopt a particular view on the use of spiritual gifts. What happens when they are wrong? Is there a retraction? Is there a discipline trial? No, nothing happens because big brother is not watching. There is no-one keeping them accountable for their instruction. In effect, you can say virtually anything you want in a blog page, and there are absolutely no consequences.

Contrast this with any form of teaching in a local church. If I were to deviate from our confessional position one Sunday as I preached, you can be sure that my elders would remind me of my ordination vows and hold me to them. If I were to present some of my musical preferences as binding commandments for the church, my elders would remind me not to go beyond what is written. If I were to speak rudely and condescendingly to my Bible study group, my elders would have a firm word for me about loving my brothers and sisters. I am very much accountable for any teaching ministry I am part of in the local church. Perhaps we shouldn't be reading any blog page that doesn't have the following disclaimer 'this blog page is overseen by the elders of xx church'.

I follow Paul, I follow Apollos ...

Whether we like it or not, we live in the age of the celebrity. This includes, dare I say it, the celebrity pastor⁵ (although I'm pretty sure this is not a problem in the RCNZ). There are pastors overseas who are tremendously influential via blogs and sermons in our own circles. Some of our members even become little 'Kellerites'⁶ or 'Piperites'⁷, reading every blog and

opinion with religious devotion. Whilst some of these celebrities have wonderful insights and things to teach, we should be very wary of following the opinions of one person. Just because your favourite celebrity pastor said it, doesn't necessarily make it authoritative for the church in all times and all places.

One of the impacts of following your favourite celebrity is that, inadvertently, the ministry of the local church can be sidelined. Those elders who are called by God to speak into your life, and guard you from false teaching, and equip you for works of service become a faint whisper, while the celebrity blogger becomes the megaphone you always listen to. This is not healthy. Those who are called to shepherd you and give an account for your soul, are those elders the Lord has appointed in your local church. Isn't it those you know best, and who know you best, you should allow to have the greatest influence upon you? I'm not convinced that the rise of the blogosphere encourages this to a significant degree. If a blog page has a high view of the place and rightful influence of the local church, I am much more inclined to visit regularly. I hope you are too.

Blog pages can be very exciting places to learn and grow and discover. Someone captured this well when they said: "Blogging is to writing what extreme sports are to athletics: more free-form, more accident-prone, less formal, more alive. It is, in many ways, writing out loud⁸" This free form nature of the blog is its great strength and the thing that captivates. But is also its greatest weakness. We need to be mindful of both if we are not to get blogged down.

Notes

- 1 See 'Wrestling with an Angel' at <http://sheepdogger.blogspot.co.nz>. The blog page was later turned into a book of the same name.
- 2 <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/the-kingdom-bible-reading-plan>
- 3 Leechblock is a programme you can install if you use Firefox as your browser. See <http://www.proginosko.com/leechblock.html>.
- 4 Please forgive the broad generalisation. I have heard that there are males who enjoy 'shopping', but I am not one of them.
- 5 For some good reading on celebrity pastor see anything written by Carl Trueman. See <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2014/03/for-what-its-worth.php>.
- 6 Followers of Tim Keller.
- 7 Followers of John Piper.
- 8 Andrew Sullivan. See <http://www.incomediary.com/bloggerstop-blogging-quotes>

Mr Andrew de Vries is a minister in the Reformed Church of Bishopdale.

How can I best learn from the Internet?

Berwyn Hoyt

Very simply, you *can't* learn from the internet. Sorry! End of article. Oh, you think I should qualify that? Well, ok. Sure, you can find information, and even answers, but learning involves more than information. To learn you must be able to weigh the information for truth and importance, then analyse where it fits into your picture of the world. For an unbeliever, that's where learning stops (2 Tim 3:7), and that's why education will never be the eureka they expect. But as a Christian, learning is much greater. You must ultimately analyse where the information fits in God's picture of the world, and understand it in relationship with Him. So when I say you cannot learn from the internet, I'm not just talking about getting information, but about becoming acquainted with the information in a way that leads to wisdom.

Please note that I'm not opposed to finding facts on the internet. That's something I do daily to help me in a range of tasks from designing circuit boards to finding Scripture passages. But while facts can be useful and can often be immediately applied without thinking much, they aren't learning. Learning implies increasing understanding for benefit next time around.

To illustrate, let's suppose that you know from the scream that your neighbour has hurt himself while working in his shed. If you file that information and do nothing about it then that shows that you haven't learned from the information. You become like the man that James 1:23 mentions, who looks in the mirror, but before he can improve his appearance he forgets what he saw. But if you try to fit the information into your understanding of the world, and particularly into God's understanding of loving your neighbour as yourself, then you have learned something, and that will direct you to help him, and to do so quickly.

Back to the internet. We must consider that what we tend to mean by the 'internet' is mostly just one big index. A very well cross-referenced index into a trillion (in 2008) odd pages of facts and fiction in forms that, to some degree, already existed even before the internet. The internet helps you to find stuff, and then links you to other related stuff. The index itself is only an easy door to the learning process. The learning itself takes hard work: extended reading, real analysis, and spiritual thought.

One corollary of this is that you shouldn't choose material simply because it's free. Since you're going to spend a lot of effort anyway, you may be getting more value if you choose something that costs money. Having said that, a lot of free stuff can also be very good.

With all this in mind, let's consider some of the classes of material available to be found via this index.

Books. Here is a tried and true way of learning. The internet is a good way to find books – if you know what to look for. You'll search a selection that is larger than any library you could visit. But Solomon mentioned in Ecclesiastes 12:12 that book-learning can weary the body. So, two things to watch out for are: 1. It's difficult to find *good* books (or *wise* books, to use Solomon's word). It takes considerable advance knowledge and careful analysis. In fact, it's generally easier to select *good* books by going to a church book-stall than on the internet because someone has already helped you sift out the tares. 2. To learn by books, you still have to do the hard work of reading. So you'll actually save time if you *take* time to find out which books are good. Read the reviews (especially search for Christian book reviews). And once you find good books, you can learn a lot, if you read and study them.

Articles. These are easier and quicker to write (and to read) than books. Because they're quick, it may feel like

“The internet is chock full of links to books, articles, and blogs. Your job is to find those which are good, and the important thing is to remember that most of them are worthless.”

you're learning more than by reading books, but you could actually be learning less. Since articles are easier to write than books, the author doesn't have to know so much about what he's talking about (like me, for example). And unless it is an academic paper, the editor will often be less stringent. Consider the credentials of both author and editor when deciding how much to trust articles.

Blogs. One use for blogs is to communicate with relatives. Or another is for pure entertainment. There's nothing wrong with that, but just be aware that it's part of your 'entertainment budget', not your 'learning budget'. It can be easy

to fritter your time just keeping up. But if you want to learn, then my comments are the same as for books and articles but with a few extra 'gotchas'. There is usually no editor at all, so everything depends on the reliability of the author. Plus, the author may have a personal target to blog once a week just to keep his readership interested. Be aware that there may be weeks where he has nothing substantial to say. Try to find an author that challenges your thinking in a godly way. It might pay to ask someone for recommendations. You could perhaps start with the Gospel Coalition blog.

News. What about news? Well, again, don't fool yourself that you're learning. Most news is just for your R&R. But if you listen to the news because you want to stay relevant, then it's going to take real work: analysis and biblical reflection. Otherwise your relevance will quickly become irrelevant to society's true needs. You can find good social commentary, but you have to look. What we really want to aspire to is gospel reflection on the news – like what Jesus does in Luke 13:1-8. He engages with the news from God's point of view. The website themightiestword.com contains good examples for us to follow, for engaging in this way, and frequently also the kiwifruitblog.org. This is what ambassadors of Christ really aspire to (2 Cor 5:16-21). The recipe is a simple function of balance: you have to be more in Christ than with the news (Rom 12:2).

Courses. Education accessed via the internet is on the rise, and some good stuff can be found from both secular

sources and theological seminaries. These can be very valuable if you have the opportunity to put in the hard yards to study it. Like you would for any school, ask others who know about them.

Forums. Well, here you can find and ask for answers: both wrong and right. And that's perfectly legitimate. But once again, use your head and look for reasons, not just answers. At a rough guess from my experience, technical forums have about 50% of the comments giving a correct answer, and only about 5% are backed up by substantial reasons. If you are asking religious questions, it may be that only 20% of the comments are correct. You need to assess the reasons given to determine whether the answer is correct. Secular forums can be useful. But I would suggest that unmoderated religious forums are full of enough doubtful rigour and time-wasters that you'd need to be full of the Spirit (1 John 2:20f) and a real Bible scholar with time to burn. And I don't know many of those.

Reading online

If you prefer to read online, go for it. But it may depend on what you're reading for.

Reading online is more intense: it's easier to lose your place (especially if you are linking through several different articles at once). You will be less able to engage with someone else in the same room, so you may find reading from paper to be better when relaxing with your wife.

If you're reading to learn, then reading

from a printed book has some particular advantages. You can underline important sections of a book for later reflection, and I have found it very useful to reference significant sections or quotable quotes in the rear cover of the book with a page number for easy reference later. This makes the book much more useful to refer to later. Mark-up like this can be done on an e-reader, but it is more difficult to do, and is more easily lost.

If you subscribe to a magazine that has articles worth referring to others, then printing a few pages as a pdf and storing them that way in a folder can be helpful for forwarding or later reference. I store mine in folders by category. Don't forget to back up your storage, though!

Determining reliability

How can you know whether to trust something on the internet? This is a big area, and I'm no expert. I can but give you the practical tips that I use.

