

faith in
focus

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Redeeming the time

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Editorial

In today's world, people don't talk about redeeming the time. Rather, they talk about managing the time. The catchword is "time management". Everyone seems to be so obsessed about time. You have probably heard someone utter the following: "there are not enough hours in the day", or "there are not enough days in the week". Really?

In our businesses, there are clocks and diaries on the walls, there are desks and computers, there are wall planners to manage all future plans, visits etc, and then there are those mobile devices that help to keep us on time. Just about anyone you come across has a diary or time management system on their mobile phone, iPad, iPod etc. We can be half-way to a meeting and take calls, emails or have our appointments updated for the day, while out of the workplace.

Gone are the simple days when we got up and retired with the rising and setting of the sun. Technologically we have advanced quite a bit, but we are no more in control of time than our forebears.

In His wisdom the LORD God created the universe and structured everything in it, bound by time, through days and nights, weeks, months, years, millenia and seasons, which would be for the ruling of the creation, mankind and history as we know it.

In Psalm 90:10,12, Moses muses about man's transitoriness, when he says: "As for the days or our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years"... "So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom." I think that pretty much sums up how we ought to view our days and time on this earth. It should be a good incentive for us to use our time wisely and not be distracted by trivial pursuits – of which there seems to be an abundance, with social media, the internet etc.

Our contributors look at redeeming the time from a couple of different but very helpful angles. I hope you find their contributions valuable.

Mr David Waldron considers a wise use of time.

Mrs Esther Smith examines the wise woman who builds her house.

Mr John van Dyk weighs up what to do next.

Mrs Sally Davey looks at sharing the gospel with "the nations" in our midst.

Mrs Jenny Waldron explores spiritual fitness.

Crossroads Bible Institute keep us up to date through their newsletter.

Mr Johan Tangelder, laments the erosion of civility.

Mr Richard Eikelboom reflects on parents and their misplaced guilt.

Mr Albert Couperus provides us with an overview of his time at Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

On page 12 and 13 of this issue, are some photos from events that happened recently in Pukekohe. If you would like to have your church event published in pictorial form, send your pictures to: fnf@rcnz.org.nz

See page 12 for details of image requirements.

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.

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Redeeming the time

David Waldron

Our family recently purchased the popular game “Settlers of Catan”. I find playing “Settlers” a particularly humbling experience because I am routinely beaten by my younger sons. I console myself with the fact that I am ‘merely inexperienced’. I tended in the past to avoid playing card or board games, believing that I could be doing something more productive with the time. However, I’ve come to see the value of relational time with the family around a game and the joy I bring them when they whip me (again)!

As many who have played “Settlers” will know, the object of this board game is to build roads, dwellings and cities on the imaginary island of Catan using five commodities: brick, wood, wheat, sheep and stone. At early stages of play, brick and wood are particularly important for road building, later stone becomes more sought-after for erecting cities. Trading these products reflects the basic economics of supply and demand; the rarer the commodity, the higher the value.

The purpose of this article is to highlight the value of time. Anyone of us can potentially make innumerable bricks, plant forests for timber supply, grow wheat in huge paddocks, graze sheep on a thousand hills or quarry stone deep into the mountain sides. However time is a ‘commodity’ which, for absolutely all of us in this life, is strictly finite and in limited supply. You and I will not live on this earth one more or one less day, hour, or second than God has determined¹.

Understanding the nature of time, the foolishness of wasting this valuable gift and the importance of making the best use of time will help to “teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom”².

The Nature of Time

Time is a created element, woven into the fabric of the universe. ‘Before’ the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth there was no space and no time, only God Himself. He is eternal in His essence, ‘from everlasting to everlasting’³, without beginning or end. He alone is the Creator of time and

sovereign Lord over all events, past, present and future. The Bible is God’s progressive revelation of Himself in the context of advancing time. It is not surprising therefore to find that references to timeframes and dates abound in the Scriptures. The Hebrew term for ‘day’ {yom} is the 5th most frequently used word in the Old Testament, the majority of which covers the unfolding history of God’s faithful dealings with his covenant people, Israel, through repeated cycles of their rebellion and restoration.

The historical events of the Bible all lead to a special moment. When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman”⁴. Then God Himself, in the person of His Son, took on human flesh. In his humanity Jesus Christ became subject to time⁵; growing progressively from a baby to a man⁶. His daily desire was to use the limited time he had on this earth to do his Father’s will⁷.

Fellow Christian, Jesus Christ never wasted a moment to secure your salvation. As children of God we are all called to express our thankfulness to God by imitating His wise use of time by being good stewards of this precious gift⁸. We are not to dishonor our Lord by wasting the time which He has graciously given to us.

Wasting time

Time only moves in one direction. When the clock strikes at midnight tonight, you will have spent exactly 86,000 seconds today. Tomorrow, by God’s grace, if your allotted time is not yet up, then you will have yet another 86,000 valuable seconds. If the Lord keeps you in your body for all of 2015 you will have used up 31,536,000 seconds this year. That’s a similar number to the population of buffalo before settlers armed with guns started hunting these majestic animals of the plains, not of Catan, but of North America.

In 45 years (from 1840 to 1885) the huge buffalo herds had been destroyed with the numbers declining from millions to barely nothing. Why was such a staggering loss not prevented? At least in part because the hunters just thought that there was an endless supply of buffalo.

“This world is not a place to idle away the hours in front of a T.V. screen, to expend large amounts of precious time each day on Facebook, Trade me, You tube, Snapchat, trivial texting or a myriad of games loaded onto your phone, tablet or laptop.”

We could say the same of whales in the expansive oceans or mighty trees in the vast Amazon basin. Sometimes it is only when a resource is much depleted that it’s value is realized.

For those of us who are over the half-way mark in life’s years, we tend to see more vividly that time is reducing. In our 40s-50s we may be shocked by the death of contemporaries, perhaps to cancer or heart attack. In our 60-70s and beyond our circle of similar-aged friends begins



to diminish. We often value time more than we had in the past. We may regret time wasted on trivial pursuits (excuse the inadvertent reference to another board game!).

Younger readers, you may well think that you have lots of time. Having the precious resource of time replenished at the rate of 86,000 seconds per day may fool you into thinking you have access to an endless supply; like a mid-19th century buffalo hunter. But be careful lest valuable time slip through your fingers like sand in an hour glass. Take the counsel of wise Solomon and ‘Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”⁹.

Time is the most valuable commodity you are given, the most precious resource you possess. That is why God’s people are called in His Word, in the light of the gospel, to “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil”¹⁰.

The late John Lennon encouraged the world to believe that the best is yet to come on this earth if only we “imagine no heaven, no hell below us, imagine all the people, living for today, no religion, all the people living life in peace”. This is not wisdom, but dangerous folly. The days are evil and there is a heaven and a hell. This world is the seat of conflict between two mighty, but unequal, spiritual powers. The cosmos is under the influence of forces which are hostile to God and in opposition to the kingdom of Christ¹¹. Peace will not come until the return of the King.

This world is therefore not, for the Christian, an ‘amusement park’ in which to waste time. It is not a place to idle away the hours in front of a T.V. screen, to expend large amounts of precious time each day on Facebook, Trade me, You tube, Snapchat, trivial texting or a myriad of games loaded onto your phone, tablet or laptop. This world is not a place for those who are children of the King to fritter away precious days, hours, minutes, and seconds.

However a wise balance of labour and rest is to be maintained. There is a time to work and a time to enjoy not working, a time even to play board games! In his act of creation, God gave mankind a model for weekly activity and resting¹². Work without rest is idolatry, more commonly called “workaholism”, where precious rest-time is wasted. Rest without work is laziness where precious labour-time is squandered¹³. Time is also dissipated through worldly pursuits where the emphasis is on laying up treasures on earth rather than in heaven. The rich farmer/barn-builder in Luke 12¹⁴, though a busy industrious man, was a time waster.

We all find time for the things and for the people who are most important to us. Your priorities will determine the use of your time. Jesus expressed this principle when he said “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”¹⁵. The world, at this stage in history, is a place in which we are called by Christ to “make the best use of the time”. Literally to ‘buy back’ or ‘redeem’ the time.

Making the best use of time

Jonathan Edwards, 18th century American preacher of the memorable sermon

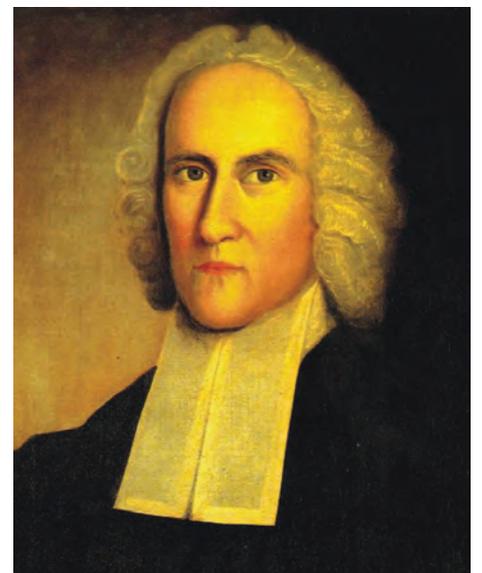
“sinners in the hands of an angry God”, was a busy man, being the husband of but one wife, and the father of 11 children. The results of his diligent labours under God’s grace are evident in his many published sermons and his extensive writings. These include a list of resolutions, two of which express his prayer that God would “stamp eternity on my eyeballs”.

Edwards resolved “never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can”. He desired to invest the precious time granted to him for the kingdom of God. He resolved “never to do anything that I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life”. Constantly focusing his thoughts upon the last hour of his life brought clarity as to what was most important to him each day.

