

"... a Reformed magazine must not shy away from addressing controversial issues that confront the Reformed faith and the Reformed churches..."

*Prof. David J. Engelsma - A Word of Encouragement*

"Are our hearts in it? Do we give priority to our personal devotions over all our other daily activities?"

*Elisa Boon - Covenant Life and Our Daily Devotions*

"He is our Father as adults and He is their Father as children..."

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# salt shakers

joel 3:16 matthew 5:16

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Welcome to the 28th Issue of Salt Shakers!

We hope that you have been kept well by God's grace, and are ready for another issue full of articles that point you to the Scriptures which are of our Lord Jesus Christ!

There are several articles about our walk with God, though they approach the subject from different angles. In truth, our walk with God is the most important thing in our lives—well obviously, since it is even more important than life itself (Psalm 63:3)!

As God's children, we strive to spend time with Him in reading His Word and through prayer. I say "strive" because we all know it is not always an easy thing to do. The flesh and the Spirit make war within our mortal bodies, and often arriving at the actual deed of reading God's Word could be the gracious result of a great and exhausting unseen struggle (Galatians 5). But how blessed and sweet the communion we enjoy as we draw deeply from the refreshing streams of living water! Indeed, as God promised in James 4:8, when we draw close to God, He will draw close to us.

But what makes us even begin to desire God and seek to be near Him? It is the simple fact that He draws us, first, to Himself. We love Him, because He first loved us. And very often, God draws us closer by way of trials and afflictions. He weakens our knees so that we lean on His strength; He breaks down our pride so that we open up to His grace. What a wonderful Saviour; what a marvellous God! Jehovah's word of promise is sure in Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." So it must be made known, that even our afflictions, our unbearable pain, yes, even all the things we don't understand is God drawing us near with lovingkindness. Do you believe that?

May God continue to draw us near, may we respond in zealous love for Him, and may we find Him faithful, as He has promised. Blessed reading, and remember to pass the Salt!

Christ regardless  
paul

# Filled with the Spirit (II)

>> Josiah Tan



*Josiah Tan* is a confessing young adult in CERC. He heads the Salt Shaker's committee and is actively serving in the young people's committee (Covenant Keepers).

In the last article, we discussed who the Holy Spirit is. Being the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Spirit is coequal and co-eternal with God the Father and the Son. Three Persons in one Being. The Spirit possesses power to create the entire universe from nothing; this same power of the Spirit is able to raise us up from dry bones into an exceedingly great army. This Spirit dwells in us through the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spirit dwells in us only because of God's decision to favour us. All of us belong to the fallen human race, and every last person is judged by God as wicked and deserves eternal damnation. Yet God regenerates us by His Spirit and gives His Spirit to dwell in us. God's unconditional love to us is amazing! We do not deserve the Holy Spirit, and even knowing that does not stop us from daily grieving the Spirit; yet, the Spirit does not utterly depart from us. The Spirit continually transforms us day by day,

until we become like the measure of Christ (Eph 4:13). The Holy Spirit is given by God's sovereign grace alone.

Finally, we concluded that because of God's unconditional Covenant established with us, we are filled with the Spirit. Our God is a Covenant God. That means, within God—single being, three in Persons—He has infinitely blessed communion within Himself. That relationship of love is expressed when the Father breathes in love the Holy Spirit, to the Son. The Son then breathes the Holy Spirit back to the Father. It is the Spirit that searches the deep things of God (1 Cor 2:10), not searching superficially, but the deepest thoughts and counsel of God.

Because we know God pours out His Holy Spirit upon us, we also know that God has unilaterally brought us into His Covenant. Through Christ and His Spirit, He has brought us in to such an intimate Covenant with Himself, that God describes us as being in God Himself (John 17:21).

## Filled

Ephesians 5 teaches us that at any one point of time, a person is either filled with the Holy Spirit, or he is drunk with sin. This is a stark contrast. When we are filled with the Spirit, our heart desires God more than anything or any person in this world. There are no in-betweens. We either love God, or we love our sins; no man can serve two masters (Matt 6:24).

Our flesh may claim, "I am partially filled with the Spirit, and therefore I am justified to be contented with a life that is half about God, and half about me." But this cannot be so; when a person is filled with the Spirit, he is ready to give up father, mother, son, daughter, and even all his friends, to single-heartedly follow his LORD. Being "filled with the Spirit" does not mean being half-filled, but rather, we seek to be fully filled.

When person is not filled with the Spirit, he is drunk. And when a person is drunk, he loses touch with reality. Oftentimes a drunk would not know he is drunk—he would even violently deny that charge. This is very applicable to when a person is spiritually drunk in sin. He may say, "I am just dabbling in a little sin, I am only idolising a little, taking secret pleasure in watching others sin, but you cannot say I am drunk in sin!" It is very hard for a drunkard to realise that he is drunk.

Getting to the stage of being drunk often happens so subtly that one can barely realise it. "I shall just have a little sleep, a very little slumber, and the slightest folding of my hands (refusing to labour for God)". Without the slightest clue of what is going on, the person has lost touch with truth and reality.

There is a stark difference between these two paths; the Apostle Paul confronts us with them, and he

“ We must first recognize that we can never receive the spirit by our work or desire... not even in the slightest measure. ”

exhorts us, “be filled with the Spirit!”

### **Filled with sin**

Satan and this world exhort us not to be filled with the Spirit and to be filled with sin—especially the sin of exalting oneself. To be filled with the Spirit is to be sincere and not hypocritical. It is to be truthful and not wanting to have anything to do with a lie (Joshua 24:14, 1 Cor 5:8). This means seeking the Word of God to know how to live unto God in every aspect of our lives.

Satan spins a lie by twisting the meaning of being sincere and truthful. He whispers in our ear that living without pretence, according to our sinful nature, is being sincere and truthful—because that is our true self. And when we live authentically (the catch phrase), we would then have peace within ourselves. “Be authentic as possible! Do not pretend to be something you are not by nature.” So the philosophy that drives the homosexual movement in Singapore is the same that drives young people to live their lives however they desire in their hearts, thinking that that is being truly spiritual and sincere.

An example of this philosophy would be a young person’s parents telling him to lead a life that is wholly dedicated to God, but within himself, he believes that the prescribed way of a “holy”

life for everyone else is not spiritually profitable to him. He feels instead that playing his favourite sport, traveling to some exotic tranquil island, or simply spending time with loved ones leads him to be filled with the Spirit. The sense of perceived freedom and being honest to himself creates the illusion that he has an inner peace within himself. But that inner “peace” is just quenching the Spirit and giving the flesh full reign.

The idea of living true to our old man of sin as being filled with the spirit is devilish but wildly popular. Its indoctrination happens in schools, through peers, in the feel-good movies many Christians spend hours of God’s time on, and in the self-believe pop songs that are put on a constant repeat. “Let it go”, embrace your own heart’s desires! Many young people fall prey to this lie of the devil, and while they treat the true means of grace with little regard, they believe that they are living authentically, being filled with a “spirit”.

We can become disillusioned and feel this way especially when we see many sins in the church (made up of sinners). We may react in this manner because we have observed and come to the conclusion that others in church are just going through the service ritualistically, while their spiritual life

is dead and cold. At home, he or she may see father ritualistically putting on a sober face to read the Bible but later on indulging in dramas and movies, or treating the church as peripheral in his life or at times even with disdain. So when a young person grows tired and his spiritual life is choked with worldliness, he looks to Satan’s way of being filled.