- On the internet you *have* to be a sceptic. Assume something is probably untrustworthy unless you have good reason to believe it. Yes, you can learn from something that is not trustworthy, but only if you spend the time to weigh it.
- So look at the reasoning given (Acts 17:11). If you can't understand the reasons or you can't align them with Scripture, then don't trust it. To learn from it, you need to really understand the reasoning. This will take time, I'm sorry.
- Consider whether it is recommended by other trusted sources. God is our example in that he attests trustworthiness by reliable or many witnesses, especially for important matters (1 John 5:6-12, 1 Corinthians 15:3ff, Ruth 4:9ff)
- Weigh it in the light of God's revelation (1 John 5:9), and in His view of things. There's just no substitute for being familiar with God's way of thinking revealed in His Word.

Here is the trap. The internet is chock full of links to books, articles, and blogs. Your job is to find those which are good, and the important thing is to remember that most of them are worthless. Don't assume that it's a good article just because you agree with it! In fact, that's a very real danger with the internet. You can always find something to read that your ears want to hear – and then you won't be inclined to learn from it at all.

Finally, please try not to forward



or post about something just because it agrees with you – unless you have some reason to know that it will actually benefit them. They won't have time to learn very well themselves if they're keeping up with you. (Hmmm ... my elder is going to remind me that I said this next time I forward him something).

In summary, the internet is not as

useful for learning as you might think. Actual learning takes careful effort, analysis, and spiritual thought: we shouldn't be deceived into thinking we're learning just by knowing stuff from the internet. Spend more time on less material. Do the hard work; weigh everything, hold fast what is good, and recommend sparingly: less is more.

"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thess 5:19ff)

Mr Berwyn Hoyt is a member of the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

How best to learn from the internet today (3)

18 obstacles to personal devotions in the digital age

By David Murray

Australian research found that "If pastors could do only one thing to help people at all levels of spiritual maturity grow in their relationship with Christ ... they would inspire, encourage, and equip their people to read the Bible – specifically, to reflect on Scripture for meaning in their lives."

Similarly, The Center for Bible Engagement discovered that "the number one thing you can do for yourself spiritually is read the Bible four times a week or more. Read it this frequently, and your life looks completely different to those who don't read the Bible, or read it less than that."

Another survey that resulted in the book *What 1000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth*, found that "Reflection on Scripture is, by far, the most influential personal spiritual practice."

And yet these basics of personal spirituality, Bible reading and prayer, are so difficult to maintain in the digital age. Consider some of the obstacles we face in trying to make prayer and Bible reading a regular part of our lives:

1. Loss of boundaries: Working life is no longer limited to one place and certain hours, but we are always on from first thing to last thing at night, always contactable, even on vacation. 75% of 25-29 year olds sleep with their phones. 25% of employees say that they feel their job secu-

urity depends on them being available beyond normal working hours.

- 2. Loss of concentration:** Tests of office workers reveal that they check email 30-40 times an hour, although they think it's only 10-15 times an hour. 1 in 4 people check their smartphone every 30 minutes, 1 in 5 every 10 minutes.
- 3. Loss of reading ability:** Computer scrolling has resulted in much more scanning and speed-reading, the exact opposite of what's required to profit from Bible reading.
- 4. Loss of meditation:** Deep and prolonged thought on anything is very rare as minds flit from thing to thing. We consume three times as much info as we did 50 years ago but think about it much less.
- 5. Loss of memory:** Memorising Scripture texts and references has become a lost art because we just need the odd word and a rough idea of location to Google the verse.
- 6. Loss of problem solving:** We don't work at answering questions, puzzling something through but, again, just Google it.
- 7. Loss of social connection:** We don't need people's help but just Google it. "In *YouTube is my Father*, Michael Anthony Adams describes how YouTube has become his substitute father, teaching him things like how to tie a tie and fix a flat.
- 8. Loss of sleep:** Excess and late technology use damages quality and length

“We consume three times as much info as we did 50 years ago but think about it much less.”

of sleep. Kids are consuming 11 hours of media a day with huge impact on quality and quantity of sleep.

- 9. Loss of quiet:** Constant beeps, buzzes, and updates reduce undisturbed time for the brain to rest. Unlike other revolutionary media like radio and TV, the Internet is ubiquitous. We never get even a few minutes waiting in line with our own thoughts but turn to the smartphone to fill it up.
- 10. Loss of friendships:** Online friendships have become more common than face-to-face. Loneliness has become one of the most common complaints of our day.

11. **Loss of family time:** Family members are constantly connected to the outside world when in the home.
12. **Loss of privacy:** We don't have much of a private life any more as so much lived out in public arena, making mistakes very public too. Also, so much gathering of personal data is going on undetected.
13. **Loss of time:** So much time being wasted, reducing time for devotional life and Christian service
14. **Loss of purity:** Multiple and manifold temptations and all in the privacy of our own homes.
15. **Loss of patience:** We have grown used to instant results, but daily devotions are a long-term program with rarely or barely perceptible changes and improvements.
16. **Loss of wisdom:** We can access more knowledge via the Internet but the lack of possessing and owning that knowledge in our own minds prevents our brain making connections, discovering connections, seeing the bigger picture. How do we interpret information, organize it, process it, discriminate, draw conclusions from it, when all we know is in Google rather than in our brains?
17. **Loss of humility:** In *This is your brain on Google*, Kate Shellnut wrote: "These days, we still say things like "I don't know how" and "I can't remember it," but our ignorance rarely lasts long. Seconds later, it gets pulled up on Google or YouTube. The information we don't know is so close – quite literally at our fingertips – that we forget we don't know it."
18. **Loss of routine:** Regularity and rhythm are rare in people's lives because of the unpredictable nature and hours of jobs nowadays. Personal devotions in the face of such a digital deluge? Impossible surely! Difficult, but not impossible, and tomorrow I'll give you 20 tips for maintaining a devotional life in the digital age.

David Murray is a pastor, professor and author. His latest book is "Jesus on Every Page", which was reviewed in last issue. This article was reproduced from his blog <http://headhearhand.org> Oct 2013

20 tips for personal devotions in the digital age

David Murray

Now I want to give you some tips to keep your spiritual head above the water in the face of the digital deluge.

1. **Take guilt to God:** Mention devotions to most Christians and the guilt meter goes straight to red: guilt over failure to do them, guilt over lack of profit in them, guilt over rushing through them. As there's nothing so motivating as starting with a clean sheet, let's take all our guilt to God and find the energy and freedom that comes from a full and free forgiveness in Jesus Christ.
2. **Get to bed early:** The main reason why people skip devotions is going to bed so late that they cannot get up in time in the morning to read and pray.
3. **Turn off your phone and avoid computer:** It's absolutely vital that you meet with God before anyone else in the day. Keep your mind free of digital distractions.
4. **Have a shower and eat breakfast first:** Refresh yourself by getting the blood flowing and the blood sugar levels rising.
5. **Don't share your daily devotions in social media:** This changes the whole nature of the communication and communion because you are thinking "How can I FB or Tweet this?" Keep it just between you and God.
6. **Establish regular time and place:** For the vast majority this will be first thing in the morning before everyone else is up. Ideally a quiet place where you will not be disturbed and where you will not disturb others.
7. **Build a systematic routine:** Read consecutively in the OT and NT so that you are exposed to the whole counsel of God. There are various Bible reading plans available. If you don't plan and map out your journey, you won't get there.
8. **Vary the routine:** Although you should have a general routine that you stick to, every few months add a bit of variety by maybe reading a book more slowly, or study a book with the help of a commentary, or memorize a chapter, and then go back to the routine again.
9. **Read easier parts together with more difficult parts:** For example, don't get stuck reading Leviticus without also reading say one of the Gospels at the same time.
10. **Start a short prayer list:** Not too long so that it dominates the whole prayer and becomes like a shopping list. Don't feel obliged to pray for everyone every day. Sometimes pray for just one person in detail.
11. **Sing and speak out loud:** Singing awakens and enlivens the soul. Reading and praying out loud avoids half-hearted reading and mumbling jumbings in prayer.
12. **Turn your songs and Bible readings into prayer:** Pause at verses and ponder how to make this a prayer.
13. **Learn from set prayers:** I don't like using formal prayers written by someone else, but I can read them to see how others pray and discover what elements I've been missing in my prayers.
14. **Be careful with Study Bibles and Daily Devotionals:** These are sometimes good when you don't have a clue what the passage means.

However, don't let them become a substitute for prayerfully seeking God's help to understand His Word. Don't let someone else do your thinking for you.

15. **Start small:** Don't go from doing nothing to spending an hour on devotions. You'll never keep that up. Start with 5-10 mins and slowly increase to 20-30 minutes.
16. **Journal:** Don't write a novel; instead write down a sentence or two or a verse that struck you while reading. Don't make this too big or you won't keep it up. Regularly review what you've written.
17. **Dads, help young Moms:** If Mom

can't find the time in busy mornings, then each evening you need to relieve and release her for 30 minutes or so to be on her own with the Lord. Why not each read the same passages and then you can share your thoughts with each other over supper.

18. **Fight formality and self-righteousness:** Pray for God's blessing and that He would prevent this blessing turning into a curse by it becoming just a formal routine or else a source of pride.
19. **Learn meditation:** And if you want some tips on meditating on Scripture have a look at Meditation: 10 Motives and 10-Step Method.

20. **Don't end the devotional life:** Try to carry it on into the day. Perhaps write a verse to keep in your pocket and refer to every time you eat or wait in a line. Write it at the top of your to-do list. Look at it before you sleep at night.
Read #1 again, and again, and again.