If you only had one hour to live. How would you spend that last hour? Think about that for a moment. Would you squander it? Surely not, you would want to use that precious commodity wisely during those final 60 minutes. You would want to redeem the time by not allowing the urgent to constantly take precedence over the important. By considering how he would manage his time during his last hour on this earth, Edwards was able, every day, to better redeem the time gifted to him as he was busy about the Lord’s work during his life.

Jonathan Edwards died suddenly and unexpectedly at age 54. He had complications from a smallpox inoculation. You and I will also run out of time one day; it may come as a sudden surprise. The hourglass will be empty for each one of us at that moment.

When you come to the end of your



Jonathan Edwards

life, will you be able to say “I have sought to maximize my time for the glory of God”? “I was given many gifts, by my heavenly Father. I had stewardship over a variety of commodities (not in imaginary Catan, but on real earth). Yet more valuable than building materials or food, more precious than gold or silver, was the time allotted to me. I have been careful how I lived, not as unwise, but as wise. I have made the most of every opportunity, because I knew that the days were evil”.

My prayer for you, dear reader, is that

you will live your life in the wisdom of Christ, redeeming the time, and that you will enter into glory hearing the gracious words of our Saviour ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’¹⁶

Notes

- 1 Job 14:15; Psalm 139:16
- 2 Ps 90:12
- 3 1 Chron 16:36, 29:10; Neh 9:5; Ps 41:13, 90:2, 103:17, 106:48
- 4 Gal 4:4
- 5 Phil 2:7

- 6 Luke 2:52
- 7 John 4:34
- 8 Eph 5:1; 15-17
- 9 Eccl 12:1
- 10 Eph 5:15-16
- 11 Eph 6:12
- 12 Exo 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15
- 13 Prov 19:15; 18:9
- 14 Luke 12:16-21
- 15 Mat 6:21
- 16 Mat 25:21

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Redeeming the time (2)

The wise woman builds her house ... Time management as a homemaker

Esther Smith

“The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.”
(Proverbs 14:1).

For many years I have found this proverb very sobering ... and helpful. I ask myself “what am I doing to my home¹, building it up or tearing it down?” I could be questioning my words to my husband or children at the time, or it could be the activity I am undertaking. I could be reflecting on the day’s work; constructive or destructive? What am I doing with the days God has given me? Am I being a wise woman with this precious time and this excellent, God-honouring task of building a home?

As I write that I feel palpable panic! How many of us can answer that with a resounding “yes!”? I feel urgency. I would that all wives, mothers, homemakers could be asked to write this article for themselves so they would be impacted and challenged as I have been. But I am writing it. Praise and thanks be to God for his goodness. Now, if I can only just convey to you such a feeling of importance, urgency, and encouragement ...

It is not my intention to outline long

lists of methods for organising your house and life. I will give a small amount of practical guidance. For the rest, I suggest you ask an older woman who has had many years of practise. This, after all, is their explicit God-given role. Please don’t be afraid to ask for help. Why would God in his *perfect fatherly wisdom* specifically require that the “*older women train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands*” (Titus 2:4) if he wanted the younger women just to learn all this for themselves in isolation?

More important to begin with than step-by-step cleaning schedules is surely our attitude towards the time we have. The focus of this article will therefore be on managing our time to build our home with prayerfulness, thankfulness, and diligence.

Prayerfulness

“Martha, Martha, [...] you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:41-42).

I have a war between my Martha

and my Mary. My Martha has all the big guns after years of being bolstered. When my Martha tells my Mary to get in the kitchen my Mary does it automatically and fearfully lest there’s an escalation. In fact, when my Mary is managing to have some time at the Lord’s feet there are constant shots being fired by my Martha from every corner of the house, interrupting every sentence read and prayer uttered. I’ve got to get my Martha subdued because my Mary is the one who needs to be in control.

Elizabeth George² puts it this way: Mary *discerned* the one thing needed and *chose* the one thing needed. “[Mary] had learned that nothing can take the place of time in God’s presence. Indeed, time spent sitting at His feet fuels and focuses all acts of service. And, as her Master noted, time spent hearing and worshipping God can never be taken away, for it is time spent in eternal pursuits, time that earns permanent and everlasting dividends.”

Mary had her priorities right. Her first priority was the Lord, and he is our first priority. Time spent in prayer and meditation over God’s Word is our only sure source of strength and encouragement for each day. We too often con-

“We need to be vigilant about each day, each moment, and enjoy them with thankfulness. Don’t let those things that appear urgent overrule those things you have prayerfully set apart in your heart and mind as the most important.”

sider this time negotiable as the more pressing voices and tasks overcome our resolve. But it is NOT NEGOTIABLE (!), FOR ANYONE (!), let alone us who are tasked with precious bodies and minds to nurture. By ignoring the call to daily prayer and meditation we make ourselves like trees planted in the desert. We are supposed to give shade and fruit to those who need it but we are withered and non-yielding with barely the energy to stay alive. But what a wondrous image in the very first Psalm of he (she!) who meditates on God’s law day and night: “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” (Psalm 1:3). All my exclamation marks and feeble ex-

planations can add nothing to the Word of Almighty God who says “if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.” (John 7:37b).

So let’s take some steps. First of all, since we’ve already begun talking about priorities let’s make the important step of defining them for a homemaker. Elizabeth George is helpful here again: defining our priorities according to God’s Word guides us “when the tyranny of the urgent beats on my door, trying to shove aside the very few really important tasks in my life – my grand duties and my chief works of:

- Loving God and following after Him with a whole heart;
- Loving, helping, and serving my husband;
- Loving, teaching, and disciplining my [children];
- Loving and caring for a home in order to provide a quality life for my family;
- Developing myself so that I have something to give to others; and
- Loving and serving God’s people.

Practicing these priorities calls us to wear many hats, and we must wear all of them – but we can only wear one at a time! Knowing what your priorities are – and choosing to wear the right hat at the right time – keeps you fully focussed on the most important thing at hand at any given minute.”³

Whether you agree with the above list on first reading or not I would encourage you to prayerfully consider what God’s priorities are for you and once that is done to pray each day for God’s guidance for each of these priorities and the plans you have made. We can conduct ourselves in such an independent way that we forget that “in his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). Our attitude of prayerfulness doesn’t end with our “planning prayer”; it is to continue throughout the day with thankfulness: “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” (Philippians 4:6).

Thankfulness

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:17).

Thankfulness is an amazing tool, an incredible weapon against time-wasting. Thankfulness allows us to commune with God throughout the day as we acknowl-

edge him as the giver of all things for our good. As we go about the sometimes mundane, sometimes downright trying days of being a homemaker, thankfulness creates contentment: contentment that we can have such an excellent opportunity to serve others in such a clear-cut and practical way. Rachel Jankovic writes of the “discipleship of the mundane”: “Christian women who seek to honour God as they work through the mundane, repetitive tasks that are given to them will be used for bigger things. We will not be mothers of little children forever. Lord willing, our work will grow with our children. Our challenges will change. Be a faithful student. God is not training you for no reason. Practice. Practice. Practice. But Practice with thanksgiving. Practice with joy. Practice with gratitude. Practice with hope.”⁴ Ann Voskamp eloquently describes the effect of thankfulness: “I am a mother-tired, but when my soul doth magnify, my time doth magnify ... I redeem time from neglect and apathy and inattentiveness when I swell with thanks and weigh the moment down and it’s giving thanks to God for this moment that multiplies the moments, time made enough.”⁵

As we go through our day, thankfulness can be a useful test. We can be thankful for time spent with a friend, being able to cook good food for our family, a cup of tea after the housework, a walk in the sunshine, all things which fit into our priorities. But what about that romance novel that makes us feel discontented with our husband? Or that television series that we can’t miss even though it means the children’s lunches are never made the night before and there is always a flustered mum in the morning trying to get them done? Can we be thankful to God for these moments? As we walk in the full knowledge of the omnipresence and omniscience of God it becomes very clear what are not his gifts, but are instead a skulking into worldliness and sinfulness on our part. We must be diligent to weed out soul-sapping “time bandits”⁶.

Diligence

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:7-9).



This is another very sobering verse, a verse that calls us to diligence, to make sure the seeds we are sowing are pleasing to God. How can we be diligent with the time we have as a homemaker? By being in the now, and by being vigilant about activities that steal our day from us.

"Wherever you are, be all there. Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God".⁷ Do you believe your job as a homemaker is the will of God for you? Then be all there and live it to the hilt. Serve the Lord, serve your husband, serve your children, make your home, better yourself, minister to others with conscious passion and commitment. Edith Schaeffer tells us "it is important to consider – as your children play, fight, or squabble, and you sigh, wish for ten years to pass, look at the clock and wish it was night, or lie in bed wishing the day to pass because you have the flu – [...] the danger to wasting the "now", or of considering that everything is going to be static, with no future!"⁸ She goes on to outline what she would tell her children, and we would do well to pay attention for both ourselves and our offspring: "Don't waste this hour. Don't waste today. Stop fighting for a minute and just think! You are getting older every day, and you won't be four, with an eight-year-old sister and a tiny baby sister for very long. Think hard – what can you do now in this combination that you can't do in ten years, in five years, even next year? Then do it!"⁹ What can you do now? What should you do now that you won't be able to do in the future? What are you doing now that you know you will want to undo in the future!?"

What is stopping us from living our situation to the hilt? The "time bandits", as Elizabeth George calls them: procrastination, general laziness, poor planning and scheduling, poor delegation, poor use of media (internet, telephone, television, books, magazines, newspapers), priorities out of whack.¹⁰ We all claim to be busy, but *"busy-ness is not an indicator of effectiveness. If you and I are busy doing the wrong things, then we are being robbed of time that could be better spent on the things that truly count – our God-given priorities."*¹¹ We need to be vigilant about each day, each moment, and enjoy them with thankfulness. Don't let those things that appear urgent overrule those things you have prayerfully set apart in your heart and mind as the most important. For example, don't let the telephone interrupt your special time with your child. You can still be all things to all people, but obviously not all at the same time. It is okay to let them leave a message and call them back later.