John 17:17 says, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” “Them” refers to God’s children. The remedy to the grave state of being filled with sin is to remember that the Spirit always works with God’s Word. Priority must be given to the preaching of God’s Word (1 Cor 1:17,21, Rom 10:14, Eph 4:11-13) in our lives. The Spirit quickens in our new man a longing and desire for the study and meditation of God’s Word, and the Spirit takes that Word and applies it to our hearts. Through the Spirit and the Word, we desire and are filled with the Spirit. Young people, do not be deceived that the preaching of God’s Word can be replaced with relaxing afternoons, long walks in the park, holidays to exotic places, and the list goes on. It is true that we have an old man of sin, and we have to be truthful and acknowledge that we are prone to all evil. But also remember that we have a new man, made alive by the Spirit. We are called to live true to our new man, and not our old.

### **Filled with feelings**

Some people reject this way of being filled with the Spirit. They would rather prefer a direct communion with God apart from His Word and the diligent meditation on it. Why this is so? It appeals very strongly to our flesh. To believe that being filled with the Spirit is the same as being highly

charged up with emotions is exciting. Not that there is anything wrong with emotions, for they have a proper and important place in being filled with the Spirit, but when emotions are placed over God's Word, then comes the random babbling, uncontrollable crying, "holy" laughter, and closing of eyes and swaying.

Prof. Hanko deals with this in a most practical manner: "Every child of God has times of great spiritual drought, when God is very distant and the inner life of the soul seems barren. The same thing happens to churches where zeal has been lost, love has grown cold, and piety seems a distant dream. The solution to the problem is not to pray for revival with special outpourings of the Spirit apart from the Word, outpourings resulting in bizarre behaviour reminiscent of medieval mysticism. The solution is not to seek revival through some mystical contemplation of the divine. The solution for the church is the lively and faithful preaching of the Word. And the solution for the child of God wandering in a wasteland is to tie himself to the Word and await times of spiritual refreshing." – From Part 4 of the series: *Thomas Kempis and Medieval Mysticism*.

It is easy to be filled with the spirit if it was primarily about emotions. A rock concert or entering a club would do better as they work up emotions to a greater extent and in the same way. As the emotions pour in, one becomes drunk and loses control of his emotions, his body, and even his mind. That is being drunk and not being filled with the Spirit. By ourselves, it is difficult, rather, impossible, to be filled with the Spirit. One of the fruit of the Spirit

is temperance. Temperance can be described as "self-control". Not a mad losing of self in emotions, or a focusing on self and one's own desires. A better way of looking at temperance is being Spirit-controlled. To have our hard wills bent, our stony hearts softened, and our dull minds enlightened by the Spirit. Then and only then do we use all our heart, soul, mind, and strength to love and desire God.

### **Filled with the Spirit**

How are we to be filled with the Spirit? We must first recognize that we can never receive the spirit by our work or desire—not even in the slightest measure. The Spirit is not some servant we demand and summon around. The Spirit goes where it wills (John 3:8).

Second, we must believe in faith that Jesus died on the cross for all our sins, resurrected from the dead and has already poured out His Spirit to us. Our believing comes only from the working of the Spirit that dwells in us, making in us a desire for God. Thus, the call to be filled with the Spirit is not so that we will now decide for ourselves that we want the Spirit. Rather, it is to be used by the Spirit already dwelling in us to renew our minds and cause us to abandon the false notions of what it is to be filled with. The Spirit uses this Word to soften our hearts and purge out the desire to be drunk in our sins. The Spirit uses this Word to bear witness to our own spirit that Jesus Christ's Spirit dwells in us and we are in His unbreakable Covenant of friendship.

### **Conclusion**

The Word is irresistible. God powerfully calls us to be perpetually communing with Him in prayer and to be unceasing in our worship and

adoration of Him. In work or play, glorify God. Be intoxicated with the Spirit; let the power of the Spirit so influence through the Word until every faculty of our minds is stayed on Jehovah, every artery of our heart pumps of gratitude to our Saviour, and the entirety of our souls desire the sole praising and glorifying of God. Then others will see and thank God that every muscle that is flexed is for the cause of building God's spiritual Kingdom.

So when we are filled with the Spirit, there must be a huge change. That change may seem small to us—but it is not. It first starts with the desire to say "no" to the control of sin and "yes" to being filled with the Spirit by hearing and meditating on God's Word. Instead of stumbling like a drunkard and stumbling others, we now walk wisely according to God's Word (Eph 5:15). Instead of lazing around as before, we now aggressively desire to use the time God has loaned to us to serve God's Kingdom (Eph 5:16). We are no longer contented with ignorance, but seek God's will in all things. In one's heart, there will be a constant melody; no longer the melody of those in bars, but rather, the melody of the songs of Zion. We will no longer be discontented and bitter, but be overjoyed with thankfulness to God for all things.

When we are filled with the Spirit and God's Word, we then begin to see everything in this world in the greatest reality and we experience the greatest joy in the Lord. We are nothing; God is everything, and God is everything to us. "Father, fill me with thy Spirit."

# A Word of Encouragement

>> Prof. David J. Engelsma



*Prof David J. Engelsma* is an ordained minister of the gospel in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America for nearly 50 years, and is married to Ruth. He served as a pastor for 25 years and was a professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament at the Protestant Reformed Seminary before retiring in 2008.

*January 25, 2013*

*Dear Covenant Keepers (youthful producers of the magazine, Salt Shakers),*

*At the request of one of you, I write you this brief letter of encouragement regarding the publication of your magazine. This was in response to my unsolicited note to him of the excellence of the latest issue of the magazine. He suggested that I might be in a special position to give encouragement and even to offer some suggestions since I myself was editor of the Reformed magazine, the Standard Bearer, for some sixteen years. One of the duties this editorship entailed was the regular, weekly reading of many religious magazines and journals, something that I keep up today. I am thoroughly familiar with all kinds of religious magazines and journals and, therefore, have some knowledge both of the strengths and weaknesses of such writings.*

## **Praise**

I commend you for your publication of a high quality magazine explaining and defending the Reformed, Christian faith and life. Your magazine is instructive, interesting, and attractive in appearance. Above all, it is sound. It does justice to the broad scope of the Reformed faith and corresponding walk.

## **Encouragement**

I encourage you to keep up the publication of the magazine. I do this, not because you have given any sign of flagging in your zeal on behalf of the magazine, but because I know something of the difficulties and pressures of producing a good magazine regularly, month in and month out, year in and year out.

Because of the witness to the truth of the Reformed faith and life that

the magazine is giving, not only in Singapore but throughout the world, and that, a witness by comparatively recent converts to this faith, the magazine is worth all of your best and diligent efforts. Do not underestimate the power, under God's blessing, that your witness in the magazine has, also among us who have had and confessed the Reformed faith for many years. There is always the danger that a church and people leave their "first love" (Rev. 2:4). The zeal of others serves to bring such a church and people to repentance and to stir them up to jealousy.

Your magazine has its own peculiar power in that it is the testimony of those who have recently been called out of idolatry and who must follow Jesus Christ in the midst of an idolatrous society. It is obvious that you have found the Reformed faith to be genuine Christianity.