David Murray is a pastor, professor and author. His latest book is "Jesus on Every Page", which was reviewed in last issue. This article was reproduced from his blog <http://headhearhand.org> Oct 2013

How best to learn from the internet today ... a review

The Next Story

By Tim Challies

Reviewed by Ron Snoek

There are 10 types of people who might read technology books, those who understand binary and those who don't. Please excuse that tired joke but *The Next Story* is a book about technology and that's the only technology joke I know. Now, if you got that joke you are in the first group and you are a technologist, and this is a helpful book to reflect on your use of technology and its impact on your life. If you didn't get the joke you are probably an English Lit major and you're still seething about the grammar of the preceding sentence. This book is also for you.

I am a bit of a technology wonk and so found it helpful to review the uses of technology and the recent history that we have been through. Sometimes when you are close to a subject it's helpful to step back and shine some light on what technology is doing in society and your own heart. Challies does a fine job of this. If you are not so comfortable with technology then maybe this book will also help you to see the way that technology can be a great benefit to us, or at least those who wish to utilise various aspects of it. At the least it will equip you with a better understanding of how technology can be better used, and how it can be guarded against. Part of this book is really a chronicle of the reflections that the author has been through.

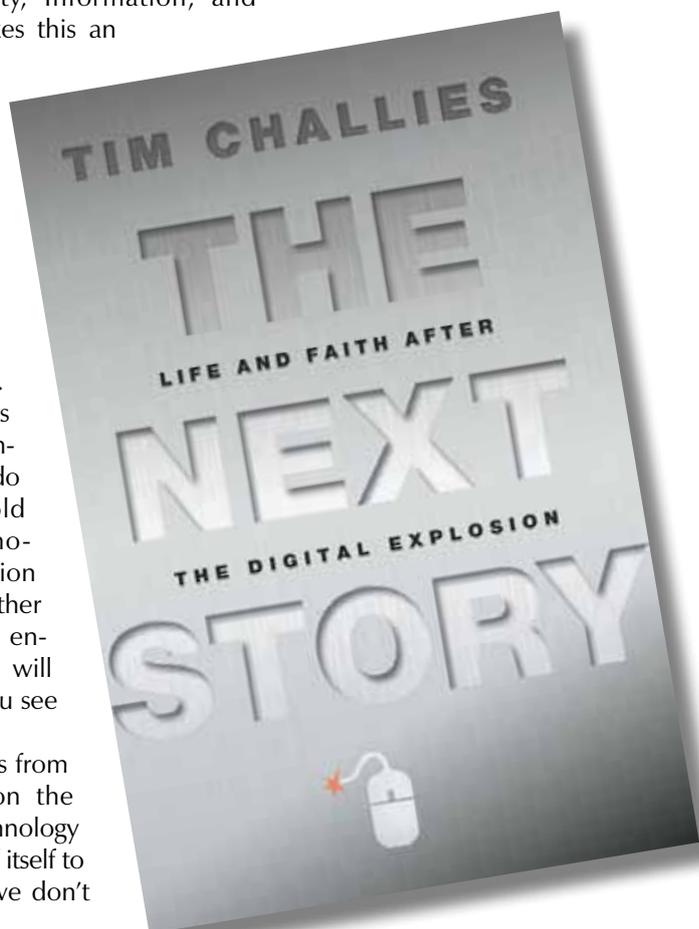
He shares his experiences of finding idolatry in his use of being constantly online, his backing away from face to face communications, and his addiction to distraction.

Rather than just knock technology (or modern social media) for the mental and spiritual impacts it has, Challies has very thoughtfully explored a number of topics including Identity, Information, and Truth. What makes this an enjoyable read is that Challies is really looking into his own life and examining what technology is doing to him. He's not a Luddite and he's not lecturing. New technologies are not always beneficial, but nor do we need to hold ourselves in ignorance and isolation from them. Together this makes for an engaging read that will challenge how you see technology.

The title comes from his meditation on the thought that technology is getting ahead of itself to the degree that we don't

know what the 'next story' is.

The book was published in 2009 so is really quite current with regard to what your children and/or parents are doing with technology. If I might slightly update it to at least 2013 standards: Please don't snapchat me your selfies.



iPod, YouTube, Wii Play

Danny E. Olinger

A generation ago, media theorist Neil Postman feared that modern men and women, enamored with technology and entertainment, were losing the ability to think critically. He also believed that they were erring in making technology – in the place of a moral universe that spoke of sin and righteousness – the new standard for behavior. Such changes that signaled the surrender of American culture to technology made spiritual devastation inevitable, even if masked by the entertainment that technology is able to offer. Postman concluded that the modern man was amusing himself to death.

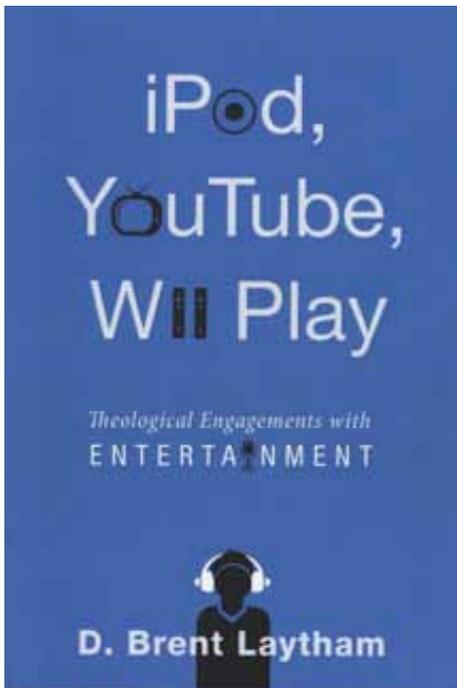
Methodist theologian D. Brent Laytham does not share Postman's technophobia, but he does share Postman's concern for the misappropriation of technology and entertainment in his sharply argued and cleverly titled *iPod, YouTube, Wii Play*. Laytham examines what entertainment is, how it works, and what it means. He also reflects on how technology and entertainment have distorted or displaced a proper, church-centered ethic. Postman could identify the threat, but he could not provide a positive answer. Laytham does both – and with a theology that points both to Christ and to his church.

For Laytham, the fact that we use the

Internet and watch television is more crucial than which websites we visit and which shows we watch. His basic premises are: (1) entertainment isn't theology, even if it is ripe for theological reflection; (2) in a culture saturated with entertainments and overwhelmed with amusements, theology must engage entertainments; and (3) entertainments will converge toward, complement, compete with, confuse, or confute Christian conviction.

The Christian's proper response to entertainment (and technology), then, involves refusing its pretension of being ultimate, while affirming its subordinate role as a good creation. One resists





entertainment as a principality, but one embraces it as a triviality.

Illustrative of Laytham's approach is his chapter on the iPod, where he argues that it epitomizes music's journey from "we play" to "I listen." The nineteenth-century Christian's iPod was a pocket hymnal, where singing was communal and it was essential to know melodies, harmonies, rhythm, and tempos. Laytham writes, "The hymnal implicates and assumes relationships with fellow Christians and with God; one does not sing hymns by oneself or to oneself. Even if I'm the only person in the room, I sing praise with all Christ's saints. Even when I love the song, I sing it not for myself, but for and to God. And the hymnal invites action, a bodily practice learned in community and shaped by tradition" (p. 45).

The iPod moves in the other direction. Rather than societal, communicative, and active, it is individual, consumptive, and passive. It is, after all, an iPod, not a wePod. Richer in musical recordings, we have become poorer in musical relationship and less fit for the musical work of worship, which is always an active, social communication, never a passive, private consumption.

But, unlike Postman, who undoubtedly would have viewed the iPod as he did television – as a technology that should be avoided at all costs – Laytham believes the iPod can still be used positively for God's glory. One needs a strategy for using it, but should not fear it.

YouTube is more complex. It combines

a top-down platform for the distribution of popular culture with a bottom-up platform for personal creativity. YouTube creates fun with sharing and can be educational in giving tips on a wide range of subjects. But it can hold people captive for hours, encourages excessive behavior to get noticed, and includes degrading spectacles. With such technology, Laytham argues, the Christian needs to develop a sense of decorum, a proper moral repugnance that knows when to look away from that which degrades human dignity, diminishes proper desires, and weakens the common good.

Laytham also notes that some have sought to incorporate YouTube videos into worship as a way of capturing a churchgoer's imagination and interest. However, he warns against making worship a highly produced form of entertainment. This is exactly what Walt Kallestad did in the 1990s at the Phoenix megachurch Community Church of Joy, growing its weekly attendance from two hundred to twelve thousand. Laytham writes:

As it turns out, Kallestad himself now claims to have been on the wrong track. Coming back from a three-month sabbatical, he noticed that his congregation's worship "was shallow," indeed, that it "was a show." Participating in his congregation's life with new eyes, he saw that entertainment as drawing in spectators rather than forming and sending forth "transformed, empowered disciples." Put another way, Kallestad discovered that entertainment couldn't be used for evangelism, because it was evangelism; a set of processes and activities that shaped how people felt, thought, and acted. (p. 6)

Wanting to avoid both the Scylla of "entertainment is whatever you do for fun" and the Charybdis of "entertainment is utterly passive consumption" (p. 80), Laytham endorses play. Play stretches the imagination, sharpens the mind, and engages the body. It is not justified by the work it does, the effects

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it produces, or the difference it makes. Play is a needed area of life that is not fraught with ultimacy. He writes:

If entertainment is defined as whatever we do for fun with our leisure time, then play is certainly entertainment, even if we are both entertainer and audience in one. On the other hand, if entertainment is defined as whatever we "watch" for fun, as another's activity presented for our pleasurable but passive attention, then play is only entertainment if we are being

entertained (note the passive verb) by the play of others. (p. 79)

While Laytham's ideas are undeniably creative and properly stress that we are better off being engaged and interacting with others, rather than being passive consumers, I wonder if "play" is the great alternative to entertainment that Laytham believes it is. Take it from a former athlete, play can take on primacy in our lives just as easily as passive entertainment.