Build your house

"The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." (Proverbs 14:1).

Considering this proverb again, maybe we now have a framework of time-management attitudes with which to build our home. We lay our plans before the Lord for each day, asking him to guide our paths. We continue by giving thanks to the Lord throughout the day for his good gifts, allowing us to assess what his best for us is at any time. We diligently remove the activities that we know are not his will and replace them

with solid actions of service and love to him, our family, and others. And we are "all there" when it comes to loving and living each moment he gives us carrying out his will in our life.

Notes

- 1 When I use the word "home" I refer to both the physical location and the people within it – my family. In the Hebrew there is no separate word for house and home.
- 2 George, E. *A Woman After God's Own Heart* (Harvest House, 1997) pp 15-16.
- 3 George, E. *A Woman After God's Own Heart* (Harvest House, 1997), pp. 218-219.
- 4 R. Jankovic, *Fit To Burst: Abundance, Mayhem, and the Joys of Motherhood*, Canon Press, 2013, p 43.
- 5 A. Voskamp, *One Thousand Gifts*, Zondervan, 2010, p 72.
- 6 E. George, *Life Management for Busy Women*, Harvest House, 2002.
- 7 Elizabeth Elliot quoting Jim Elliot's diary. E. Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendour*, Authentic Media, 2005, p 10.
- 8 E. Schaeffer, *What Is a Family?*, Baker Book House, 1975, p 212.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 George, E. (2002) "Life Management for Busy Women", Harvest House.
- 11 Ibid. p 237.

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A TESTIMONY

Grant me, O God, to care
for those You place around me,
For to that end I share
the love of Christ that found me!

So grant me words to speak
in every situation,
that those who hear may seek
and start a celebration.

For knowing You brings joy,
creating true fulfilment,
which drives us to employ
the grace that is so brilliant.

And so, in glad refrain
may lives renewed, contented
in You, with strength remain:
In glory be presented!

*John Goris
Wellington, 14.05.14*

What in the church should I do next?

John van Dyk

It was after a session meeting late on a Friday night that I along with two other elders were walking to the street when we noticed that the car belonging to one of them had sustained a flat tyre. Before I could put down my laptop bag, take off my jacket, loosen my tie, roll up my sleeves and call an impromptu meeting as to how we would deal with the situation the other two had set to work. One man was cranking a jack handle as if his life depended on it while the other had the spare tyre out of its compartment and was manfully levering a wheel brace. Now, never let it be said that John van Dyk doesn't do his bit, oh no. "We three are a team," I thought to myself. "There must be something I can do that shows my energetic commitment to my fellow elder's moment of need." And so there was. While the car

was raised and lowered, and the wheel replaced, I stood and held the torch.

There is something instructive about service in church life in this faintly bizarre episode. Even though we might feel as though we have more to offer, whether in terms of effort or expertise, such responsibilities may not as yet have been asked of us. We need to be content for the current season with the roles we have been assigned.

I want to consider how we might go about prioritising our time among the many (and often competing) opportunities for service we have in church life. But first of all a few caveats.

Things to guard against

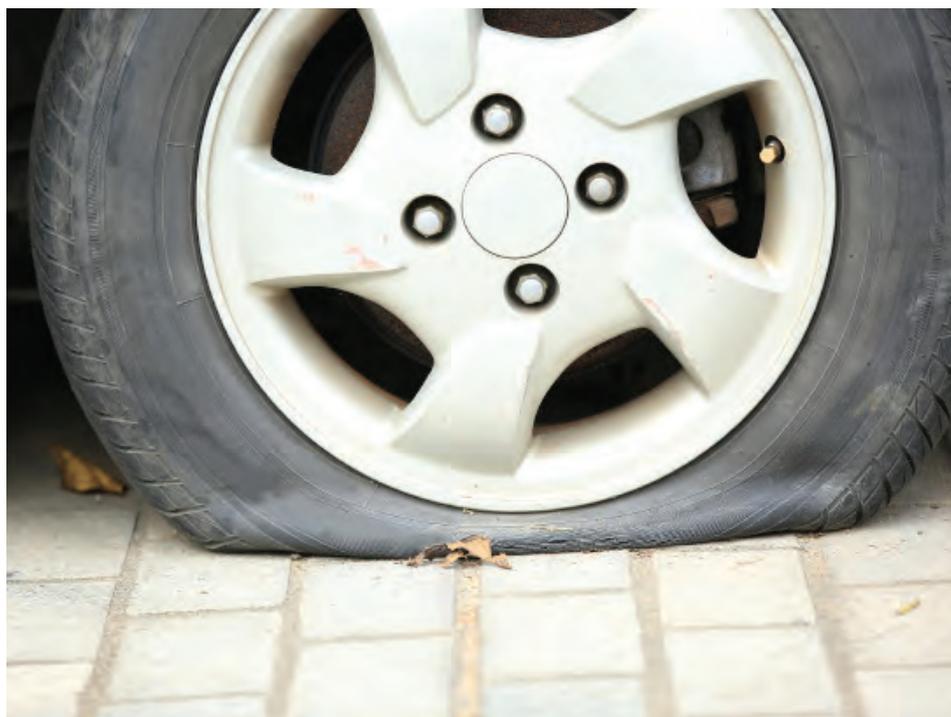
For some readers this question will be purely academic. For them there is no quandary over prioritising time among opportunities for service in church life. Their involvement begins and ends with

Sunday worship. Now it is absolutely true that we serve Christ as we deal graciously with, and witness to, and help those with whom we come into contact; and we also serve Christ as we go about our daily vocations; but we are also unequivocally called to participate in and contribute to the body of Christ, which is the church. God has placed a great variety of people in the church, people with many and varied talents. Not only is the church greatly blessed when all the available talents are exercised for her benefit, but also the individuals profit as the work they do tends to have a sanctifying effect in their own lives.

Yet there is a flip side to this. While Christ can be richly served though service in the church, it is also possible that such service, when done for wrong motives, is not service to Christ at all. It is all too easy to become faithful churchmen or churchwomen, but hardly faithful Christians, if Christ is not in view as we go about our work. If, for example, we seek praise or admiration for our work, or fall into mechanical routines, or slip into a view of the church as a human institution then our work tends towards being self-serving rather than Christ-serving. In our service in the church, as much as anywhere else in life, we need to heed the words of the writer to the Hebrews and "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (12:2-3).

Greater and lesser gifts

As we consider the ways in which we might like to serve the church there are a number of factors that need to be taken into account. We need to consider the gifts with which the Lord has blessed us. 1 Corinthians 12 teaches us



“We need to find a balance between competing responsibilities remembering also the importance of maintaining our spiritual well-being, and also have adequate time for rest and recreation.”

about gifts. Some of the gifts listed were temporary ‘sign’ gifts confirming the authority of the apostles during the time of the early church; the other kinds of gifts continue to be bestowed on church members even today. Note what is said in verse 31: “but eagerly desire the greater gifts.” And, just in case we’re unsure as to what is meant by “greater gifts”, we read in 14:12, “Try to excel in gifts that build up the church.”

This theme has been developed by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne in their book, *The Trellis and the Vine*. The administrative and organisational functions are likened to a trellis, while the work done in fulfilment of the Great Commission is likened to a vine. Their observation is that trellis work tends to take over vine work. “Perhaps it’s because trellis work is easier and less personally threatening” they say. “Vine work is personal and requires much prayer. It requires us to depend on God, and to open our mouths and speak God’s word in some way to another person.”

“Trellis work also often looks more impressive than vine work. It’s more visible and structural. We can point to something tangible—a committee, an event, a program, a budget, an infrastructure—and say that we have achieved something. We can build our trellis till it reaches to the heavens, in the hope of making a name for ourselves, but there may still be very little growth in the vine.”¹

So what are our areas of strength? Anna works as an accounting technician and is known for her sympathetic ear and kind words of encouragement. Jim works in the construction industry and has a fearsome command of Scripture and bursts to share the joy he has in Christ. All of these skills and attributes can be used in the life of the church, but it’s easy to see that for each of these individuals the latter capabilities are those that will build up the church the most. Individuals, families and sessions will do well to make the ‘building up’ gifts the first priority for service.

Sometimes we will need to trust the judgement of others in identifying our gifts. We may not think we are cut out for tasks that we see as requiring particular wisdom or sensitivity, but others, especially those who have had greater experience, may discern hidden or emerging gifts that we ourselves are not yet aware of.

There is a corresponding responsibility on those making appointments to exercise careful judgement. For example, does the person being considered as a Cadet or Gems counsellor have a love for children (besides their own), are they able to teach the Word of God as well as bushcraft and handicraft, and are they able to engage with their charges on a spiritual level?

It may seem obvious, but we should also prioritise our time to the areas of greatest need. If your church needs a webmaster and you have skills in that area, then offer to maintain the website. You might love to do gardening, but if your church already has three gardeners the offer of a fourth isn’t going to fill the greatest need.

Informal service

A common misunderstanding about service in church life is that such service must be performed as the result of a formal appointment. However, it’s not only Sunday School teachers, committee members, church treasurers and librarians that serve. Service can and should

be rendered simply by members taking their own initiative. Examples could be visiting the ones who most need to be encouraged, taking an interest in those outside one’s usual circle of friends, showing hospitality, giving practical help where there is a need.

So the frustrated gardener, whose erstwhile only creative outlet was web-pages, can easily exercise their green fingers in the service of the church by sharing their gift with others. Ask the elderly member, the invalid, the struggling family if they could use your help. And take the time to have a cup of tea with them afterwards. The benefits to the health of the body from work such as this are immense.

Perhaps the greatest service of all, and the one to which we should all be heartily committed, is actively upholding our fellow church members and the ministries of the church in prayer.