Adding to the power, by the grace of God, is the fact that the magazine is the production and to a large degree the heartfelt witness of Singaporean youth. Youth are giving a sound, uncompromising testimony to the unadulterated Reformed faith and life that adults, indeed ministers and theologians, are hesitant and fearful to give throughout Reformed Christendom today. May your magazine shame them.

## **Advice**

The advice that I now give is not occasioned by any failure on your part. It is not at all implied criticism of the magazine. But I strengthen your resolve, warn against dangers that threaten Reformed magazines, and perhaps sharpen your vision for your magazine.

Continue to keep the magazine a living witness. I mean by this that

you have contemporary writers write on today's issues for today's readers. There is a place, even an important place, for the occasional article on an important subject by a writer in the past. We ought to use and benefit from the riches of the past. But do not allow the magazine to become a collection of reprinted articles and sermons by dead authors. Some Reformed and Presbyterian magazines are such collections. They are lifeless. I skim through the thickest of them in a couple of minutes.

In order to be lively and useful, a Reformed magazine must not shy away from addressing controversial issues that confront the Reformed faith and the Reformed churches at the present time. By addressing controversial issues, it gives direction to the people of God. In treating such issues, the magazine should expose, refute, and condemn errors, both of doctrine and of life. God does not call magazines to be only positive any more than He calls preachers to be only positive, although He does call them to be primarily positive. "Contend for the faith!" is a command to Reformed magazines, as well as to Reformed preachers and theologians (Jude 3). Being strictly, sweetly positive, while avoiding controversy, is a fault of many magazines in our day. The fault is serious. Fact is, avoiding controversy and remaining only positive make it impossible to teach and defend the truth as the truth ought to be taught and defended. If it is not defended against error, the truth will not endure in the circles of such advocates of the truth.

Such bland magazines, I do not even bother with.

“ Pray continually for wisdom, so that you write and publish the truth, and only the truth...”

Your magazine is aptly named, Salt Shakers. Good magazines have savour, a salty flavour, a bite. Love for God and His truth cannot but take the form of hatred of that which is opposed to Him and His truth. Jesus Himself described us and our testimony as “the salt of the earth,” and warned that if the “salt have lost his savour” it is “thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Matthew 5:13).

#### **Presumptuous Advice**

And then there is one more, very practical item of advice. I risk being presumptuous in giving it. But the possible benefit outweighs the risk of presumption. As a magazine so closely associated with the young people of Singapore, let Salt Shakers aggressively pursue the closer fellowship of all the young people in all the churches in all the world with which the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore has church relations, not excluding other young people of the same mind who desire this fellowship. Work at getting the magazine in the hands of young people in the Philippines, in Northern Ireland, and in North America. Selected articles of special interest and benefit for young people that appear in Beacon Lights might be reprinted in Salt Shakers and similar articles in Salt Shakers might

be published in Beacon Lights. The magazine could urge and facilitate contact among the young people by means of the internet.

And Salt Shakers could promote a convention of the young people from all the churches at some central or convenient location, so that there would be the personal fellowship that is ideal. Not a merely national convention, but an international convention.

A dream? No doubt. But a dream well worth entertaining and realizing in actuality, with the help of Almighty God. Singaporeans, Ulster-youth, Filipinos, and North Americans—a modern expression and enjoyment of Pentecost. With extraordinary benefits for many covenant young people.

Carry on, with a sense of the worth of your work on the magazine.

Pray continually for wisdom, so that you write and publish the truth, and only the truth, and in such a way as to glorify God, honour Jesus Christ, benefit the church, profit the children of God, and do some damage to the kingdom of darkness.

Wisdom is the main thing, also in publishing. Seek wisdom.

*Cordially in Christ,*

*Prof. David J. Engelsma*

# Overcoming Panic Attacks from a Christian Perspective

>> Jonathan Lee



*Jonathan Lee* is a member of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church. He is currently receiving spiritual oversight from CERC while serving his National Service in Singapore.

When you hear of the term “panic attack”, what comes to mind? Perhaps you envision someone hyperventilating and completely losing their mind. However, the truth is, someone can look completely fine on the outside and yet still be suffering from a panic attack. This was the case when I experienced them soon after enlisting into the Singapore Army. Prior to enlistment, I had never experienced a panic attack before. What follows is a summary of what I experienced and how I overcame my panic attacks from both a physical and spiritual point of view. Looking back, it is truly humbling how the feeling of complete helplessness and despair I had while experiencing the panic attacks led me to realize that God is the only One Who can ultimately give His child healing and strength to face earthly trials and challenges each day.

I enlisted into the Singapore Army on February 4, 2014. I remember how nervous and scared I was that

day. I was sent to Pulau Tekong, a relatively deserted island northeast of Singapore, and I was there for a total of four weeks. I was confined there for the first seventeen days after enlistment. However, despite the sudden change of environment, I did not have my first panic attack until near the end of my four-week stay in Tekong. Looking back, this was probably because when I first enlisted, I had no idea what to expect from the sergeants that were in charge of us every day. Once I knew their daily routine, I began to experience anticipatory anxiety about it, and the anxiety led to my panic attacks. I was a recruit in the army at that time, and recruits are given few privileges and increased regimentation as opposed to the average National Service man. My sergeants would often punish and shout at our entire platoon if the area cleaning of our bunks was not up to standard. As recruits, we were given just ten to fifteen minutes to finish our meals, and we were forced to wake up at 5:30AM each morning after seven hours of uninterrupted rest. We also stayed in camp from Sunday night to Friday night. It was not long before going through this on a daily basis led to extreme stress build-up, and the result was the panic attacks.

At first, I did not report this to my sergeants. I dismissed the thought that I was actually suffering from panic attacks. I thought it was just extra adrenaline; after all, I was only

suffering from the occasional fast heart rate at that time. But it eventually got worse. Soon, I began to experience shortness of breath, chest pain, and suicidal thoughts along with the fast heart rate. It was now late April, and I was at a different army camp and given the vocation of a medic. All medics have to undergo a ten week course at this camp. The course is very compact, involving learning a lot of medical terms and procedures. Tests are given about twice a week, and one of the course requirements is performing ten successful IVs on your course buddy. As trainees, we had to undergo the course while keeping our regimentation up to standard or be subject to punishment from our sergeants. We were still required to stay in camp from Sunday night to Friday night. At this point, I was feeling severely stressed by my current environment and reported the symptoms of my panic attacks to the sergeant in charge of me. He was especially concerned with the suicidal thoughts that I was experiencing, and he immediately took me to the camp medical centre to see a medical officer.

By God’s grace, I was able to overcome my panic attacks and return to normal condition about a month after I saw the army medical officer. Antidepressants and a change of environment helped me to heal from a physical standpoint. The camp medical centre prescribed me two antidepressants to take. One helped relieve the panic attacks quickly



“ God is the only One Who can give you healing and strength to face trials and challenges each day. ”

when they recurred; the other helped to increase the brain's production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that increases feelings of happiness. I took it every night before going to sleep, and it helped me significantly despite causing drowsiness, especially in the morning. Along with the prescription of the antidepressants, the army put me on four weeks of medical leave—ample time to be away from the environment of the army camp in order to rest and recuperate. At the end of the four weeks, I saw the army psychiatrist, who downgraded my Physical Employment Status (or PES), making me eligible for just two army vocations: clerk or store man. I went back to camp on June 4—exactly four months since my enlistment. At the time of the writing of this article, I am currently working as Temporary Support Staff (or TSS) at Medic Training Center (MTC). MTC is a unit that performs paperwork for the trainees and instructors who participate in the army medic course. Lord willing, I will be permanently given the vocation of a clerk or store man at a different unit for the rest of my National Service.