Of course, life with all its legitimate pleasures is a gift from God. Jesus

himself used the ordinary enjoyments of life as figures to describe the blessedness of heavenly life. But all of life, including entertainment and play, is to be lived for God's glory. Laytham would certainly affirm this, but his exaltation of play might point to a difference between a Methodism that sees the insignificant as significant and a Presbyterianism that constantly focuses on the eternal. Still, this is an excellent book that deserves a wide reading.

New Horizons, February 2014

Outward focus

Sally Davey

What to do when they won't tolerate you

.....
A review of D.A. Carson's
The Intolerance of Tolerance
Inter-Varsity Press, Nottingham,
2012
.....

Christians need clear-thinking leaders who understand what is going on in the world, and who can tell us how to respond to it. That has been particularly true in recent years, tossed around as we are by the destructive winds of postmodernism. While the fabric of morality that used to hold western society together has been reduced to tatters, the one remaining, overarching moral imperative – tolerance – seems to have us, the Christian church, in view as the only group *not* to be tolerated. We might splutter indignantly at the hypocrisy and inconsistency at all of this, but we also need to understand exactly what is going on and how to act. We need to know – not just so we don't get undermined and ensnared in it all ourselves – but, more importantly, so that we can expose the false arguments and bring the saving truth to unbelievers.

That is what I like about this book. D.A. Carson has been a wise teacher

and faithful evangelist for decades: he's been a help and a guide to many, many Christians. *The Intolerance of Tolerance* is a book that lays a clear pathway for believers needing hope and practical help to "destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Not all of us are biblical scholars, and not all of us understand our place in the history of western thinking – which are skills needed to make sense of it all. Don Carson has them, and puts our faltering feet on solid ground.

The thread that runs throughout Carson's book is a distinction – which he explains fully in his first, introductory, chapter – between the "old tolerance" and the "new tolerance." Here is how he defines the distinction:

"The *old* tolerance is the willingness to put up with, allow, or endure people and ideas with whom we disagree; in its purest form, the *new* tolerance is the social commitment to treat all ideas and people as equally right, save for those people who disagree with this view of tolerance." (p. 98)

In subsequent chapters, Carson lays out evidence for the destructive activities of the new tolerance in the past decade

or two. It is clear that Christian churches, colleges and other institutions are particular targets of governments and protest groups; and the legal system has been used to exert pressure on Christians and the Christian point of view. We know this to be true in most western countries – in New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom as well as in the U.S.

Probably the most difficult, but nevertheless useful chapter in the book is Chapter Three, a series of "jottings" on the history of tolerance. Here Carson pro-

“We should challenge the idea that secularism is, on the face of it, neutral and superior.”

vides explanation of the transitions from the ancient to the medieval world, then on into the early modern and modern worlds. He shows that the Christian church has always had good theological resources to think through questions like the relationship between church and state in biblical categories: Christian, he says in effect, you are not alone!

One of the most interesting points that emerge from Carson's analysis is that the "old" (and in his view, correct) tolerance, never existed in a moral vacuum. Always, a shared understanding of some sort of ethics was the base from which people would exercise tolerance toward those who disagreed with them. The vast difference today, according to J. Daryl Charles, whom Carson quotes, is that "people believe nothing, possess no clear concept of right and wrong, and are remarkably indifferent to this precarious state of affairs." (p.75).

Chapter Four examines the dangerous inconsistencies of the new tolerance; and Chapter Five deals with the particular pressures on the church today – including the pressures to "dumb down, dilute and minimize the gospel". In Chapter Six Carson reflects on a variety of moral issues related to today's thinking, concluding that there are few moral gains from the new tolerance. The fact that political correctness has done away with demeaning labels does nothing to balance the suffocation of worthwhile discussion about truth and morality. We are more likely, today, to believe lies and countenance gross immorality than ever.

In Chapter Seven we shift to the level of governance and the legal system, where Christians increasingly find themselves at odds with the state. The new tolerance has tried to push religious faith to the sphere of the private – but Christianity and some other religious faiths can never, Carson argues, be purely private. Today 's thinking arrives at the nonsensical conclusion that opinion polls should really determine a government's direction and choices (at times I've imagined a "virtual parliament" that simply downloads the results of opinion polls to write its legislation!). By way of contrast Carson quotes the famous British statesman, Edmund Burke, who in 1744 told the electors of Bristol that while his constituents' wishes ought to have great weight with their representative, and their opinions his high respect, nevertheless "his unbiased [*sic*] opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to

you, to any man, or to any set of men living." (p.152). That, in a nutshell, is the difference between the old tolerance and the new.

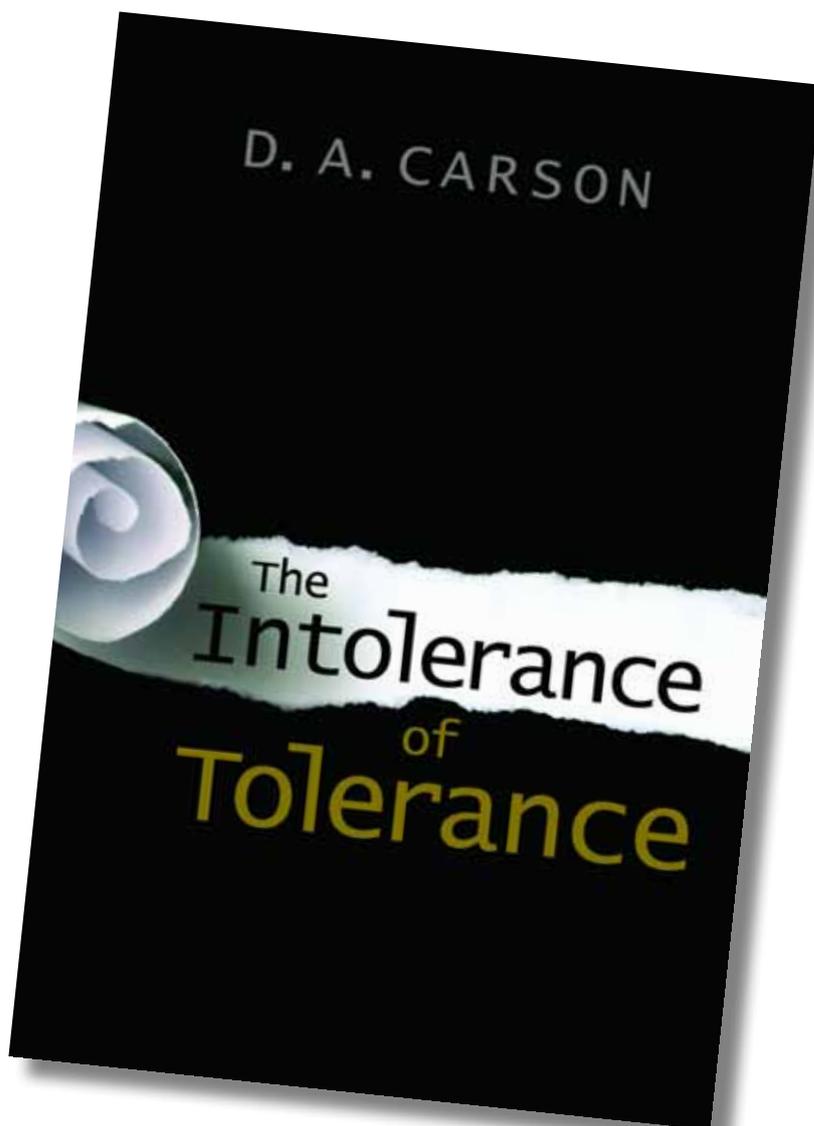
Carson's conclusion is without doubt the most useful part of his book for us "regular believers". It's where he connects his more academic contribution with everyday situations, and gives us the help we need to meet the challenges of the new tolerance. He makes ten clear points, each one offering hope for the intimidated Christian.

First, we should expose the new tolerance's ethical and ideological bankruptcy: it offers us nothing, and robs of what is good. We should be unhesitating about this – and the rest of Carson's book has given us the equipment to do it. Second, we should preserve a place for the truth, firstly in our own thinking, and then with others, insisting (and presenting the reasons), that the old tolerance is far superior to the new. Thirdly, we should expose the new tolerance's condescending arrogance. I used to encounter this in the university when professors would "assume" (*i.e.*

take a "higher moral ground" stance) that no thinking person would endorse the "outdated rubbish" (or other descriptor) that was the Christian faith. By persistent, gentle holding of our ground on this we can often get others to recognise the point.

Fourthly, we should insist that the new tolerance is not "progress" – and Carson has already offered plenty of evidence for this. Once you have read and digested his Chapter Six, you will easily be able to think of your own additions. Fifthly, we should distinguish between the fact that there is diversity and the idea that all diversity is inherently good – that is a somewhat subtle, but very telling point. Sixthly, we should challenge the idea that secularism is, on the face of it, neutral and superior. To do this we have to understand it, of course. But once we ordinary Christians have cottoned on we will soon think of ways to make the point in conversations with "Regular Kiwis" who wanting to keep religion out of discussions of anything important.