The right balance

Finally a word of warning. We cannot spend every waking hour in service, whether that is service to the church, or employer, or business or family. We need to find a balance between these competing responsibilities remembering also the importance of maintaining our spiritual well-being, and also have adequate time for rest and recreation. If we have so many church responsibilities that it becomes impossible to properly prioritise them, and that they begin to impinge on other responsibilities, then it is time to reassess our commitments. It is quite in order to refuse an appointment or relinquish a task in such circumstances. The Lord will answer the prayers of his people with regard to getting the work done in his church.

Ours is an age where personal pleasure has become a god to many and there is a great temptation to treat every non-work hour as our own. Yet we know that ultimately we will be called to account for the stewardship we have exercised over our time. Let us be found to have been good stewards, rendering faithful service to the kingdom of God in our vocations, family life and leisure time, as well as service in the church.

Notes

¹ Colin Marshall & Tony Payne: *The Trellis and the Vine: The ministry mind-shift that changes everything*, 2009, pp. 9–10

Mr John van Dyk is a member of the Reformed Church of Dunedin.

The nations are next door

People are on the move. While migration has always been a feature of human life, it seems as if there has never been a time when more people have been moving in more directions and in such large numbers. Perhaps we are particularly conscious of it in western countries, where immigration can become a sensitive question: too many people arriving in too short a time can create social and cultural problems. What if the newcomers don't settle in, become alienated, are slow to integrate? Sometimes our consciousness of problems like these can blind us to the fact that large-scale movements of people have always been happening. It's always good to remember, too, that immigration has driven the dynamism of many a modern nation.

“God has been moving people around since the beginning. He has used exodus, war, famine, exile and many other means to further his kingdom, as the Scriptures tell us.”

War, famine, poverty, and the search for a better, safer life and a future for one's children have always motivated families to leave their homes and travel around the world. But by anyone's perception, migration today is huge. The total number of international migrants in 2010 alone was expected to reach 214 million – or around 3% of the world's population. In the 20 years from 1990 to 2010, the more developed regions of the world were expected to gain 45 million international migrants, an increase of 55%. Furthermore (getting closer to home), the increase of migrant populations between 2000-2010 was expected to be highest in North America (24%), Europe (21%), and Oceania (that's us – 20%).¹ While all regions of the world are experiencing immigration, the world is certainly coming here, too.

With all these people swirling around from every country to every country, it would be tempting to think it was a completely random process. Is it simply an accident that you and I happen to live in New Zealand in 2015? Did my great-great grandparents just wash up on these shores like so much flotsam – when, equally plausibly – they could have ended up in Canada or South Africa or, like their siblings and cousins, stayed where they had grown up in England? Was it by chance that your Dutch parents came to New Zealand, or that you, a South African, arrived here in the 1990s?

No, there was divine purpose in each one of us being here. Paul made this clear to his Athenian audience when he was introducing them to the most basic truths about God. The great Creator of the universe “made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods [when they should live] and the boundaries of their dwelling place” (Acts 17:26). This is a remarkable fact! God has ordained where and when each one of us should live. It is no accident – there is a purpose in it. Paul goes on

to explain the purpose – it is so “that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.” (Acts 17:27). This purpose is the furtherance of God's kingdom; something to remember as we respond to the “nations” who live in our suburb, our street – or maybe right next door.

God has been moving people around since the beginning. He has used exodus, war, famine, exile and many other means to further his kingdom, as the Scripture narrative tells us. He has also used them to bring the gospel to the nations surrounding Israel. Gentiles, we know, were always meant to be included by faith in the family of God. God told Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” In Psalm 22:27 David wrote: “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.” Isaiah spoke often of the belief of the Gentiles as well. Until Pentecost only a trickle of Gentiles joined themselves to the people of God. In Acts Chapter 2, though, we begin to see the marvellous outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who would be given to Gentiles so that they would repent and believe in the Lord Jesus in ever-increasing numbers. As the first and second centuries wore on, the gospel went out to all the Gentile nations in the Mediterranean world and even further beyond; God using the peace imposed by the great Roman Empire to facilitate the travels of the apostles and their missionary successors.

God is able to use remarkable ways to extend the gospel. In the fifth century A.D. things looked bad for Rome when the empire was invaded by the German tribes. The most important tribe, the Goths, took the province of Dacia (present-day Romania) and forced the Romans out. But in doing so, the Visigoths (western Goths), were introduced to the Christian faith by their Roman prisoners; and they then spread the faith

(albeit in Arian heretical form) to the other German tribes on the borders of the empire. What had been a disaster for Rome turned into the conversion of her enemies.

Time and again in the centuries following, God used wars, invasions, the marriage alliances of kings and the travels of Celtic missionaries from Britain in the seventh century, to take the gospel all over Europe. The Christian church endured and spread; and the migrations of many people were an important part of this.

At the time of the Reformation persecution caused Protestants who would not submit to Rome to flee for Geneva, where they were instructed in the Scriptures by Calvin and other teachers. Returning home, these refugees led their own national churches back to the Word of God.

Around the same time, technological developments in sailing and navigation made sea travel to other continents and islands possible; and soon exploration and, later, colonisation, meant western Europeans were migrating to the Americas and beyond. Those who were Christians took the Scriptures with them and established churches; and many more hitherto unreached peoples, such as native Americans, Asians, Africans and Pacific Islanders were being exposed to the gospel.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the New World, of which we are generally considered a part, together with the Americas, has received millions of migrants from the "Old World" (Europe); and more recently, from other parts of the world wherever there are troubles or hardships. In part this has been due to our need for manpower. But it has also been out of generosity to those suffering pogroms in Eastern Europe, or the "Killing Fields" of Cambodia, or ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia. The Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour has long been the symbol of welcome to refugees arriving in the U.S. from Europe. Inscribed on its pedestal are these words written by poet, Emma Lazarus, in 1883:

*"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to
breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming
shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-
tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden
door!"*

Nations where the gospel has flourished have usually been kind to refugees.

What all these movements of peoples mean is that "the nations", to use a common Old Testament term, are living among us. While we still need to send missionaries to other countries, we also have unprecedented opportunities to bring the gospel to those who don't know Christ, right here, next door. This is often quite literally true – immigrant families are living in the same residential streets and apartment buildings as many of us. We ourselves, farmers in Canterbury, share the same road with overseas farm workers. We have many



God-given opportunities to bring the gospel to the nations.

How do such opportunities become reality? Some of us know refugees, those who have come here because of war or personal danger. Over the years such families have come from Cambodia, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, among other countries. Families in this situation have been through traumatic experiences. They often have little in the way of family, friends or personal possessions. Their command of English may be slight. There are lots of ways we can help provide friendship, practical help and encouragement. How to get started with finding a job, enrolling in schools, going shopping, navigating the medical system or learning to drive well enough to pass the driving test are things kind Christian friends can do well. Your children can be so helpful in including their children in their lives. Immigrant children

generally learn English much quicker than their parents do; and in many ways they provide a bridge between the new culture and their parents – your children can help in this.

Many of the newcomers are here on student visas – not all are young and single, but a big portion are. Their situation is often a lonely one, living in a hall of residence at a university, or in a flat where (these days) flatmates live as isolated units, seldom cooking or eating or even talking together. They miss their families, have hardly anyone to talk to if something goes badly wrong, and find themselves worrying on their

own. What an opportunity for you and your church! Encourage your student members to find them at the university, and bring them along. Take these students into your homes, include them in your family lives, and help them with all the puzzling day to day practicalities their culture did not prepare them for here. You will often find that when they Skype or email their families at home they will be relaying what you've been telling them about Christ. It is remarkable what God uses!

Many of these people are much more "religious" than we are in New Zealand. They come from cultures that might be Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim or Hindu; and while they may not be committed adherents themselves, they will at least be used to religion and religious institutions being a respected part of

continued on p14 ♣



Triple blessings in Pukekohe

*On Sunday 8th of March three couples had their third child baptised.
(left to right) Nathan and Lydia Walraven (daughter Shiloh); Louise and Jeremy Posthuma (son Marcus); Pieter and Odette De Kock (daughter Leah).
Officiating Minister: Rev John A Haverland*

Want to have a spot on this page?

Have you had an event that you would like recorded and published in pictorial form? Why not send in your photos and share your event. Please make sure that all digital images are high quality and a minimum width of 190mm. Images that come from cellphones won't be printed unless they produce images that are a minimum of 8megapixels or more. Here is a valuable tip – set your camera to its highest setting.

And to record your event, make sure that you send a short description of the image(s).



Fishing competition in Pukekohe

For the last three years, members of the Reformed Church of Pukekohe have competed in a fishing competition. By all accounts, it has been a very successful event with many competing for this now, annual event. All the competitors have night and day to fish. At the conclusion of the day there is a weigh-in and prizegiving at the church, followed by a bbq. It is a day (night 'n' day?) of great fishing and fun!

(above) All the participants in the Pukekohe Reformed Church's Fishing Competition. Winner of best fisherman this year was, Mr Wynand Breytenbach (left).



life. We find that many are much more willing to talk about spiritual matters, even in a heart-related way, than the average Kiwi. Many immigrants have known genuine hardship or suffering at the hands of others, and because of that they will talk about the evil of the human heart, the judgment to come and the life hereafter in a much more open way than we are used to. I have noticed that the longer immigrants are here and the easier their life becomes, the less interested they grow in talking

about matters of the faith. It seems to me that we should talk while people are more open to eternal truths; and before their comfort levels lead them to forget God.

It's an exciting time, when you realise that God has brought the nations to us. Some of them are peoples whose governments refuse to allow Christians to speak about Christ to them. And here they are, living in our neighbourhoods, shopping in our supermarkets and sitting in our school classrooms alongside our

children. Imagine: that Iranian engineering student you met in the lab could be in heaven one day with you. That Uzbek boy learning to speak with a Kiwi accent as he plays with your son in kindergarten may be one of those "born there" in the heavenly Zion (Psalm 87:4). Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a part in bringing them there?