From a spiritual standpoint, several things helped me overcome the panic attacks I had been experiencing. First, God through His Word proved to be

the ultimate source of healing. Bible passages such as Romans 8, Psalm 46, and 2 Corinthians 4 helped me to maintain a proper spiritual focus as I went through this trial. So many times, it felt as if God had completely forsaken me. However, these Bible passages, as well as many others, state the opposite: God only strengthens His children as they go through earthly troubles. Second, singing Psalters and hymns also helped me heal spiritually. Singing definitely helps to uplift the downtrodden soul! Third, prayer helped calm me down when I was feeling extremely nervous and afraid. Talking to God is one way to remind yourself that He is there for you in both the bad times and the good times. Finally, spiritual encouragement from friends and family, both here in Singapore and back home in the United States, helped me to overcome my panic attacks. Bear in mind that everyone needs a support network to be encouraged and renewed each day. I strongly encourage you not to hesitate in speaking a word of kindness and encouragement to someone whom you know is struggling, both physically and spiritually, with a trial that our Heavenly Father chooses to place in their earthly path. Thanks to all of you who prayed for me and encouraged me, especially as I was going through this trial!

In conclusion, the most important thing I learned from this experience is that God is the ultimate source of healing. This statement is so easy to confess by mouth, but you can only come to know this when you go through a trial so difficult that there are times when you are drowning spiritually and have no idea what to do. Only then can you come to realize that God is the only One Who can give you healing and strength to face trials and challenges each day.

*“Only God can move a mountain*

*Only God can calm the sea*

*Only God can heal a wounded spirit*

*Only God, only God*

*Only God can hear my heart's cry*

*Only God my sin atone*

*Only God can give us calm assurance*

*Only God, only God*

*God Almighty, most Holy, wise God*

*Thou art the power, and the glory,*

*Oh God, our God”*

- Only God, Mary McDonald

# COVENANT LIFE AND OUR DAILY DEVOTIONS

>> Elisa Boon



*Elisa Boon* is a confessing young adult in CERC.

How often do we do our personal devotions? Do we do it in a rush? Do we do it grudgingly and only because our parents force us to do it? Are our hearts in it? Do we give priority to our personal devotions over all our other daily activities?

The Oxford dictionary defines “devotion” to be love, loyalty, or enthusiasm for a person or activity. Our personal devotions should hence stem from our love for God and always be placed in first priority. Do we display love, loyalty, and enthusiasm when it comes to spending time with God daily?

Let us be reminded of how important daily devotions are in our Covenant Life with God and may we be encouraged to spend time with God in prayer and the reading of His Word daily.

## **Covenant Life**

According to Prof. Engelsma, the Covenant of God with His elect is a unique relationship of intimate fellowship in mutual love. And this intimate relation of friendship is

established in our Lord Jesus Christ. God reveals this in Scripture, saying, “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” (Jeremiah 7:23) And in Jeremiah 31:33, “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” God claims us as His people and as His children we are called to keep this Covenant by living out the Truth of the Covenant. This can be done in so many ways, for example, obeying God’s commandments, and living antithetically in marriage and in the institution of the home. However, in this article, we will focus on how we can keep the Covenant by doing our daily devotions.

## **Covenant Life and Daily Devotions**

What is vital in maintaining relationships with your friends, parents, and those that you love? Communication, isn’t it? It is only through continuous perseverance and patience in communication that we discover what the other party likes or dislikes, what their personality is like, and what their desires are—among many other things. It requires communication to form a close and intimate friendship between two parties.

This is the same for the relationship we have with God. In order to have a Covenant life with God, communication with God is key. God

communicates with us through the preaching of His Word in the Bible, and through our daily prayers and devotions. But the most intimate and personal means of communication we have with God is through our devotions and prayers. It is only through personal devotions that we get to share our unique needs, struggles and thanksgiving with our Covenant Friend. At the same time, we learn of His will for us through the Scriptures.

Personal devotions are also a great Covenantal privilege! When we do our devotions, we enter into the presence of Jehovah to listen to Him speak to us through the reading of His Word (Psa 119:9, 105), and we also speak to Him through our prayers. This is indeed a Covenantal blessing!

There are many verses in the Bible that exhort us to do our devotions! Daily devotions should generally consist of at least two parts: prayer to God and the reading of Scripture. The following two paragraphs show proof from the Bible about praying and reading God’s Word respectively.

### a) Prayer

These verses exhort us to be always praying and always talking with our Covenant Friend. By praying, we are walking with God and will enjoy the blessings of Covenant Life, just like Enoch did. (Genesis 5:22)

Luke 18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

Luke 21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Other verses include Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18.

### b) Reading God's Word

First, we want to read God's Word because His Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Psalm 119:105). His Word reveals His way for us and guides our footsteps as we journey as pilgrims. Just as it would be foolishness for a traveller not to seek counsel from maps, it will be foolishness for a child of God not to seek God's will in the Scriptures. Second, God's Word is a weapon for His children in the midst of this wicked world—it is the sword of the Spirit. (Ephesians 6:17) Daily devotions prepare us for the daily battles we face with the devil; not doing our devotions would be akin to going to the battlefield unarmed!

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Psalm 119:9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Other verses include Act 17:11, Isaiah 34:16, and Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

We can also learn from many godly men in the bible who showed such devotion for doing their devotions (pun intended) and enjoyed the fruits of this Covenantal exercise. Look at David who prayed three times a day and always sought after God (Psalm 55:17; 63:1,6), Daniel who continued to pray and worship God despite threats to his life (Daniel 6:10), Job who esteemed the words of God more than food for his body (Job 23:12) and Jesus who set the example for His disciples and followers by making prayer and devotions His priority and exhorted them to do the same (Mark 1:35; Matthew 6:6).

### Spiritual Laziness

Today, there are many attacks of the devil targeted at this Covenant Life we have with God. The message of the world is to live life to the fullest, to pursue material wealth and high-flying careers, to seek fun and all sorts of worldly entertainment so much so that the wonderful Truth and the importance of the Covenant is pushed to a dark corner of a youth's closet and forgotten. As Christian youth, we must be vigilant and not fall into the devil's temptations which lead us away from the blessedness of keeping God's Covenant. Applying this specifically to daily devotions, let us beware of spiritual laziness. A spiritually lazy youth neglects his prayers and the reading of God's Word; he lacks appreciation for the Truth and takes it for granted. A spiritually lazy generation would be detrimental to the church and even the denomination because apostasy begins with spiritual laziness! This is so because he would choose worldly entertainment or

the pursuit of worldly goals over reading God's Word and prayer. He will then lack a good understanding of Scripture, which will allow false doctrines to creep into the church easily.

### Conclusion

My fellow youth, when we plan our week's or day's activities, let us consider these: "Will I have enough quiet time alone to meditate on God's Word? Does playing computer games or watching the television edify my soul? Can I put some of these things away and spend more time cultivating the Covenantal relationship I have with my Covenant Friend? Am I just giving excuses when I say that I do not have time for God?"