The last four are easy to grasp – but crucial. We need at all times, urges



Carson, to practise and encourage civility. There is never a place for the Christian to be rude, dismissive, or disparaging. We need to practise keeping our cool, even when attacked or demeaned. This is how Christ behaved – and so should we¹. It is practising the true, old tolerance. Next, we should, as Carson puts it: “Evangelize. Evangelize and plant churches. Evangelize and pray. Evangelize and live life in the light of the consummated kingdom for which we wait. Evangelize.” Thinking that exercising civility and the old tolerance is the sum of our duty as we quietly endure our world’s rush to destruction is not an option. It doesn’t matter that the new tolerance calls this “proselytism” – as if it were an offensive activity that should be stopped. It is holding out the light of hope to a darkened world – and to

people walking in darkness.

Ninethly, we should, of course, be prepared to suffer. If our Lord suffered before us, why should we not? The world has always hated us; and as Carson says, if his book is right in its view of democracy, then we should not be surprised when democracy becomes tyrannical. And, were the state to ramp up its intolerance of us, “we would gladly bear it, and learn a little better how to do evangelism in our prisons.” I like this realism.

Finally, and briefly, in Carson’s closing words:

“Delight in God, and trust him. God remains sovereign, wise and good. Our ultimate confidence is not in any government or party, still less in our ability to mold the culture in which we live. God may bring about changes that reflect the more robust understanding of tolerance

better known in earlier times, and that would be very helpful; alternatively, he may send ‘a powerful delusion so that [people] will believe the lie’ (2 Thessalonians 2:11), and in consequence we may enter into more suffering for Jesus than the West has known for some time. That would have the effect of aligning us with brothers and sisters in Christ in other parts of the world, and enable us to share something of the apostles’ joy (Acts 5:41).”

This is a good book – read it, and be equipped.

Notes

¹ Doubtless some will point to Jesus’s condemning remarks to the scribes and Pharisees, and to his harsh words on cleansing the temple; but these were to religious teachers and other Jews who should have known better – not to unbelievers who didn’t.

Old new life

Andre Holtslag

[The first part of this article is a summary of a lengthy article that appeared in *Christianity Today*, which was written by Patton Dodd¹. AH]

The place is New Life Church in Colorado Springs. The year is 2006. The occasion is Easter. The scene is megachurch, with the emphasis on *mega*; laser lights, a huge band with D.J. and turntable, seating for 8000 and a membership of 14,000. The Pastor is Ted Haggard, who founded the church in 1984, and who is the president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).

Recently, New Life had been described as the “nation’s most powerful megachurch,” by Jeff Sharlet of *Harpers*, and Pastor Ted as holding more sway over the political direction of evangelicalism than any other American pastors. New members were flocking to the church in vast numbers to see the show and to hear Christ preached by Pastor Ted.

But two things happened that brought the meteoric rise of New Life to a crashing halt. Haggard resigned because of accusations about drug use and a

homosexual relationship; and a few months later a gunman opened fire in the parking lot of the church, killing two teenage girls before being shot, himself, by a security guard.

Membership declined to just 8000 [!-AH] and there were significant financial debts and staff redundancies.

Patton Dodd came to faith under Pastor Ted’s ministry. He was Haggard’s writer and editor. He resigned soon after Haggard’s fall, saying, “I never wanted to darken the doors of a New Life service again.”

But things changed at New Life. Brady Boyd was appointed as New Life’s Senior Pastor soon after Haggard left. Others, like Glenn Packiam and Daniel Grothe, are pastoring some of New Life’s satellite churches in Colorado Springs. And as Dodd discovered when he recently attended a downtown New Life service [never say never! AH], there is a new oldness in New Life. “Many Sundays, we recite the Nicene Creed and say the prayers of the people. Every Sunday we hear Scripture read (Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel) and do corporate confession. We share the Eucharist, receive a blessing, and sing the doxology.”

And this came about because of members like Gary, whose faith had foundered after the scandal. This led him to study Christian history, which raised questions in his mind, like, “why did the faith at New Life bear little resemblance to the faith he was reading about?” And he was soon raising these and other questions with New Life leadership: “How does the way we worship determine the way we believe?” “Why don’t our songs mention Father, Son, Holy Spirit?” “Would Paul assent to our statement of faith?” Gary pointed pastors to more traditional ways of thinking, praying, reading the Scriptures, and caring for strangers, and asked: “Why do we do it our way instead of this way?”

Now that is not the whole of the New Life story. Dodd speaks also about church planting and community projects. My specific interest, however, is in these comments about worship. And please don’t get the idea that New Life services are now exactly like our services in the R.C.N.Z. If anything, because New Life has several congregations, their services vary significantly from one congregation to the next and are perhaps best

described as a mixture of contemporary and traditional.

However, the questions asked by this church about 'the way we worship' seem timely. Many of us have grown up in churches that have such things as corporate confession, benedictions, O.T. & N.T. readings, doxologies, and the reciting of creeds as features of weekly worship. And I can remember a time when I myself was 'tired' of the same-old, same-old, and keen to see change and innovation. Why must we always read the Law??!! And we must not avoid or be scared of or squash these sorts of questions. They are *reasonable* questions, provided they lead us to seek biblical answers. Too often, change comes about for two reasons:

1. There has been little or no teaching about *why* we do what we do – we just do it because that is how we have always done it.
2. Just for the sake of change (and this is closely related to Reason 1). I may be tired of the old way and I encounter a new way at church X or Y, so that is what I seek to implement back home.

Now, this is not to say that we hold on to traditions because they are traditions. A Reformation motto was *semper*

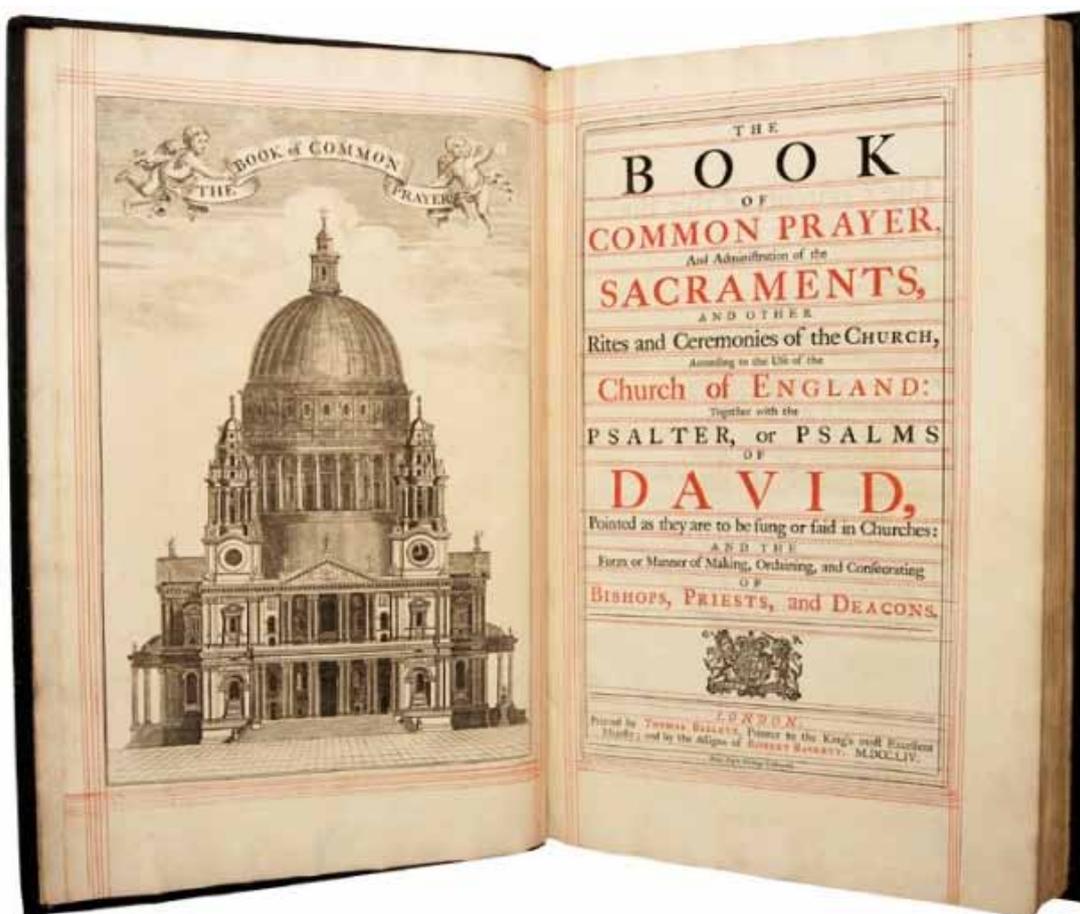
reformada, always reforming. It is Scripture that must always inform our worship. But neither should we change for the sake of change or change without giving thought to why we do what we do. James J. De Jonge is president of Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He recently wrote an article about the principles behind the liturgy (worship order) in John Calvin's church. One of his closing comments about Calvin was: "His principles still are reliable guides. Many worship committees would benefit from a careful study of these principles before adding needless clutter and confusion to the Sunday morning liturgy in an attempt to be innovative."²

I also remember reading a biography of Charles Simeon. Simeon was a minister in an Anglican church and worship there followed the liturgy prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer* – On the 4th Sunday of September (for example), you read *these* Scriptures, sang *these* hymns, said *these* prayers, and preached on *this* text, every year. For his annual holidays, Simeon would travel to Scotland and lead worship in a Presbyterian Church where the liturgy was no where near as 'set.' Simeon said, however, that by the end of the third week, he yearned to be back at

home where he did not have to spend a moment thinking about or being surprised by what was coming next in the service; that was always known and set. His sole concern was to engage in that part of the worship with heart, soul, mind and strength. The fact that there are some things which we do in worship, every week, is not, necessarily, in and of itself, a bad thing. In fact, there can be a beauty all of its own in the comfort of repetition. There is, though, the challenge that comes to each one of us, whether we lead worship or are in the pew, to engage and to mean what we say or pray and to understand why we do some things, repeatedly.