Notes

1 J. D. Payne, *Strangers Next Door* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2012), p.39.

Feminine focus

Jenny Waldron

Emotionally fit

Last month I wrote about the benefits of being physically fit and, more importantly, spiritually fit. The other area that we need to exercise, train and become fit in, as we love and serve our Lord and King, is our emotional life.

Emotions are a wonderful legacy from God. He created us after His own image and He gave us the ability to express and experience a range of emotions. They are very much a part of us. They enable us to express our thoughts and feelings, from laughing heartily, cooing over a newborn baby, to expressing the grief we feel when a loved one is taken from us.

Nancy Leigh De Moss writes¹: "The problem is not that we *have* emotions – they are a gift from God. The problem is that our emotions (unlike God's) are tainted by the Fall. The challenge is to let the Spirit of God sanctify us in the realm of our emotions so that they can be expressed in godly ways. I know of no other tool that the Enemy uses more effectively to lead us, as women, into bondage than our emotions."

It can seem, at times, that our emotions take us over. They burst forth and we feel we have no control over them. They seem to come from "nowhere" and overwhelm us with their intensity. One minute we are happily serving dinner, and the next we feel like throwing the

saucepan at someone's head, yelling and shouting.

My husband once used this illustration in a sermon, saying: "When you hit a sausage with a hammer, what's on the inside comes out. In the same way, when pressure or difficulty comes to a person, what is on the inside comes out." When pressure comes on, anger, fear or peace or joy may come out of a person. A sinful or a godly character may be displayed when someone is put under pressure.

As we grow up, we develop patterns in the way we handle situations and people. We learn them from our parents, teachers and peers; and we choose ways and practices that suit our temperament. Some of these emotional habits may be godly and self-controlled, gentle and kind – but often we tend, naturally, to cultivate wrong emotional responses; ones full of anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk.²

Marie (not her real name) was a Christian woman who displayed a quiet and gentle spirit. One day I was visiting her home, and she needed one of her girls to come and do some small job. She called the girl quietly and in a sing-song sort of voice. When the girl did not appear, the sing-song whisper became a little louder, and all the time she was smiling and continuing to talk to me. The com-

“We need to read God's Word regularly, pray specifically and with thanksgiving, capture every thought, gird up our loins, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, changing us to be more like Christ.”

mands became a sort of hissing, hoarse whispery command. When that didn't work, Marie suddenly let forth this tremendous yell and scream for her child to come right now or there would be big trouble! I nearly fell off my seat and the child duly skipped into the room (obviously having learnt that she didn't really need to come until Mum raised her voice!). All the while, Marie kept talking to me in a voice barely above a whisper (supposedly quietly and gently) and smiling as if nothing happened. Although the mother was clearly frustrated at her disobedient child, the emotional outburst was totally out of place and 'over the top'.

Are our emotions under control, especially when we are angry, frustrated or deeply hurt? Do we trust God in and for all things, or do we yell and scream and lose our temper when someone crosses us or we don't get our way? Are we fearful of the future? Do we worry about what others think of us or our children? Are we contemptuous of others who don't look or live like we do? What are we like behind closed doors? We can all put on a fine show on Sundays, but what are we truly like in our own homes, when only the family is there? Anger, either loud and overbearing or giving the 'cold shoulder', saying (even thinking) vicious things or lashing out at those who love you, (sadly it is loved ones that usually bear the brunt of out-of-control emotions), always having to have the last word, or trying to win every argument can all be turned around as we become spiritually and emotion-

ally fit and strong. We can change but only with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is only through the work of the Holy Spirit, progressively renewing our minds, that this is possible.

Our Lord Jesus calls us to be sanctified according to the grace that has been shown to us. As we live in relationship with Him, we desire to become more and more like Him. The only way we can do that is through the work of the Holy Spirit, because at best, our own efforts are weak and feeble and don't go the distance (which we realise when pressure comes on) and at worst, we become proud of the way we have achieved small, superficial changes in our own strength.

Some time ago, I bashed my thumb rather heavily with a hammer. I went running to my husband yelling "There is a God, there is a God!" at which point he stared at me as if I had completely lost my mind. "Yesss, I know" he answered cautiously. "I just bashed my thumb with a hammer and I didn't swear! I just said, "Ow!" I know that God has changed me! I didn't even think of swearing!" He nodded knowingly, patted me on the back and gave me a hug. My point is, that God does change us. I used to swear 'like a trooper' as the saying goes, but God has taken my filthy mouth and cleansed it. He can take your mouth and cleanse it too. Our tongues do so much damage, so quickly.³ It seems that our tongues bypass our brains and just let loose of their own accord; but the Lord teaches us that what comes out of the mouth is generated by our heart. We

are to be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.⁴ The yelling, screaming, anger, swearing even, comes from a heart that is not under God's rule nor is it self-controlled and those things must be put away from us. We need to learn to capture every thought, train our lips to stay closed and to be careful (and kind) when we speak. We are to put off the old self and put on the new.⁵

Another emotion that some of us allow to rule our lives is fear – always worrying about the children, how they are doing at school, or whether they will get a job or find a spouse or catch some disease. We may be anxious about financial matters, or whether our husbands love us, or whether he is going to die before us, or if he does die, how we will cope without him. Fear and anxiety are lies from the Father of Lies. The Bible is full of "Do not be afraid!" statements because God is not a God of fear – but rather He casts it out and replaces it with His peace that surpasses all understanding. Joshua 1:9 express this so well; "Be strong, be very courageous. Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." We are to gird up our loins, as it were, be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, learning to trust the Lord and lean not on our own understanding. Our worst fears rarely come to fruition, and even when hard times do come, God is there to help us and He is our Rock. We are to be strengthened by Him and shelter ourselves in Him. Staying close to God and His Word, praying and meditating, is essential to keeping ourselves free from fear.



When you find yourself becoming overwhelmed by emotions, pause for a moment and think about what Christ has done for you. Read Ephesians 1 and meditate on God's glorious grace, his blessings toward us, and His plan for all whom He has predestined to be His people. As we think about God's plan of redemption, and how Christ fulfilled it, the Holy Spirit changes us, gives us a new perspective on life, both here and now and eternally. Our emotions that threatened to loom so large, will recede and be replaced by God's peace and joy.

I was listening to a sermon by Kenneth Stewart⁶ recently, and he said that prayer is often talked about, but rarely done. Lots of books are written about prayer, but praying itself is not practiced as often as it should be. He focused on Phil 4:4-6 as a cure for anxiety and he gave en-

couragement to be specific in prayers. We are to lay before the Lord the particular circumstance, person or emotion that we are struggling with. Sometimes we don't know what to pray, but the Lord knows the whole situation. As we come to our Heavenly Father and talk to Him about our troubles, struggles and woes, He delights to help us. These verses also tell us to pray "with thanksgiving". Sometimes there doesn't seem to be much to be thankful for, but as we ponder God's goodness to us, Christ's work on the cross and our Father's plan for salvation and our sanctification, we will find many things to be thankful for, even in the darkest of times. Sometimes we lose sight of the big picture because our emotions get us caught up in the here and now, but God has a long term plan for us, an eternal one, which makes

this life pale in comparison. So I encourage you, sisters in the Lord, to look up and keep the Lord's sacrifice and plan before your eyes. The things here on earth that bother us so much will then grow strangely dim and take their proper place in the eternal scheme of things.

So to get fit emotionally, we need to read God's Word regularly, pray specifically and with thanksgiving, capture every thought, gird up our loins, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, changing us to be more like Christ.

¹ *Lies Women Believe* by Nancy Leigh de Moss (published by Moody Press), Pg 194

² Col 3:8

³ James 3

⁴ James 1:19

⁵ Col 3:9

⁶ Sermonaudio.com: Kenneth Stewart, Glasgow RP Church, Scotland: A Cure for Anxiety.



CBI New Zealand Newsletter March 2015

In Ezekiel 34:11 we read "For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for My sheep and look after them." It is a privilege to be involved in this Ministry where the Lord is reaching out to His lost sheep in prison. May this year bear much fruit as we seek to work with more men and women in prison bringing them the Word of God through the CBI Bible Study Courses.

Later this year another men's prison will open in South Auckland. This will be a low/medium security facility housing 960 men. Lord willing we will have some CBI students there in the near future.

During 2014, I had some very in-

formative and meaningful meetings with several Chaplains in five separate prisons. These meetings lasted for several hours each. We discussed some of the CBI students and their particular struggles which can also apply to other prisoners. Specifically we discussed:

- The difficulties for the Christian prisoner who goes before the Parole Board.
- Literacy problems for those in prison and how to deal with this.
- The struggles students face when released – regarding parole conditions, family issues and being able to attend church etc.

A retired CBI Instructor now involved in doing Bible studies in prison, facilitated a group study in a self-care unit in one of the NZ prisons based on the book "Seven Secrets for Success in the Workplace" written by Dr. H. D. Schuringa – President of Crossroad Bible Institute. This study was whole heartedly supported by the Chaplain. The content of the book was adapted and modified in order to work with prisoners most of whom struggle with reading/comprehension. Therefore much of the format of each class involved discussion, encouraging interaction within the group around work sheet activities. At the same time they learned from the Scriptures how much the Lord teaches us on this topic. This study attracted many who previously had no interest in the Bible and as a result have joined in Bible study. They seemed to see how pertinent God's Word is to

real practical life. Lord willing a similar class can be organised later this year.

The Manga Messiah Course (MM) is proving to be an effective way of reaching out to prisoners with God's Word particularly those who have had little or no education and therefore struggle with literacy. There were 106 students sending in MM lessons at 31/1/2015 (73 at 31/12/2013). There were 25 (14 at 31/12/2013) who had completed the Course and will hopefully continue on with Great Truths of the Bible (GTB). A number of students already did this during 2014 and some of them are now doing Survey of the Bible. At 31/1/2015 there were 63 (57 at 31/12/2013) students enrolled in MM but had not yet sent in a lesson.