May we be encouraged that there is much spiritual profit in doing our devotions and how it adds to the blessedness of the Covenant Life we have with God. All the attempts we make to read God's Word and develop spiritually will surely be rewarded by God's grace. Through devotions, the reality of God's grace and love for us will become more apparent; and when God's Word becomes more precious to us, we will have a much deeper comfort and security as we live as pilgrims in this world.

Let us press on in keeping the Covenant through doing our daily devotions, and be comforted by the spiritual profit we will have as shown in Proverbs 13:4, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat."

# What is Reformed? Reformed Worship (V)

>> Prof. Hanko



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To be Reformed in worship means to include in our worship only those elements that the Scriptures require. This rule is called “The Regulative Principle of Worship”. The principle means that the holy and infallible Scriptures “regulate our worship”, in all respects: in how we worship and in what elements may be included in our worship. God has the right to tell us exactly how we must worship him. The Queen of England has the right, as queen, to tell us how we are to behave in her presence. If we do not do what she says, we may not bring a request to her or talk with her. She has that right by virtue of her high office as ruler over us. God is our Creator and Saviour and has every right to determine how we behave when we come into his presence. This is true when we come before him in prayer; it is also true when we come to him in public worship.

The regulative principle of worship is defined in our Heidelberg Catechism. It is part of the Catechism’s explanation of the second Commandment: “What doth God require in the second commandment? That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word” (Q & A 96).”

That Scripture is our rule for worship does not mean that in some passage in the Bible God gives us a list of things we may do (and must do) in worship. Scripture is not like that. Scripture is God’s revelation of His will for His church in their life as a church in the world. God worked this way in the old dispensation when he gave Israel laws, not only in how they ought to live, but also laws for how they should worship in the tabernacle and temple.

In the new dispensation, because Christ had finished His work and given the church His Spirit, the rules for worship were given by the example of the apostles in their work and by their instruction in the churches. This

does not mean that the rules were suddenly changed from what they were in the old dispensation; no, the rules remained the same, but they took on a different form. In the old dispensation Israel only had the types and shadows of Christ to go by; in the new dispensation we have the Spirit of Christ in our hearts to guide us.

It all comes down to this. I would like you to read Hebrews 4 for your devotions today. The title of the chapter is found in verse 1: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” The key idea of worship is “entering into God’s rest”, with all the emphasis on the word “rest”.

When God finished His work of creation, He “saw all that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” It surely did not mean that God looked over His creation and could not find any fault in it, or any lack, or any mistake. It means, rather, that God entered into the enjoyment of His own work, knowing that it was completely

“ The key idea of worship is “entering into God’s rest”, with all the emphasis on the word “rest”.

adapted to the purpose God had in mind when He created it. And that purpose was not simply to glorify Himself in the original creation, but His purpose was to glorify Himself in Jesus Christ, His own Son, through the long and difficult way of sin and salvation. The earthly creation was made to serve as the stage on which the great drama of salvation from sin in Jesus Christ would take place.

The fifth commandment calls that purpose God's rest: "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God... for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

So, when God rested on the seventh day, He entered into the enjoyment of His own perfect work of creation. And, therefore, for us to rest on the Sabbath day does not mean inactivity, naps and sleep, or doing something that refreshes us rather than tires us. I read an article once in which some man was arguing in favour of closing all places of business on the Sabbath day because everyone needed time off from work to recuperate and relax. He had no idea of what the Sabbath is all about. God's people are busy on the Sabbath day, often more busy than during the weekdays. At least, they ought to be. But when they truly rest, they, as God did, enter into the enjoyment of God's work of salvation in Christ.

In the old dispensation, Israel had to work six days to earn a day of rest, for the Sabbath was on the seventh day. God told Israel that only if they were obedient to God and kept his law in

“ We receive rest as a gift of grace in Christ so that we can work as God's people in this wicked world. ”

everything they did, could they enter into God's rest; that is, into God's glorious work. But Israel could not keep God's law and earn a Sabbath day. Read 2 Chronicles 36:21: it is a powerful text to show that God brought Judah into captivity because they did not (and could not) keep and enjoy the Sabbath. But the land of Canaan, a picture of heaven, did enjoy its Sabbath rest for 70 years.

Christ finished His work in His resurrection on the first day of the week. And this resurrection of Christ is the great work of God against which there is no greater. We keep Sabbath, therefore on the first day of the week. In the old dispensation Israel had to work six days to enjoy God's work, but the people could not. And so Christ did what we can never do: He performed God's work of salvation by His cross and resurrection for us. And so we enter into God's rest on the first day of the week, for we enter into God's rest when God did, in Christ, what we can never do. And so the glorious fact is: (never six days of work to earn rest) we receive rest as a gift of grace in Christ so that we can work as God's people in this wicked world. And the final Sabbath is in Heaven when we enter into God's rest forever and ever in the full salvation we shall receive in that day. Sabbath is,

therefore, a day for praising God and thanking Him for doing for us what we could never do, and taking us into His enjoyment of His work for us.

Now we come to that part of our discussion in which we must talk about what Scripture requires of us in order to properly worship our God.

Some churches practice what they claim is purity of worship, and they insist that by including in or excluding various elements from worship, they are "pure" in their worship. By implication it seems to me that by this term "pure" they are saying that anyone who does not observe the practices they observe is not worshipping God "purely".

Others go to another extreme and include in their worship elements that cannot be justified by appeal to Scripture. I refer to such things as liturgical dance, drama, film productions, children's services, chorus songs displayed on a large screen in front of the church, and audience participation in Bible teaching. We have to find our way through these many differing ideas in search of what God wants; for what God wants, we must do.

But I think I will wait with this part of discussing "Reformed Worship" till another article.

# Teaching Children Devotions

>> Connie Meyer



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The topic of teaching children how to have devotions is broad and covers several areas. There is personal prayer, and meditation and reading of Scripture, and there is family prayer and reading of Scripture. Very young children cannot read for themselves, of course, and must be led in devotions. But the question is, how do we teach our children to have devotions at any age, and especially, how to have personal devotions when they are able? The question involves the spiritual growth of our children, and so it is tremendously important.

## **Devotions with Young Children**

Very young children see and hear what is going on around them and as they are included in family devotions, they can very quickly learn that this is a time to be reverent, to listen, and to pray. Very young children can be taught to say “Amen” at the end of family prayer. This is more than tradition. This includes them in the

prayer. They learn that the prayer uttered by father or mother was their prayer, too. They are taught to close their eyes in prayer as well, to keep anything from distracting them from the important activity of communing with God. It is good to speak of these things with our children, telling them why they must do these things with us, including telling them what “Amen” means—that it is not just a signal that the prayer is finished.

That we include them in our devotions reveals a certain attitude, an attitude that we do not count them as lesser Christians in this activity. Yes, they might be very young, but God puts the same Spirit in them that He puts in us. Jesus speaks of the faith of a little child. What a small child is able to glean and understand at times can often be amazing and ought not be underestimated. Although they can be very immature and need much instruction and discipline, we may not discount their faith. Faith is a gift, no less to them as it is to adults.