So, my fellow pastors and elders, are we teaching old and young why we worship as we do? Do they know how the Bible informs our worship and the God-glorifying reasons why we confess that "our help is in the name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth," for example? The late and dearly loved brother, D. G. VanderPyl wrote a booklet called *Reformed Liturgy*. It is no longer in print but is available electronically from the R.C.N.Z website³. It is a very useful resource that explains the typical parts of our worship services in plain and layman language.

And how about you? Have you



taken the time to study these things? In the Lord's providence, the folk at New Life are discovering and embracing aspects of worship liturgy that many of us have grown up with. They are precious because they are God-glorifying, because they have their origins in Scripture, and because they link us with the church in history.

The command to "sing a new song" in the Bible does not mean that we may never sing the same song twice, but that we must sing each song as an act of sincere, living, meaningful, Christ-adoring, Spirit-led, God-glorifying worship. May it be, then, that the 'old' remains 'new' in the worship of our Reformed churches.

Notes

- 1 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/december/new-life-after-fall-ted-haggard.html>
- 2 <http://www.reformedworship.org/article/september-1988/calvin-liturgist-how-calvinist-your-churchs-liturgy>
- 3 <http://rcnz.org.nz/synodical/resources.php>

Mr Andre Holtslag is the minister in the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

Missions in focus

The Root and Fruit of Missions (Part 2)

Peter Kloosterman

To recap the last article, we are making a distinction between the root and the fruit of missions. In this article I would like to consider the practical outworking of this distinction considering two areas where the distinction is needed: one is the assistance offered on the field and the second is the role of short term mission trips.

I have recently read a book by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert entitled "When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself." This book traces how the church has done much harm in her work of missions as she has administered

aid and assistance to those who are in need. This arises from the confusion of root with fruit. The needs on the field when addressed as fruit issues will result in long-term harm for those we hope to help. Western methods are applied (money, efficiency, organisation) rather than allow the root of the gospel to take hold and develop in accord with the Lord's work among His people.

Those who are poor need more than alleviation of an immediate need. They need help in their relationship with God and their relationship with one another. Their social and spiritual circumstances must be addressed. They need to understand their calling as image-bearers of the Triune God to do justice, love mercy and to walk humbly with their God.

One startling example bears repeating. Brian Fikkert was in Africa and found a woman who was gravely ill. Her illness could be alleviated simply by an administration of penicillin. He intervened and spent his easily earned eight dollars to save the lady's life. Later he starts to think twice about the consequence of what he did. He questions the appropriateness of his intervention. Why does he question it? Consider what he says.

I failed to consider the local assets that already existed in this slum, assets that include small amounts of money, a church, a pastor, and the social bonds of the one hundred refugees attending the small-business class. ... While the refugees were poor they could have mustered the eight cents per person to pay for the penicillin. ... Of course,

handing over the money was so much easier and so much faster than asking the refugees to assist Grace; and therein resides the problem of many poverty-alleviation efforts: the ... need for speed undermines the slow process needed for lasting effective long-run development (125).

The long-run development can be accomplished as we, and they, learn to rely more on God's word more than on the pragmatism of immediacy. Needs must be addressed in a comprehensive manner, with the root of long-term development the goal rather than immediate relief.

This can be especially hard for Christians from a first world country. We know we can do so much for the impoverished. We are blessed with many resources. The danger is that we create greater dependence on wealth and our ability rather than on the natural community of God's church to intervene in their situation. I am not suggesting that we don't respond to a crisis or that we excuse ourselves from responding at all by an appeal to the local church's responsibility. We must step back and think of a better way to address the needs of those impoverished.

The authors of the aforementioned book offer some helpful directives. They identify four which they call the ABCD of assistance:

- a. Identify and mobilise the capabilities, skills, and resources of the individual or community. See poor people and communities as full of possibilities, given to them by God.



- b. As much as possible, look for resources and solutions to come from within the individual or community, not from the outside.
- c. Seek to build and rebuild the relationships among local individuals, associations, churches, businesses, schools, government, etc. God intended for various individuals and institutions in communities to be interconnected and complementary.
- d. Only bring in outside resources when local resources are insufficient to solve pressing needs. Be careful about bringing in resources that are too much or too early. Do this in a manner that does not undermine local capacity or initiative (122).

Who is best equipped to address the need of God's people in a third world setting? It is not us. God has called His people in the third world to work together as the church of Jesus Christ. We come as assistants. We do not come as managers. We must change our approach to evaluate what we desire for the mission field. How does this work? We must evaluate our motives and our methods. Are we doing long-term harm? Does the work of missions build the church and foster her being self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing? We must constantly be on guard against pride and imposing a superior notion regarding our culture, theology, and wealth. All the mission aid poured in to assist the third world continues to create a circle of dependence. We must realise the subtle temptations to substitute our way of thinking and doing things (fruit work) for the deliverance that



only God can bring through the gospel (the root work of the church).

With this understanding firmly in place now let us consider how it is that we can work in a principled and effective way on the mission field. In conjunction with the previous article let us remember that the root of mankind's condition is determined by his relationship to the Triune God. Whether he lives as a sinner in rebellion to God or as a child of God reconciled through faith in Jesus Christ determines what need must be addressed.

When we are dealing with alienation from God it is imperative that the gospel be addressed to this condition. This will take time and patience. Prioritisation requires that addressing one's eternal need of salvation through Jesus Christ is more important than alleviation of poverty or one's educational, physical, or material need. We must realise that the church, even in her infancy, is specially equipped by God to care for the soul and the body. That's what the book of Acts shows us constantly. The Gospel embraced by a true and living faith is the root that will bear fruit of restored relationships with God, man, and creation.

The care that needs to be exercised in offering assistance also applies to short term missions. Short term mission trips have increased in popularity in recent decades. It is estimated that between USD \$2.5 and \$5 billion annually is spent annually on religious mission trips. This increase, however, has not always had positive effects. Consider some of the following statistics from Robert Lupton's book *"Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)"*:

- Africa has received \$1 trillion in benevolent aid in the last 50 years, and per capita income is now lower, life expectancy has stagnated, and adult literacy is lower.
- 85 percent of aid money flowing to African countries never reaches the targeted areas of need.
- U.S. missions teams who rushed to Honduras to help rebuild homes destroyed by Hurricane Mitch spent on average \$30,000 per home---homes locals could have built for \$3,000 each.
- The money spent by one campus ministry to cover the costs of their Central American missions trip to repaint an orphanage would have been enough to hire two local painters and two new full-time teachers and purchase

“The goal is not to eliminate our engagement with the mission field, but to evaluate it and consider that some of our methods and desires might be doing more harm than good.”

new uniforms for every student in the school (ch. 1).

The struggle with short term mission projects is that there is no long term development and engagement with the people on the field. Those who come have limited time and an agenda for each day. Relationships aren't cultivated and needs are only superficially addressed. The disparities in culture, economics and time management mean that the beneficial effects for the recipients of short term missions work is minimal, or as these authors are claiming is actually harmful.

As stated previously, these problems require evaluation of our work, not necessarily elimination. It requires prioritisation not prohibition. This means we need to look at ourselves as much as we look at those on the mission field. The distinction between root and fruit is helpful. Is what we are doing serving the proclamation of the gospel by the church or seeking to artificially sustain fruit that we enjoy. But there is more. Are we desiring the mission experience to serve the church or serve ourselves? Is

the need we are trying to alleviate actually addressed or have we simply assuaged our guilt by doing something? Are we willing to evaluate ourselves before we endeavour to go to the field? The books cited in this article are helpful for that. The goal is not to eliminate our engagement with the mission field, but to evaluate it and consider that some of our methods and desires might be doing more harm than good.

I have now touched on the problems that need to be addressed in our evaluation and prioritisation in missions. The two books I have cited, "When Helping Hurts" and "Toxic Charity", are helpful for further expansion and exploration of these topics. These authors also offer suggestions for moving forward. I would like to touch on those in the next article.

Works cited

Corbett, Steve, and Brian Fikkert. *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself*. Chicago: Moody, 2012. Print
Lupton, Robert D. *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (and How to Reverse It)*. New York: Harper Collins, 2011. EPub.

ProLife News

In September 2012, abortion-rights supporters launched a campaign for freely available abortion up to birth. Their model is the 2008 Abortion Law Reform Act of Victoria in Australia. The campaign strategy entailed influencing public opinion through what is called "advocacy journalism" written by sympathetic journalists and activists. Now an emerging pattern can be discerned.

- *North & South* magazine published a long article in September 2013, entitled "The Meaning of Life" advocating making abortion purely a "health issue".
- On 12th January, the *Sunday Star Times* published a letter by Morgan Healey, president of the Abortion Law Reform Association of NZ (ALRANZ), accusing Voice for Life of scare tactics and being "anti-women".
- *The Listener* in March 2014 pub-

lished a sympathetic feature on Florence Radcliffe, a Wellington illegal abortionist. The writer described her as a "brave pioneer".