Each month *Crossroad Connection*, the broadcast ministry of CBI offers inspiring messages, interviews, letters from prison and news about restorative justice. Episodes are available weekly at www.cbi.tv. I encourage you to view them.

Perhaps the best way to thank all those who support CBI NZ is to hear it from the students themselves. After completing GTB a student wrote: "I thank God for all the CBI Instructors for their kindly, wisely, amazing work for us students. I'm so grateful for their loyalty to the work in this ministry of God's Word showing love and encouragement to the students. I know I am a member of the CBI family and I really want to continue working together with CBI to spread the Word

of God in prison." This student leads a Bible study in prison and has encouraged many men to enroll with CBI.

"I am 40 years old and it took me to hit rock bottom to get on my knees and ask the Father for forgiveness and to allow me to be a member of His family. Faith alone tells me God is real and forgiveness of our sins came through His Son Jesus Christ. Amen"

"If Christ is truly in us then we are changed. We need say nothing to others but this change within us is noticed by those we come into contact with. As God has changed our lives even the prison officers have said words such as 'I don't know what they are doing to those pris-

oners in church and those studies they do (like your CBI studies) but they are a changed person.' Praise the Lord!"

"I was wondering if I could do the Manga Messiah studies please, to help me on my journey of faith. A good mate of mine recommended these studies to me and he is highly enjoying them. The church in this jail also recommended the CBI studies to me. So if you could please get me started asap that would be great. Thank you so much for opportunities like these and for people like you that can help me on my journey."

"Thank you CBI I pray the Lord will bless you and all those who choose to learn more about the Lord Jesus Christ

through doing the studies you provide. God bless."

"Dear God thank you for a great lesson (MM 8). Thank you for guiding me in my life and guiding me to CBI. God bless them all."

"Thank you all for your help for me to get to know the Lord Jesus better every day."

Please continue to pray for the ministry of CBI in the prisons and for those involved with the work of CBI in NZ. If you would like further information about Crossroad Bible Institute you can contact us at cbi.nz@xtra.co.nz or write to Crossroad Bible Institute, P.O. Box 11005 HASTINGS 4158

Focus on home

Short Report of Auckland Presbytery meeting

The Auckland Presbytery meeting held on Friday evening, 27th February, 2015, was opened with a devotion by Mr Joshua Meinsma of the Hamilton Reformed Church, exhorting us to carry out the church's evangelistic and church-planting task. After this the Rev. Dirk van Garderen took the chair. It was rather a house-keeping meeting, the main items reported on or discussed being:

- The RC Hamilton reported on their plans for the Men's Presbytery Study Day to be held later in the year;
- The Church Order Article 47 questions were answered by the Pukekohe and Avondale delegates.

The Pukekohe brothers reported very positively on the life of their congregation. Currently, there are three Bible studies plus two ladies' studies running in the congregation; with all combining for the first term for a series of seminars on Vocation and Work by the Rev. John Haverland. They report the blessing of many young couples and a growing number of younger children; also, a number of visitors from the wider church community, some of whom have become members over the past while. Generally, it seems these people are looking for biblical preaching and more reverent

worship. All this has meant that they have had to increase the size of the session; and they are also working on bringing newer men on and assigning an experienced elder to work alongside them for some months.

The Avondale elders also brought an encouraging report, citing three Bible studies plus two ladies' studies and also an adult study class on a Sunday morning conducted by the Rev. Peter Moelker. A men's breakfast is conducted once a month on Saturday mornings. They reported difficulty obtaining enough elders. To meet this need, they are discussing training younger men. Avondale also reports increasing numbers of new families and children. The Church kindergarten is struggling at present (30-35 children with a capacity of 45) because of competition from daycare centres. One nearby centre is licensed for 200 children!!

Correspondence was received from the Overseas Mission Board (OMB) seeking members for the new national board; this was referred to the local sessions.

- A church visitation roster was presented and accepted.
- The National Diaconate Committee and OMB liaison, Dirk van Garderen, reported on recent meetings, and no doubt significant matters will be reported by those committees.
- The Rev. John Haverland reported on

behalf of Mr John Kaijser, the presbytery youth liaison; that the National Youth Camp, at which the Rev. Leo de Vos took the studies, went off well, and that the committee is now preparing for the Easter Camp.

- All these Presbytery liaisons were re-appointed, including the Rev. Michael Willemse as synodical deputy. The Rev. Leo de Vos will replace yours truly as second synodical deputy.

John Rogers

OMB Short Report

The OMB held its annual planning meeting at Palmerson North on Friday 20 and Saturday 21st February.

Reports were received and discussed from representatives of sending churches. Hamilton are in the process of renewing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Hamilton church and the OMB for Janice Reid. The Hukanui session reported that Mr Wally and Mrs Sjaanette Hagoort have now returned home from the mission field. Appreciation was expressed at this meeting for their years of faithful work as managers of the Mapang mission home and also for the assistance they gave to the Bible College and churches in Port Moresby, especially the East Boroko congregation. The Hagoorts have now returned perma-

nently to New Zealand and are living in Dargaville. The Hastings representative provided an update on the work in PNG. Presently the College staff are at risk of being overworked and not able to do all the tasks they were called to do as thoroughly as they feel is necessary. There is not enough time nor opportunity to grow deepening relationships with the students or churches because there is always another pressing need to attend to. This concern further emphasises the need for a Compound Manager at the Reformed Churches Bible College. This is a position which our last Synod has endorsed. The OMB is currently seeking support for this from our churches. Responsibility for fundraising for this posi-

tion is to be shared by the RCNZ, the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

The board had a lengthy discussion on missions strategy at the RCBC focusing especially on training methodology. A subcommittee of three were appointed to look into evaluating and setting direction with respect to training up PNG nationals for effective church leadership.

The financial report was received and explained. A new vehicle suitable for PNG conditions has been purchased for the Douma's use. Both the Douma's and Hagoorts old vehicles were sold with the proceeds returned to the OMB account.

We now have a representative from the National Diaconate committee on

the board. Presently the OMB and NDC have different focuses. The board discussed ways in which the OMB and NDC might work more closely together, including identifying needs in our own mission field which the NDC could support and vice versa.

The Rev. Alan Douma, Janice Reid and Peter Kloosterman were appointed by the board to attend the ICRC meeting in Seoul 8-11th October 2015. The Rev. Dirk van Garderen will also attend this meeting as a speaker.

The next OMB meeting was scheduled for 8th of May in Palmerston North.

Hans Vaatstra

The erosion of civility

Johan D. Tangelder

What ever happened to civility, manners and common courtesy?

The erosion of manners is a vast and under-acknowledged problem of social immorality. Small children brusquely inform their teachers, "That's none of your business!" The elderly are addressed by their first names. Pastors too. Everyone is now called "guys" – just recently my wife and I were in a restaurant where a young waitress asked us, "How are you guys; what do you want?"

This erosion of civility takes on many forms, from this increasing casualness in address to a casualness in dress. T-shirts are almost everywhere, even in church, and one can go to a store and buy jeans ready-made with spots and patches, and unraveled at the edges. These jeans are not cheap. Those who wear them make a statement – they make known their rejection of elegance. Another example of this casualness is getting married on the first tee on a golf course or on a beach. And there is the need to hurry, real or imagined, which has created fast food, available at all hours, and it begot eating and drinking everywhere at any time. Shops, public offices, libraries had to post "No Eating or Drinking" signs to protect their premises from accidents and the disposal of refuse. Casualness erodes civility.

Parodying politeness

Today instead of *being* polite, we pretend to be. Have you tried to phone your insurance company or government agency for information? Instead of getting a person on the line, you are told, "Please hold. Thank you for holding. Your call is important to us. We are sorry you are having to hold." The message seems polite – it is presented in a polite form. But it is insincere; if our calls were important to them, why would they force us to waste twenty minutes or so of our time while listening to painful muzak?

Political correctness is a perverse form of politeness. The goal of politically correct language is the avoidance of unnecessary offence and while this goal is good, the means chosen to achieve it are not. Feelings are sheltered at the expense of the truth. No one is ever insulted, no feelings are hurt, because no significant distinctions are acknowledged – there are no sins in the PC world, only alternate lifestyles. Even gender differences are ignored – men are the same as women who are the same as men. The *Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook* informs men that they should not hold a door open for a woman. The dictionary called it "the male door-opening ritual... a cynical symbol patriarchal subjugation." Even the word "guy" is too sexist for *The Nonsexist Word Finder Dic-*

tionary of Gender-Free Usage. Instead of saying "Hey, you guys!" we could replace it with "Hey, you people."

As a result of "political correctness", our society has revived the spirit of the Medieval inquisition with speech police at work, punishing individuals and corporations for words on certain topics quaintly called "sensitive." For example, in 1991 Stanford University was reported to be working on "speech code," in which such words as "girls" and "ladies" were forbidden as "sexist"; instead of "girl," the word "pre-woman" had to be used. Some extreme feminists insisted that the word "woman" should be spelt "womyn" and others wanted the word "wimman."

Instead of politeness, we have pandering.

The visual media

Nothing illustrates the erosion of civility better than television and the handheld remote controls through which viewers graze "at will in the flickering pastures of one greener channel after another." It assumes that real learning takes place via images. And it is mainly devoted to consumption and entertainment. It promotes that the central thrust of our consumer culture that you must "buy in order to be." Advertising has become the scientific management of public

opinion, especially during elections.