## **Teaching Children to Pray**

Before children are able to compose prayers on their own, they can be taught small form prayers. There are some traditional ones: “Lord, bless this food for Jesus’ sake. Amen”, and “Now I lay me down to sleep...” or “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. Amen.” But again, this is more than tradition. If parents use this method, they might vary what prayers they

teach their children to recite, but the goal is to teach them that prayer is for them as well. The form prayers begin to teach them some of the things they must pray for all their lives, not just when they are little. These are our prayers for all of us. When they pray these prayers, we pray with them.

This is to follow Jesus’ example. The disciples asked Jesus, “Teach us to pray.” What did Jesus do? He taught them the Lord’s Prayer. We, both young and old, learn to pray from that perfect of all form prayers, and we pray that beautiful prayer all our lives long. We recite it in the Reformed forms for Lord’s Supper, marriage, and more. We do well to teach our children to memorize especially those glorious words from their earliest years.

The theology behind teaching our children to pray the Lord’s Prayer is not to be taken for granted. Not everyone does this, nor even allows this. That we together with our children address God as “our Father” speaks volumes. He is our Father as adults and He is their Father as children, and we all know it. We know it conclusively for ourselves and we know it organically for our children. In Covenant promise, God has promised to gather His children from our children. That does not mean He gathers them all head for head, as the difference between Jacob and Esau so plainly shows. But without that promise, there would be no Covenant seed at all. He does gather His own

from our seed—He said so. To acknowledge that God is indeed our Father and the Father of our children is to acknowledge in faith that what He promised is true. The promise is to believers and their seed. That is Scripture, and that is Reformed. We do not have to wait until we see some evidence of the activity of faith in their lives before we teach them to pray to their Father; just like we do not wait to see some activity of faith in them before they are baptized as infants. We baptize them and we teach them to pray based on the same principle: God's Covenant promise.

Jonathan Edwards, a famous eighteenth-century Puritan preacher and theologian, has infamously called his own children "little vipers". That was not because they were particularly naughty children, though they may or may not have been. The reason he called them that was doctrinal. He viewed them no differently than the savage heathens that lived not so many miles away from him in that day of colonial America. Perhaps he believed his children had an advantage to being saved because they were raised in a Christian home and were brought to church every Sunday, but they still needed to do something to be saved. They were not born that way, Edwards taught.

That is not Reformed. If that would be the case, there would still be a condition that must be met by the elect children in order for them to be saved. Something else has to happen before they may say, "Our Father". Even though Edwards vehemently opposed any label of Arminianism, viewing his children in this way amounts to that. Rather, our Reformed baptism form speaks of our elect children's accomplished salvation. This is the first

answer that parents must acknowledge under oath: "...although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of his Church ought to be baptized." They are sanctified in Christ. That is present tense. By God's grace, they are sanctified members of Christ's body already, even as we as adults are. We believe that. We confess that. Sanctification is part of salvation, and therefore we are saying they, even as little infants, are saved along with us. And the result is: we teach them to pray to our Father in heaven along with us from their earliest days.

We also confess that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness, as the Heidelberg Catechism teaches us. Gratitude is also no less important for our children than it is for us. Both they and we must learn to grow in this most profound activity of thanks. This, too, is something we strive to teach them as they grow older—that prayer is thanks and that all our requests show how much we trust in our heavenly Father. In utter reliance on Him, all thanks and praise is due only to Him.

### **Family Devotions**

All of this emphasises how important family devotions are. A set time of devotions together as a family each day will be a key time for teaching all these things about prayer to our children; and again, showing them that they are to be included in such important Covenantal activities.

Though it can be done at other times if necessary, it is most often to best advantage to have family devotions together at meal times. As the family gathers around the table to eat, not only are the members already

conveniently seated together, this is also when we are to acknowledge that God has given us the food that is set before us, to ask His blessing upon it, and to thank Him for it. Unbelievers receive food at God's hand too, but it is not a blessing to them. Our very prayers at mealtime say: there is only particular grace and no common grace! All these things are shown to our children as we pray together when we eat. Opening and closing our meals with prayer, along with reading a portion of Scripture together before we close, are, indeed, activities of the Covenant, expressing the relationship we have as God's people with our Lord.

### **Reading Scripture Together**

That this relationship is also expressed in our reading of the Word together in devotions also bears instruction to our children. For very small children, they will learn how to sit still and listen while a portion of Scripture is read. That instruction will also greatly help the child as he or she must also learn to sit in church and reverently listen to the sermon. Sound Bible storybooks can be helpful for some devotional times with young children as well. But as soon as a child is able to respond and talk, more than listening can be done. As father reads a passage from the Bible, he might stop at certain points and ask questions of the little ones, to see if they are understanding what is being read. Responses can be very surprising. At times children are able to understand much more than we might expect, and at other times we cannot predict what they do not yet understand, thinking that what was presented was quite clear and simple to us. Such questions and answers can make for very precious times in the Word together.

As children grow older and can read for themselves, one practice we have found to be helpful is to provide a Bible to all the children and require each to read a verse or two in turn around the table. This not only helps to keep everyone's attention, it also is conducive to discussing the passage together after it is read. This might involve more preparation on the parents' part, to have already read over the text and thought of some questions that can be discussed as a family, but gaining such involvement of the whole family in the discussion is to experience great spiritual richness. As with the younger children, we also cannot take for granted what older children may—or may not—be understanding. It is well to ask them. In addition, as issues come up in our lives, we can together endeavour to apply the Word we have just read to those circumstances. All this becomes very blessed communion of the saints.

reading and learning in our devotions. In fact, one way to monitor children's devotions is to ask them from time to time what they are reading and learning in their devotions.

But they also learn by direct instruction. Having devotions on their own, as soon as they are old enough to do so, must simply be a requirement. Not legalistically, but the attitude must be communicated to them of the great importance that such activity has in the life of a child of God. We do not merely have to have devotions—we want to have devotions. How wonderful to require what we want to do! We want to pray, read, and study God's Word because He loves us, and we get to know the One we love more and more as we spend more time in prayer and in His Word. That's devotions. That's part of life in the Covenant—a very important and precious part.

grace to see and understand more of His truth and doctrine.

On another practical note, as children mature and are able to both read and write proficiently, providing a journal for them to use in personal devotions can be helpful. Reading is one thing, but being able to put down onto paper a summary of what one has just read and learned is another. This requires more time and effort, of course, but the exercise is imminently profitable—for young and for old. Questions can be written down as well. Sometimes one has many more questions than answers. But as the passage is in this way thoroughly studied and digested, often more answers come into view as the Spirit answers our prayers and opens our eyes to the Word. What was so puzzling on one day may become clear on the next, or the following, day. If a journal is kept, these questions, thoughts, and answers are not forgotten, as otherwise can so easily happen. Having the journal to read over later on can prove to be helpful as well.

These are only some thoughts and suggestions for teaching children to have devotions. Other saints may have found other helpful tools and practices to be profitable as well. But however it is manifest, life in the Covenant is precious beyond words, and both personal and family devotions are a significant part of that life. Psalm 119:18 is but one verse that embodies our prayer and experience in this regard: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." May we so instruct our children and include them in the wonderful gift that God has given us to fellowship with Himself in this way. May God as our Covenant Father so continue to reveal Himself more and more to us as His chosen Covenant friends. Such is to the praise of His glorious name.