- Most recently the *Herald on Sunday* ran an opinion piece by Marama Davidson, attacking anti-abortionists and calling for free access to abortion as a "health matter". These features promote easier access to abortion, but hide that the changes allow for abortion up to birth. For more information about this prolife fact, or other life issues please contact Voice for Life on (09)4430995 or visit www.voiceforlife.org.nz.

ProLife Facts

Today, the thought of infanticide would fill most people with horror. However, in many times and cultures it was an acceptable practice. The decision was frequently based on the availability of resources. Historically, the spread of Christianity had a large impact on reducing infanticide, both by teaching that it is wrong to take a human life and by providing an alternative. Early Christians forbade infanticide and would rescue and care for abandoned babies. Later, more sophisticated systems were put in place to facilitate this. The "Foundling Wheel" was a mechanism used in Rome in the Middle Ages which enabled a mother to abandon her baby to the care of a convent without being seen. Variations of this centuries-old practice continue today, with "baby hatches" being employed in parts of Germany, Poland, Switzerland and several other countries. Late last year, objections were raised to a Baby Hatch opening in Shenzhen, China. The point was made that this facility would help people to break the law, since abandoning children is illegal. A counter-argument is that many babies are being abandoned anyway so this is a way of safe-guarding and protecting their lives. Visit YouTube to view: "Should this Man get a Nobel Peace Prize?" This moving clip looks at Pastor Lee's "Baby Box" ministry in South Korea, examining both the pros and cons. For more information on pro-life issues, visit www.voiceforlife.org.nz



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Information regarding the criteria for this position and an application form can be obtained from the Principal:

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Frozen: The Movie

a review

Greg Forster

The Pixar conquest of Disney – the ongoing effort by the new recruits from Pixar to change the Mouse House’s shallow culture of self-indulgence and self-esteem with something much more morally serious – has been an uneven battle up to now. But *Frozen* is an unqualified victory for Pixar’s morally serious and culturally edifying storytelling, and its stratospheric success with audiences and critics may well turn the tide of the war. It’s a profound movie on many levels.

The most obvious lesson of *Frozen* – the one made explicit in the movie – teaches viewers that love is not about how you feel. It’s about putting other people’s needs ahead of your own. This theme by itself profoundly inverts the old Disney culture; it’s a big win for the Pixar invaders. But *Frozen* not only makes this point, it also traces some wide ranging consequences. It shows us why people are investing too much importance in romantic love relative to other kinds of love, like sisterhood. The responsible grown-ups who tell you not to burn down everything else in your life for the sake of “true love” are not your enemies; they’re your friends. They’re the people who *really* love you.

When *Enchanted* subverted these same fairy-tale conventions – getting engaged to someone you just met – it was only going for laughs. Don’t get me wrong, there are a lot of laughs in *Frozen*. It’s the funniest movie I’ve seen in years. But there are not a lot of laughs on this particular subject. *Frozen* is not overturning the Disney view of marriage for fun. *Frozen* is playing to win.

Everybody’s a fixer-upper

That theme alone would be enough to make *Frozen* an early contender for the most culturally regenerative movie of the year. But there’s more going on. Under the surface, *Frozen* deals with two other subjects that are, if anything, even tougher for our culture. One is the corruption of human nature. It used to be that pretty much everyone agreed there was a systematic moral dysfunction in human nature. Christians hold to this

teaching in an especially strong form, of course, but we are by no means alone. Aristotle believed it, as did Kant. There is a whole song in *Frozen* about how nobody is what he ought to be: “Everybody’s a Bit of a Fixer-Upper.” The villains in *Frozen* are willing to kill, but the main threat to the heroine’s life actually comes from the selfish actions of a sympathetic character – someone who loves her. This person, we are repeatedly and emphatically assured, would never harm her.

After the potentially fatal blow, the question emerges: how could this person possibly do this? The character held up as the voice of wisdom gives us the answer: because all people have that selfishness inside them, and under the right circumstances, it will surface. Even to the destruction of those we love most. This theme, of course, relates to the main message that love is not about feelings. We prioritize our own feelings rather than other people’s needs because other people are so disappointing. And our lives fall apart when we prioritize our own feelings because we are just as disappointing as everyone else.

We need each other

The other submerged theme in *Frozen*, one buried even deeper, is the tension between social rules and individual freedom. Without giving too much away, I can say that *Frozen* is the movie *Brave* was trying to be. Here’s what *Brave* attempted to say: society needs rules, and individuals who are not well served by the rules must learn to subordinate their own desires to the good of their neighbors as

embodied in the rules. At the same time, social authorities must recognize that the rules should accommodate the needs of individuals – including the needs of those unusual individuals not well served by the same rules that serve everyone else. There was internal conflict over *Brave* at Disney, and it shows. But *Frozen* succeeds brilliantly where *Brave* faltered – better, perhaps, than *Brave* could have. Because in *Frozen* we see what happens to individuals who try to flee from society in order to escape its rules. They fall apart. Their lives become arbitrary and meaningless. And they learn to hate. “The cold never bothered me anyway,” Queen Elsa sings as she builds an ice castle to live in, alone, at the top of a remote mountain. She doesn’t realize that the cold is seeping into her heart. We all need freedom, but we also need each other. See this movie.

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Focus on home

Harriet Haverland

Gleanings

BY THE GLEANINGS

TEAM:

Odette De Kock – Auckland
Presbytery

Yvonne Walraven – Wellington
Presbytery

Frances Watson – Christchurch
Presbytery

Collated and edited by **Harriet Haverland**

MINISTERS AND CHURCH WORKERS

The installation of **The Rev. Pieter van Hussteen** to serve as pastor in Wainuimata took place on Saturday 3rd May, at 11am. After this there was a fellowship lunch.

The Rev. Nathan Ketchen of Palmerston North received a call to a congregation that is part of the Communion of Reformed Churches in Colorado, USA, which he then visited in April of this year.

The Rev. John Haverland and **the Rev. Michael Willemse** have been in Geelong this week for our annual visit to the RTC. We've had a full and fruitful week sitting in on classes, visiting our students, meeting with faculty and also with the Australian deputies. In all of this we have been reminded again of the real blessing it is to have our own Theological College. The teaching staff are all top notch and our students receive a fine theological education at the RTC.

The Rev. Dirk van Garderen has returned home from three weeks in the Netherlands where he represented our churches at the synod of the RCN.

In a recent update from **Josh** and **Hannah Flinn**, they report that with mid-term exams just finished Josh now

has Spring Break. His subjects this term have been the Doctrine of God, Pastoral Counselling and Preaching. At the end of the term, he has a summer internship for nine weeks at Immanuel Covenant Reformed Church (part of the URC) in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada. They are looking forward to this. Hannah is investing in piano lessons and her mother is going to send her a copy of our new hymn book so she can be up to speed when they return. They are very thankful for our prayers. "We appreciate it so much and know that it has been a huge factor in the Lord really giving us ease in settling in to a new culture and life over here. Our thanks to you all for your support. It is much appreciated." Josh and Hannah. (North Shore bulletin)

Waldron Family: There will be a welcome event for the Waldrons on the evening of Saturday 12 April, at the Reformed Church of Bishopdale. This will involve a shared dinner and some other fun so please mark it in your calendars and plan to come. (Christchurch bulletin)

The Rev. John Zuidema has received a call from the Wellington congregation.

CHURCH BUILDINGS and ANNIVERSARIES

Oamaru 50th Anniversary: On August 23, 1964, the congregation of the Reformed Church of Dunedin – Oamaru group, held its first public worship service, led by The Rev. P H Pellicaan. We plan to remember that auspicious occasion and so give notice to all interested parties of this intention. Whilst the Reformed Church of Oamaru was instituted last August, it is unlikely that many, if any, of the founding members of our group from 1964 will be able to attend a 50th Anniversary in 2014.

Pukekohe Reformed Church will be celebrating 25 years as a congregation on Friday 6 June. The actual anniversary was 5 February but the celebration was delayed till the congregation had settled into their new building.

MISSIONS

The Solomons: During the first week of April, large parts of the Solomons were struck by a cyclone, fierce storms and unrelenting torrential rain for more than



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three days, causing the worst flooding in Honiara, the capital, for some time. The news concentrated graphically on houses washed off river banks, roads and bridges down or damaged, and the international airport not being able to operate. We did not however see the hundreds and hundreds of simple family homes ruined, vital subsistence gardens and soil washed away and essential pigs and chickens drowned. The Bethesda Training School for the Disabled at Henderson, where Susan Larsen is based, had to be evacuated as the facilities were at ground level for easy access by wheelchairs. The floods had washed away not only the beautiful vegetable gardens, prepared and planted by the students, but also the fences, posing a security problem with opportunistic looters about. Please pray for safety and strength for the disabled students, Susan Larsen and her ministry at the Bethesda Disability Training Centre, as well as the ministry of Jair and Laretta Duinkerke at SWIM, and all other staff and missionaries at Bethesda and SWIM as there is much work to be done following the heavy flooding.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH and EVANGELISM

Hamilton: Holiday Club is fast approaching being only five weeks away! The theme will be "Jesus is My Superhero".

We have had a great response so far from many people in the church offering their time to help out during the holiday club. However we still need more helpers and would ask that you prayerfully consider the opportunity to be involved in this outreach. Please speak with one of the organising committee members if you can help out. We will be doing a leaflet drop advertising the Holiday Club to the local community and would love to have some helpers so if you can assist please meet at church at 6.30pm. Please also remember this outreach in your prayers asking God that we may be faithful in bringing the gospel to the lost.