Escalation of violence and human folly is the preoccupation of the media, the obsession of the news. The way TV presents the news helps viewers to avoid the trauma of meaning and questioning. After seeing a famine in Darfur or the ruins of Basra, Iraq (in a mere three minutes), they pass at once to a game show or soothing sports. TV show producers do not hesitate to parade the most outlandish perversions, the most degraded appetites. They combine artistic brilliance and technological innovation with crass vulgarity. In the meanwhile they are dumbing down culture and the English language.

One wonders whether there is still anything left in our culture that can be exploited for its shock value? Nothing seems to shock us anymore, least of all intimate revelations of personal life. Abuse is the currency of all reality shows. Lynne Truss observes that people who are encouraged to be vulgar and rude to each other in contrived and stressful situations are TV's bread and butter. Irreverence became the monopoly of the clever and the bold, free from compassion. They poke fun at anything held sacred by Christians, and speak with an amused smile about Christians who believe in absolute truth. Many TV shows give the impression that easygoing promiscuity is the normal pattern of sexual relations. The ideology of "nonbinding commitments" makes a virtue of emotional disengagement. As a consequence, personal relations have become increasingly risky – most obviously, because they no longer carry any assurance of permanence. The social consequences of the erosion of civility are loneliness, alienation, boredom, as well as the loss of respect for women. Popularity has now replaced purity as the measure of a young woman's social value. The devaluing of women is clearly demonstrated in all the pornography available on the Internet and cable television. Dr. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., observed that America is awash in pornography right now. And he stated that it is "a very glaring and graphic symptom of the problem we face in this country." And *The Grand Rapids Press* (July 22, 2007) states in a feature article titled "LOOK AT ME – Sexiness Seen as Power as Adult Entertainment Becomes Mainstream" that pornography used to be relegated to a video hidden in the bottom drawer or a magazine

under the mattress. "Today, it's part of everyday life."

Why does it matter, and why is it happening?

Why do manners matter? Why should we care about courtesy?

Because basic civility is one of the most elementary ways of showing that we are aware of the presence of other people, and of the impact we may be having on them. For example, it has become common now not to respond to any sort of request if the answer is "no." Increasingly, if someone applies for a job and fails to get it, they are not notified to that effect; they never hear anything at all. People are also fired indirectly. They are asked to pack their belongings, and are shown the door with companies refusing to let them know why and wherefore. Are manners important? They are! If we can't talk about the morality

of manners, we can't talk about the morality of anything. Manners are based on an ideal of empathy, of imagining the impact of doing something for the sake of other people that is not obligatory and attracts no rewards. As Mark Caldwell puts it in his *Short History of Rudeness*, "Manners are what is left when serious issues of human relations are removed from consideration, yet without manners serious human relationships are impossible."

Why the erosion of civility? I believe it reflects the spirit of our times. The key reason for the disintegration of our culture is the lack of knowledge of God's Word, the Holy Bible. The solution to incivility then, involves a return to the Bible. So this rise of rudeness presents Christians with an opportunity to contrast our solution – our biblically based solution – with all the insufficient and ineffective approaches the world takes to



the problem. Incivility is our in – even the issue of politeness gives us a chance to present the Gospel Truth.

The biblical solution to incivility

And the truth is that there are three foundation stones to a civil society.

1. Respect.

The first foundation stone is respect for individual human beings and their dignity. The Christian view of civility supports the dignity of every individual. All people are to be given respect simply because they are human beings. We acknowledge our many differences and show respect regardless of our differences of belief, race, status, income, intelligence, and age.

A society that does not respect the individual will generally treat human beings as things. People need to be treated with respect, not because they have earned it, not because they are always kind or easy to get along with, and not because they are just the same as anyone and everyone else. We show respect because we are created in the image of God. God did not create trash. All people, whatever their condition and whatever their achievements or failures, have eternal worth, a value beyond our ability to calculate. Since we are created in God's image, we are held responsible for whatever we do. The first created human being, Adam, was called to account for his fall into sin. He could not hide from his responsibility. God asked Adam and

in him all of us, "Man where are you?" (Gen. 3:9).

Psalm 8 speaks of the dignity of the individual. "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings, and crowned with glory and honor" (Ps.8:5 NIV). Through the Incarnation of the Son of God, human beings have been lifted up to a place of immense significance. Our high position in creation is all of grace. Thieliicke remarked, "God does not love us because we are so valuable; we are valuable because God loves us."

Beliefs have consequences. Because every person deserves to be treated with respect, we ought to consider the way we treat each other. The way we behave toward each other, even in minor things, is a measure of how we respect God's image bearers. And the little things count – it is God-honoring to say "thank you" when someone holds the door open for you. As Henry James wrote: "Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind."

2. The family

The second foundation stone is the institution of the family – the very best institution for fostering civility. No institution surpasses the healthy family in its capacity to transmit to each new generation biblically formed virtues on which the success of every other institution of society depends. Without the

family, respect for the dignity of each individual will be undermined and sooner or later lost. When families break down the effective transmission of the virtues of honesty, civility, self-restraint, concern for the welfare of others, justice, compassion and personal responsibility is imperiled.

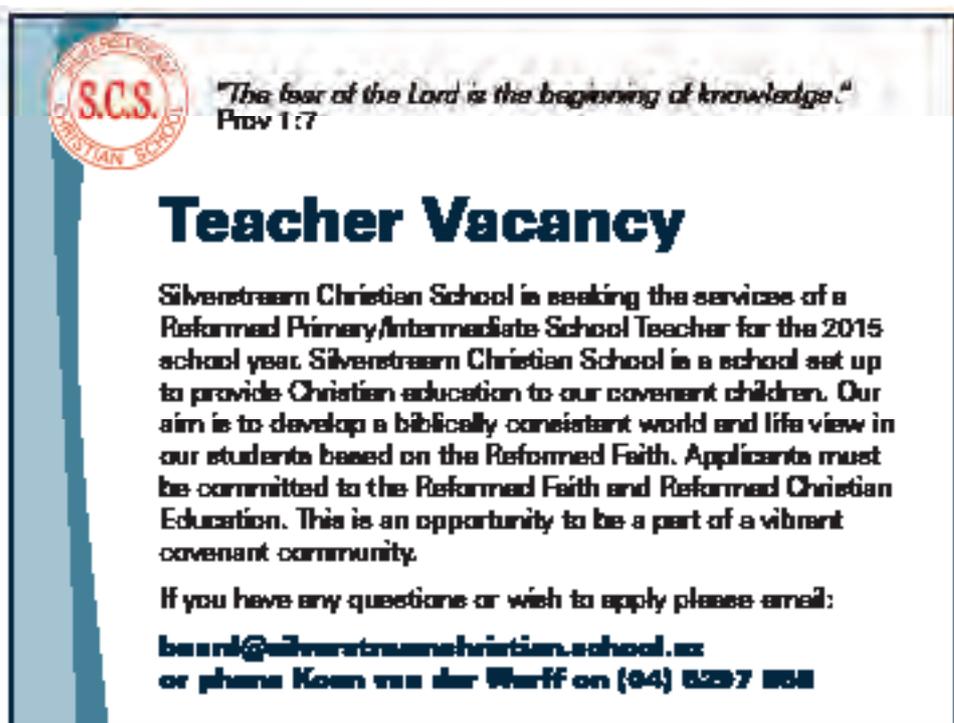
Family is not a "lifestyle choice." It is not one of the various free-ranging styles of conducting relationships and bringing up children. Today post-Christian ideologies hostile to marriage have made the single-parent family and even same-sex marriage socially acceptable. But the breakdown of the family unit has a measurable social impact, and the costs are counted in broken relationships, and damaged lives. People now disappear from each other's lives without explanation or regret.

What our society needs is a solid Biblical foundation for a healthy family. When the family structure breaks down, our society will be in a dire peril. As the British evangelical reformer Lord Shaftesbury (1801-85) put it: "There can be no security to society, no honor, no prosperity, no dignity at home, no nobleness of attitude towards foreign nations, unless the strength of the people rests upon the purity and firmness of the domestic system At home the man is trained to be a good citizen."

3. Effective government

The third foundation stone is a fair and effective system of law and government. A society without an effective government and without laws based on God's Word will turn to anarchy. And law without a Christian basis degenerates into rules and mechanical legalism. Political scientist Glenn Tinder noted, "A nation that does not dare to make moral judgments is surely living under the shadow of nihilism." He is right. We need laws that restrict evil and promote the common good. But moral issues were not on the agenda during the last Canadian election campaign. Politicians shied away from the word "immoral," lest they be accused of racism, sexism, elitism, or simply lack of compassion.

An effective government recognizes the supremacy of the Triune God. With this in mind the Belgic Confession (Art.36) states: "We believe that our gracious God, because of the depravity of mankind, has appointed kings, princes, and magistrates; willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies; to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among



The advertisement features a circular logo for Silverstream Christian School (S.C.S.) in the top left corner. The main text is centered and reads: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Prov 1:7. Below this is the heading "Teacher Vacancy" in a large, bold, blue font. The body text describes the school's mission and the specific vacancy for a Reformed Primary/Intermediate School Teacher for the 2015 school year. It emphasizes the school's commitment to Christian education and the Reformed Faith. At the bottom, it provides contact information: "If you have any questions or wish to apply please email: beurd@silverstreamchristian.school.sc or phone Koen van der Werff on (04) 8297 888".

them with good order and decency." We need laws because none of us is virtuous all the time, and some people will be deterred from wrongdoing only by the threat of punishment. We need a system of laws to accomplish many of our common ends – such as safely crossing the street. Above all Canada needs laws to protect the lives of God's image bearers from conception to natural death.

Conclusion

Will civility stifle debate or freedom of speech? Far from stifling debate, civility helps strengthen debate because of its respect for the individual as God's image bearer. And far from curtailing freedom of speech, it keeps freedom of speech alive as civility in speech is constructive for the sake of the common good.

What can we do as Christians to

reverse the erosion of civility? We must address it head-on, starting at home. If we do not address it from a biblical perspective and practice what we teach, we will fail the next generation.