“ We want to pray, read, and study God's Word because He loves us, and we get to know the One we love more... ”

### Personal Devotions

What about personal devotions? How do we teach our children to have those? By example first of all. They need to see us praying and digging into the Word ourselves, using a concordance or commentary when we need help in understanding a text because we are not content to leave a passage with little or no comprehension. They need to see us compare Scripture with Scripture as we meditate on that passage, taking the time to study the context of the text as well. They learn as they hear us talk about what we are

As we do these things more and more, we become more conscious of the fact that the God of the universe, the God who created all things and controls all things according to His immutable and omnipotent counsel, is speaking to me. And who am I to deserve such favour? This is nothing short of a wonder of grace! But that's real life in the Covenant. Our children need to know that they are part of that life and wonder. God reveals Himself to us and to them in His Word. Thus prayer is an important part of personal devotions as well. God answers our prayers for



# EXAM STRESS!

>> Isa Chan



Isa Chan is a confessing young adult in CERC.

If there is one characteristic of Singaporean students, it would be the huge amount of stress they face. Singaporeans are especially obsessed with grades because, as a country with few natural resources, we rely heavily on our human resource. Hence, the government and our education system place a large amount of pressure on students to “squeeze” the maximum potential out of them. Schools become very competitive, and instead of a healthy learning environment, students feel like they are pushed beyond their abilities to perform at a certain level. Although the pressure comes from various sources such as competitions and projects, exams are major culprits. How should Christian students deal with exam stress?

Exams are amoral—they are not wrong in themselves. However, they can be made into an idol if, in our hearts, parents and students place them as more important than God. Because of the great emphasis our education system places on results, Christian families have to be careful not to conform to the world in this respect. This is a real danger as we see students being sent for many tuition lessons outside of school. Parents play

a big role in making sure that their children do not place their education and exams as priority over everything else. If parents prioritise education over Christ (for example, by allowing the child to skip second worship service on a Sunday in order to study for exams), the child will be led to think that studies are more important than God.

There may be some people who are not stressed out by exams, and that is one of God’s gifts that they can be thankful for. For those who easily feel the pressure of exams, fret not—God’s Word will be your guide.

Let us begin to talk about how to manage stress by first bringing our attention to our calling to walk worthy of our vocation which the Lord has called us to do. Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might...” In our calling as Christian students, we are not spared from stress. A “*bo chap*” (Hokkien dialect for “indifferent”) attitude, or putting in minimal effort and not caring about our studies, does not speak well of us, as studying is our God-given vocation in this stage of our lives. As students, we have to do our best to glorify God’s name.

The best way to manage exam stress is preparation. As the saying goes, “practice makes perfect.” Practice, practice, and practice. We have to pay attention in class (even if the lesson is really boring) and do all our assigned homework. This implies that we have to have enough rest at night so that we have the energy to stay awake when we are supposed to. If we find ourselves not doing so, or when

we procrastinate in our preparation for exams, we will accumulate to ourselves much stress when the exam date draws near. Furthermore, by being attentive students, we are being a good testimony to those around us and living in obedience to God’s Word in Ecclesiastes 9:10.

The Bible also instructs us to prepare ahead diligently. Ecclesiastes 6:6 and 8 says, “Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise... [she] provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest.” The ant is a hardworking insect which gets ready for winter by collecting food beforehand. God calls the ant that prepares for the days ahead wise—and those who do not, sluggards. Similarly, before our exams arrive, we should consistently and diligently practice in order to be prepared for them.

We need to be wise and manage our time well. This can be done by coming up with and following schedules and timetables. The world has a practice of “mugging”, which means studying for the exam at the last minute. Mugging actually increases stress by making you feel unprepared and mentally tired, especially if you “burn the midnight oil”. Mugging also shows that we have not been using the time that God has given us wisely. Time is a precious gift that God has given us and we should redeem the time by carrying out our Christian duty. This means that any misuse or wastage of time is a sin. On the other hand, we should never study so much that we neglect our spiritual life. Our first calling, after all, is still to be children of God. Signs that we are studying too much include

studying till very late on Saturdays—or even studying on Sundays—and not having enough time for personal or family devotions.

Another way to prepare is to ask and clarify any doubts we may have quickly. The quicker our questions get answered, the more ready we will be for the subsequent, related topics. This will help to ensure that we know our subjects sufficiently well to face our exams, and it should help us feel more confident as we prepare for our exams. One thing that may hinder us from clarifying our doubts is pride. We may be afraid to be looked upon as less smart than others. However, we are called to be humble and to do our best, and thus there is no shame in asking questions and clarifying doubts.

If you are currently in a situation where you have squandered all your time away and your exams are just around the corner, there is not much left to do but to just give your best with whatever time and energy you have remaining. More importantly, be thankful for whatever God gives and move on by learning to be diligent.

Even though we may have prepared with the very best of our abilities, some amount of stress is unavoidable. We have to learn to accept stress and not let it cause us to be so nervous that it affects our performance in the exam hall.

“Thy will be done.” Prayer is such an essential part of our Christian life, and even more so when we face stress from exams. It brings us great comfort to know that we can go to God and speak to Him. But, it is also a great temptation to pray for excellent marks; and when we receive unsatisfactory grades, we complain against God. That is why we must always pray for God’s will to be done. Praying right before the exam always helped me in calming myself down and reminding myself of how God’s sovereign will is always done. Before the exam paper, I would pray for strength to write and wisdom to know what to write. I would also thank God for His preserving grace and ask that He would give me contentment no matter how the exam, or my result, turns out to be. After the exam, I would pray again and ask for contentment and

humbleness. Even though our prayers are not perfect, we know that God will hear us and answer us, because our Lord Jesus intercedes for us to make our prayers to God perfect.

Finally, God has given each of us different gifts. Not everyone will get so-called ideal grades, but we are called to receive and use whatever God has given us with thanksgiving and not grudgingly. Not doing well in exams is not the end of the world. So long as we, with a clear conscience, can say that we have walked worthy as students, we know that we can rely on God who will work all these things for our good. After all, our purpose in life is not acing exams, nor is it about any earthly goals, but it is to fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Philippians 4:6-7: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

## A Summary of “Encouraging Next Generation to Read”

>> Melina Chong



Melina Chong is a confessing young adult in CERC.

At the annual meeting of the RFPA a year ago, Pastor Huizinga delivered a speech on “Encouraging the Next Generation to Read”. Many who have heard or read this speech have been greatly edified by it. This article aims to capture the essence of the speech, and to encourage reading.

The subject on reading was introduced with an illustration of a banqueting table with different guests. We focus on the man seated at the first position

of the table. The man has before him a good hearty meal. He is called the “devourer”. He selects a choice bite, brings it toward his mouth, chews, and swallows it. He continues eating until his plate is empty.

What exactly does this picture depict? A good hearty meal represents sound and spiritually edifying literature, while the man is the reader. Devourers read spiritually edifying literature, and allow what they read to impact their

lives. Their joy and excitement about the content of their reads oozes out, bubbles over, and they cannot but talk to others about it. Books after books are read, and the love for God deepens with each read.

Spiritually edifying literature includes the Bible, the confessions, and anything that expounds Biblical concepts. Such literature does not limit itself to Protestant Reformed works. A non-exhaustive list of such works includes devotions, meditations, works of church history,

and catechism teaching. Reading privately is important when learning how to exhort and grow in doctrine. The command goes forth to not only pastors, but also to every child of God.