North Shore: Mainly Music – We had our first family night for 2014 on Sat-

urday, April 5th, with fun, food and socialising with people of the community.

Wellington: We are having a Church Open Day on Saturday 29th March! We'd love to show off the renovations and earthquake strengthening to the back of our building, so visit us between 10.30am and 2.30pm. Please come along and have a look, a tea or coffee, some free nibbles and BBQ, and activities and face painting for the kids. We'd love to see you there!

CAMPS and CONFERENCES

Queen's Birthday Camp (WRYC): Calling all youth! This is a sneaky reminder to let you know that QBC 2014

We give thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness towards our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

ADRIAAN & FEIKJE POSTHUMA

as they celebrate

60 Years of Marriage

10 April 1954 – 10 April 2014



Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Psalm 23:6

Frances and Derrick Watson

Joanna and Louis Couperus –
Joel, Caleb, Ephraim, Israel
Jonathan and Glenys –
Katie, Alana, Danielle
Melinda and Davy Kerkhoven –
Derek, Lilyana
Nathan and Tammy –
Adelaide

Tony and Robyn

Heidi and Abe Berkelaar
Anton and Michelle –
Austin, Madeline
Andre and Grace
Annelise and Nathan Borger

John and Marielle

Johanna and David Bilton –
Eliza, Michaela
Michael and Hannah – Keziah
Andrew
Alicia
Luke
Lydia
Owen
Frances
Joel
Isaac
Anton
Anneke
Ben

Rosalind and Derek Cressy

Benjamin and Cassandra
Nathanael and Adri – Kevin
Naomi
Othniel
Abigail and Manie Bruwer

Hillary and Diana

Simone and Ashley Clarkson
Gareth
Hayley
Jade

Winston and Kristina

James
Jeremy
Timothy
Christopher

Graham and Alice

Laura
Jessica
Jared

Raymond and Monique

Reuben
Juliette
Renee
Michaela
Eliza
Joseph

Back issues of Faith in Focus

can be found on the

RCNZ Home Page

<http://www.rcnz.org.nz>

is back and better than ever!

When: 30 May – 2 June 2014

Where: A fantastic new location! Wellesley park, Akatarawa

Minister: This year we are pleased to announce that the Rev. Kloosterman will be leading the camp studies.

More info to come, but lock those details into your calendars!

CLASSES and COURSES

Avondale: Gives thanks for the four people who had been attending the Christianity Explored outreach. Pray that those who attend may come to a greater

understanding of who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, and how they can know Him as their Saviour.

North Shore: Doctrine Review Class – I have had a good interest in this and we will begin this Tuesday, from 8-9pm. If anyone else would like to join, you are most welcome. Just let me know and I'll send you the material.

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

Avondale: Advanced notice – Please book in your calendars a congregation soup night hosted by the Cadet and GEMS – fundraising for National Camp in January 2015.

ACTIVITIES

Hamilton: Ladies Gathering – A small number of ladies meet once a month to encourage each other in their walk with the Lord, and they have started using the book *Respectable Sins* by Jerry Bridges.

The Thought of God – Maurice Roberts. Pg.121-122

There is among all sorts of persons a crying need to take a dose of moral courage. The need is not for more cleverness or more education, now for more analysis or more research into man's problems. It is for more straightforward speaking. It is for more openness. It is for more boldness to call things what they are and to set them in the light of God's Word. The man who will courageously refuse to play the popular game of deception is the man who will win the title of prophet to this generation.

This is what every pulpit should be doing. It is the glory of the pulpit that there a man speaks as the interpreter of heaven's mind, no matter what the world may say. Our people come to God's house weary. Their minds have been numbed by the secular argument which eliminates God and anaesthetizes moral judgement. When they come to the congregation, they thirst for renewed ethical and spiritual rearmament. The task of the pulpit is to sharpen blunted convictions in those who hear us and to renew their confidence in the things they have believed out of God's Word.



*"With great thankfulness to our Lord and Saviour
we are blessed to celebrate the*

60th Wedding Anniversary

of

WILLEM & LOUISE WEEDA

on 29th May 2014

Very much loved parents, grandparents and great grandparents of:

Gerri & Paul

Sarah

Jessica & Hayden

- Elliot, Rose, Tristan & Gryffen

Helen & Ed

Miriam & Aaron

- Erin, Judah, Katelyn & Helen

Matthew & Gemma

- Noah, Dominic & River
Tim & Elke

Diana & Gerald

Sam & Diana

Natasha & Simon

- Charlotte & Eva

Casey & Jeremy

- Madeline & Oliver

Tom

Raymond & Jeanette

Libby, Alex & Lewis

Coralie & Steve

Daniel & Stephanie

Ben

Stephanie

Caleb & Melissa

*My help comes from the
Lord, the maker of heaven
and earth"*

Psalm 121:2

Confessions of a Family Camp newby

So we're first time campers
Or, at least, haven't been for a while
Wasn't sure what to expect
Things haven't changed much in style.

So many new faces
So many new names
Kloeg, Voschezang, de Vries
Actually, it's just more of the same.

The day starts quite tasty
With breakfast at 8
Then finishes with a full tummy
And bed far, far too late.

We came along together
With four princesses in tow
Though after a terrible first night
We (I, Maria) was ready to go.

But each day things got better
The girls settled down
And we were no longer desperate
To head back to town.

The speakers were great
Though the sports mentioned were all
Ice hockey and cricket
Where was Australian football?

We tried the extreme sport
Of the river water slide
Even managed to do it
Without flashing my behind.

So much fun was had
Though some skin has been burned
Socks have been lost
Sleep has been spurned.

It's all part of the package
I was told with a smile
As we made yet another trip
To the lost property pile.

So we're experienced campers now
We know the ropes
The schedule, jobs, bells
And John's ridiculous jokes.

So will we be back?
Even tent it next time?
I don't like your chances
The cabin's just fine.

So thanks from us newbies
For the sacred welcome song
Next year we'll be the ones
Rapping along.

Family Camp 2013/14

For many years we have not been to the Reformed Church Family camp held in Finlay Park Cambridge, due to other commitments, but this year, two of our children and our grand-children "took us to camp".

Being in the "retired" age bracket, we requested a chalet for our sleeping arrangements – which was very comfortable and close to the Chapel.

The Rev. Peter Moelker led the morning studies on "Always Reforming" and the Rev. Andrew de Vries in the evening on "Justification by Faith". These studies were held in the Chapel. We began this time together with singing from the Song Book.

As part of being campers, this year I got up early to help prepare the vegetables and John attended the prayer meeting.

John was asked to lead a Choir and that was a real blessing to get together and sing in four-part harmony.

The facilities at Finlay Park have improved greatly over the years and there is plenty for the children to do; in a safe environment. The afternoons are free for fellowship, swimming and sports.

We were grateful for the kitchen staff, for their lovely meals, fresh bread and buns, homemade soups and baking.

Mr and Mrs Derek Cressy were very gracious and capable camp managers, with their assistants.

The banquet night was on Tuesday and the dining hall was beautifully decorated in medieval style. Many campers dressed up in costumes from that period.

On the final night of camp was the talent evening, when we could see comedy, tap dancing, the camp choir sang, the Kids' Club skit was performed for us and musical items.

We certainly encourage any grandparents who have not been to camp to consider going and share in this denominational event. This year was the 52nd camp. On a personal note, I (Maria) actually attended the first camp (as an 11 year old) in Matamata.

John & Maria Holtslag, Silverstream

Wellington Ladies Presbyterial

Why do we grumble and complain?
Do we not understand what we have gained?
Not by any merit of our own;
But through our Saviour now enthroned.
What about our daily bread?
Or the roof above our head?
Are these not also gifts from God?
He knows what's best for us in all.
Gratitude is what we need.
Let's see the blessings and not our dreams.
Sickness, death and financial woes;
These are burdens that sinners know.
Let's focus not on how we feel
But know God's love which He revealed.
Know his care for us each day;
While at work, at home or play;
Remember to thank the Lord always.
Showing gratitude in all we do and say.

The 42nd Wellington Ladies Presbytery took place on March 15, 2014 at the Masterton Reformed Church. There was an optional get-together on the Friday night, March 14th, for a wonderful dinner at Ten O'clock Cookie

continued on back page

Bakery and Cafe. This was attended by 30 ladies from many different churches. On Saturday the theme for the day was "Back to Basics". There were around 70 ladies present for the day. We started with morning tea and a time to greet and talk together. At 10am Elise Stolte started the meeting with a "get to know each other" game. This was met with lots of laughs. Then it was on to singing and devotions. The devotion was based on the book; "Choosing Gratitude – Your journey to Joy" by Nancy Leigh DeMoss. We need to grow in gratitude by seeing all that the Lord has done; especially in the basic things. Our speaker for the day was Carissa Fairbrother. She is a local financial advisor who shared with us some very practical and helpful hints on being wise with our finances. Much of what Carissa said was talked about over a lovely lunch. After lunch we had a collection for Bellyful. Bellyful is a charity that provides meals for women who have just given birth; many of whom do not have family to help out. This is a fantastic way to be a helping hand in our community. We then split up into three groups. Two groups enjoyed making simple crafts that can be used as gifts. This was one of the ideas brought by Carissa; make your gifts instead of buying something expensive. The third group watched our local baker, Nathaniel Cressy, make ciabatta bread. This was a big hit; especially because we got to taste samples. Afternoon tea was then served and many of the ladies stayed to talk and spend more time in fellowship. All in all it was a wonderful day.