Reproduced from Reformed Perspective, Nov 2008.

Misplaced guilt

Richard Eikelboom

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

Some of my most difficult discussions have been with parents whose children had just recently left the church. Some talked about how painful it was for them to pray together with the minister and the congregation for their children. Others told me that walking out of the church building afterwards was also a challenge: some people spoke to them as if nothing had happened; most maintained an uncomfortable silence; and just a few offered what they considered to be words of comfort.

I hasten to add that none of these parents were surprised by the reaction of their fellow church members. Instead they all remembered: "Before my children left the church, there were others. And did I know what to say to them? Did I have an idea of what they were going through?" When anybody's children leave the church, it's natural to think about Proverbs 22:6. But what conclusions should we draw this time, or next time?

Of course, what people think is not the most important. If people blame me when my children leave the church, that is only a human judgment. What matters more is God's opinion, what the Bible says. But then doesn't Proverbs 22 say that *if* parents do a decent job, *then* their children will never depart from God's way? That seems to be a promise of the gospel, a God-given guarantee: If parents are faithful, their children will be

Christians for the rest of their lives. In this way God seems to separate good parents from bad parents. Good parents have all their children in the church, while bad parents have children who leave the church. For some parents this Word of God is even harder to take than seeing their children leave the church in the first place: God seems to blame them!

The reality is, though, that Proverbs are not promises. Instead Proverbs are wise sayings, based on what godly people see and experience and expect to happen in life. Take Proverbs 10:27 for example: "The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short." What is this proverb saying about people who die at a young age? That they were all wicked? Of course not! In fact, in times of persecution, wickedness (by denying Christ) can add length to life, but the years of those who fear the Lord can be cut short (as martyrs). But the principle is still valid: We should fear the Lord and trust him to bless us, while those who live godless and undisciplined lives can expect trouble.

And it's the same with parenting. We should train our children in the way of the Lord, trusting him to work in their hearts. And children who grow up in ungodly households are more likely to turn their backs on the Lord. But these are only proverbs, observations of godly men, not promises of God!

One hurting mother made a comment that was particularly helpful. She told me: "After my son left the church, people tried to comfort me by telling me that 'I did my best.' Those people meant well, but that comment hurt. For when

I thought back over my years of parenting, I remembered many occasions when I had not done my best. When we had visitors, and I heard my children fighting, I did not always respond in the best possible way. And when my son was a teenager I gave him too much freedom." Which parents can honestly say that they always did their best? If we comfort ourselves by insisting that we tried hard, we kid ourselves.

Instead we must believe that God is sovereign, and our children belong to him. He never promised any parents that their children would believe the gospel. He never promised any parents that their children would go to heaven. Our salvation does not depend on our own efforts, we learned from Martin Luther in the days of the Reformation, and the salvation of our children does not depend on our own efforts either.

It is important that Christian parents take their responsibility seriously. But ultimately we must believe that good parenting does not save children. Instead, as parents we depend on the electing grace of our covenant God! May he give comfort to Christian parents who already experience pain because they see their children make bad choices. And may he remove from their shoulders any extra burden of guilt which they might carry because they misunderstand Proverbs 22:6.

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Reflections on Seminary

For the Couperus family, thoughts are turning back to home. Albert has just finished his second to last semester, and there is one more to go. After two and a half years it is time to think about goodbyes, but also about the upcoming “hellos.”

We have been reflecting on our time here, and I thought it would be good to share some of our thoughts with you as well.

Seminary education

Seminary has been tough. It should be! One of the things that I wanted to be able to do when I came here was to put down some deep theological roots. I feel that I am certainly doing that. It has been a privilege to sit under my professors, and learn more about God’s Word, and His Word applied. I have done courses in Biblical Theology, Systematic Theology, Pastoral Theology, and others. Each course comes with a significant amount of reading. So it is not just a matter of writing papers and sitting exams. It also involves reading approximately 1000 pages of material per subject. This helps give a background to each of my courses, and helps me to become aware of all the different arguments, ideas, and heresies behind

a particular doctrine. The reading also helps to fill out material that cannot be covered in class, as there is only ever a limited amount that a professor can teach in class.

Our class this year has consisted of approximately 15 students. The small class size means that there are plenty of opportunities to ask questions, and have discussion. There is also no room to hide when the Professor asks a question!

In the second and third years the classes are combined, and work on a two year rotation. This means that seniors and middlers are in class together. So this year Josh Flinn and I have been in the same class. We also share the same study space together. It has been a blessing to get to know Josh and Hannah better, and I look forward to the time when we will be able to serve together in the churches back home in New Zealand.

Internships

One of the highlights of our time here has been the two internships that we have been able to go on. Our first summer was spent in New Jersey, on the East Coast of the United States. Our second summer was in Ontario, Canada.

During an internship you get to have a taste of what serving in ministry will

be like. This involves preaching, leading Bible studies, attending meetings, helping out with vacation Bible study, and visiting.

Both experiences were different in many ways, but there were many similarities. It was good to be able to preach on a regular basis. It was also good to have a congregation in mind when I was writing my sermons. It is one matter to write a sermon when you get to know the people who you are preaching too. Going out and visiting certainly helps when it comes to sitting down and writing a sermon.

We have been amazed by the way we have been received into people’s lives. Even though we are only there for a short time, people draw us into their lives and homes. It is very humbling to be able to minister to people. People often told us that it was a real blessing to have us there for the summer, but it is so much more of a blessing to us, as we have learned from people how to serve God in so many different situations, including loved ones dying, facing life threatening surgeries, living with significant physical disabilities, dealing with family arguments, families being brought back together, babies being born, and God’s grace shining in ordinary lives. We have met so many wonderful people, it has been awesome to get to know them, but also very hard to say goodbye.

Preaching

While a significant part of the summer is preaching, this is also a part of the semester. In their final year seniors are required to preach 12 times, with 8 of these being original sermons. So we certainly get plenty of preaching practice. By the time I have left Seminary I will have led worship at least 65 times. This is such an important part of training for us, and invaluable experience.

As part of preaching the congregations give us feedback. This is helpful, but what is most helpful is the practice of leading God’s people. We continue to be amazed that congregations are willing to listen to students practising their trade! They are very understanding and encouraging. It is also wonderful to see the desire of people for men to be



Albert taking time out to enjoy what the big cities have to offer.

trained for gospel ministry.

We also preach a number of times in class. This is what I find the most intimidating. I don't mind preaching before my professors in a worship service, but it is another thing in class. Students preach in front of other students and then their sermons are pulled to pieces, in love of course!

Support

When we were considering training in the United States we were told by a number of people that American people are very generous. We were unprepared, and blown away by the support that we have received. The children have adopted grandparents that spoil them, and as a family we have been well looked after in ways that we simply don't deserve. This is more than financial donations.

There is significant support from the churches surrounding the Seminary and further beyond. We are often reminded by people that they are praying for us. There is a real desire for men to be trained for the ministry. The Seminary itself relies mainly on donations, and it is well supported. Only 10% of the funding comes from student fees, so it relies heavily on the generosity of churches and individuals. The churches regularly hold collections for the Seminary and these are well supported.

There is also significant support from the Seminary community itself. It is a privilege to be in class with fourteen other men who are also training for the ministry. This was one of the big attractions for us in coming to Mid America, and we have not been disappointed. The friendships that I have made will be friendships that I will take forward into the ministry, should the Lord provide me with a call.

Another aspect that has been beneficial is that of the Seminary Wives group. They gather once a month for meetings, but there is so much more than just meeting together: helping out with baby-sitting, teaching, and encouraging and supporting each other. There is a real feeling that "we are all in this together."

Family

One of the things that is drummed into us at Seminary is that the habits that we learn in Seminary are habits that we will carry on into pastoral ministry. This is very true, and has certainly been a challenge for me. One of the biggest learning curves has been that of work-

life balance. I know it is something that all students struggle with. Some struggle with not spending enough time in their studies, and others struggle with spending too much time. I tend to fall into the latter. This is something that we have had to work through as a family. It is very easy to sacrifice family time so that a paper can be finished, or so that a little more preparation for an exam can be done.

One thing that I have had to learn is that there is always something that could be done, but it doesn't necessarily need to be done. We have found that it is important to schedule time, and make sure that I stick to that time. Scheduling family time is something that doesn't work well for everyone, but certainly works well for us.

I have been spending some time

taking the devotions and P.E. for the homeschool group that the girls have been attending. This has meant some 'enforced' family time, and has been a lot of fun for all of us.

Hanneke and I have been learning in this regard, and it is an area that we have made progress on. It has also helped us to work on communicating with each other, what our expectations are. We also have a shared electronic diary which helps avoid any scheduling conflicts!

And the girls? They are doing very well. While homeschooling is a challenge for all, they have been making good progress. We had the opportunity to get the girls tested by a university that runs tests on children to see what level the children were at, and we were very thankful that they are equal to, and in



No shortage of interesting things to see and do.

many ways above that of their peers for their age level.

They have also very much enjoyed being able to travel around the US on internships and make many new friends, although it is often very hard to say goodbye!

Items for Prayer

- Give thanks for the Lord's care and protection for us – we have not had any major medical issues.
- Prayer for seminaries as they train men for ministry
- Pray for Albert as he concludes his studies
- Prayer for the future as we make plans to return home and serve in the RCNZ, first as a vicar, and then, Lord willing, in pastoral ministry.

In conclusion we would like to thank you for your support, both prayerful and financial. Without the support of the New Zealand churches this would not have been possible. We look forward to be able to repay this support in a small way by coming back home to serve in ministry, and we are looking forward to catching up with many of you when we return to New Zealand soil.

Blessings,

The Couperus Family.

*(right) No matter where you go,
there are reminders of home.*

(below) The Couperus family.