Third, we have an account of the apostle Paul awaiting his death sentence in prison. Paul requested for Timothy to bring him books (2 Timothy 4:13). The books, especially the parchments, provided great comfort and edification to his soul. This should be the cry of God's people, to desire good literature in the darkest of times.

images are used to communicate the same messages that words do. Words are shortened into abbreviations and are truncated, reducing the time the mind spends with words. Critical thinking and meditation are seldom practised.

As such, a few practical ways to promote and encourage reading sound, spiritually edifying literature are suggested.

#### 1. Support the Preaching

Pray and support the seminary. Pray



Can you unite your voice with the Prophet Jeremiah and say, “Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart”? (Jeremiah 15:16)



and commentaries.

### Significance of Reading in God's Covenant

Reading has a significant place in the Covenant of grace. It has been used as an instrument of God to fulfil His promises, and this can be demonstrated by Scripture.

First, in Israel's history, Moses and the leaders after him read the book of the Covenant to the people. The book of the Covenant contained God's laws and promises for Israel. Apostasy crept in when the book of Covenant was not read. The book of the Covenant was found and read during the period of which King Josiah reigned (2 Kings 23:2). Reading of the book normally led to spiritual prosperity; and conversely, the neglect of it caused apostasy.

Second, the young pastor Timothy was commanded to ‘give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine’ (1 Timothy 4:13). Reading publicly is important for church worship

Fourth, Revelation 1:3 states that ‘Blessed is he that readeth’. Those who read the book of Revelation publicly or privately are blessed. By extension, this refers to the whole Bible and even faithful expositions of books of the Bible.

Last, but certainly not least, is the Bible itself. God in His perfect wisdom chose to reveal Himself to His people through the Bible. He reveals Himself through His written revelation instead of other means! To learn about Jesus Christ through the Scripture requires reading. This further emphasises the absolute importance of reading and its place in the Covenant. Through reading, we learn about Jehovah God and His saving work through Christ. Hence, read we must!

### Practical Ways to Promote Reading

The modern world indirectly discourages the deep thinking reading requires, with an increase of visuals in the form of pictures and videos as replacement. These captivating

for the ministers and ensure that young people sit under the preaching. The preaching of the Gospel is ‘the power of God unto salvation’ (Romans 1:16). The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of those who sit under the preaching, transforming them and renewing their minds. A hunger and thirst for God is developed, and it ignites the desire to learn more about God.

God uses His Word preached to spark the interest in a young person's heart and tugs at the heartstrings. The young person wants to find out more about the topic which was preached during service. The young person goes home, searches for a book or magazine on that topic and reads to learn more.

#### 2. Encourage Preparation for Future Service

Redeem the time, read! Reading solid, spiritually edifying literature helps the young person grow in knowledge of the truth. Young men, prepare for the day when you would be serving as an office-bearer in church. Young

ladies, the call goes out to you as well. Read and learn to understand God's revelation. We will never have enough knowledge, but let not the lack of knowledge hinder your service in God's Kingdom.

### 3. Encourage Partnership

Find an accountability partner. One who is able to hold you accountable, encourage you and motivate you to read. This partner can be a parent, sibling, a spouse or a trusted friend. Decide on a book that the both of you would read at your own time, and set a specific time for discussion.

Reading of a book sometimes takes its toll and it might be difficult. A weary reader must not be discouraged. This is where the accountability partner steps in. Be encouraged and motivated by your partner. Let this partner remind

you of how far you have gone from the beginning of the book. Let this partner remind you of how much you have benefited from reading. Let this partner remind you that the more you read, the easier it is.

Encourage deeper thinking, and try peer-paraphrasing. Synthesize and paraphrase what you have read to your partner. You could paraphrase from the same book both of you read, or it could be from a different book. Spend some time paraphrasing after each chapter, and share with your partner what you paraphrased. Let reading be an enjoyable and rewarding experience for the both of you.

### 4. Encourage Portioning

Do not look at that thick book sitting on your shelves and get daunted before reading it. Allow yourself to

divide the book and portion it into bite-sized sections. You do not have to read a whole book nor a chapter at a go. You would be surprised at how much can be covered when reading manageable, bite-sized pieces!

Portioning also makes you realise that having no time to read is really just an excuse. It is not a matter of having no time to read, it is a matter of allocating time to read. Prioritise reading, read that bite-sized bit after your devotions. Put away your electronic device if need be. Gird up the loins of your mind, read.

Dear reader, are you a devourer? Can you unite your voice with the Prophet Jeremiah and say, "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart"? (Jeremiah 15:16) If not, pray that God plants in your heart the desire to read.

## The Content Sufficiency of Scripture (Belgic Confession 7b)

>> Pastor Angus Stewart



Pastor Angus Stewart is a minister of the Word at Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland ([www.cprc.co.uk](http://www.cprc.co.uk)).

### ***Belgic Confession 7: The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to Be the Only Rule of Faith***

*We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein. For, since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures; nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul saith. For, since it is forbidden to add unto or take away any thing from the Word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. Neither do*

*we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees, or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, Try the spirits whether they are of God. Likewise, if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house.*

In the last article on *Belgic Confession 7*, we considered what we called

*canon* sufficiency. We do not need oral additions to the Bible, such as charismatic prophecies, or written additions to the Bible, such as the Apocrypha or the Pseudepigrapha. The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are enough; nothing else is required to “supplement” them. In this article on *Belgic Confession 7*, we turn to what we are calling the *content* sufficiency of the Bible. The truths that the Scriptures contain (their doctrines and ethics) are enough for our salvation and godliness.

### **What the Bible’s Content Sufficiency Does Not Mean**

The sufficiency of the contents of Scripture does not mean that the Bible is all you need in order to change the tyre of your car. You need a jack, a lug wrench and a spare wheel. But Holy Writ is sufficient to teach you patience as you change your tyre (even in the rain!) and that you do it without swearing (Philippians 2:14).

Almighty God does not will that children or students spend all their time reading the Bible and none of their time reading their school books on biology or history or whatever (Daniel 1). You need to learn your biology lessons, but always in the light of Scripture. For instance, the truth that God created life on days three, five and six (Genesis 1) and sustains it by His providence (Psalm 104), and that there is more to sex than physical processes (7th Commandment). Read your history books, but know that only the history recorded in the Bible is infallible (John 10:35), that all that happens is the execution of God’s eternal decree (Ephesians 1:11), that everything in history serves Christ’s church (Ephesians 1:22), and that this world’s history ends with our Saviour’s return on the last day (Revelations 6). God’s Word is also sufficient to forbid you doing homework or revising on the Lord’s Day (4th Commandment) and to instruct you to study to please the Lord and not merely your teachers

(Colossians 3:22-25).

The sufficiency of Scripture does not mean that all you need is a Bible in order to buy a house. Merely opening the Word will not tell you what building is to be your future home, nor will a mystical feeling or a divine voice tell you the same. But Scripture’s teaching on money will inform your decision. Can you afford it? Beware of covetousness (Luke 12:15)! Is it near enough to a faithful Reformed church? Remember your children also need to be brought to catechism classes.

In short, the Reformed truth of the sufficiency of Scripture does not mean that it is sufficient for absolutely all things. Not the Bible but a cook book will explain how to make lovely meals!

### **What the Bible’s Content Sufficiency Does Mean**

Let us look at *Belgic Confession 7* to see what it says about the content sufficiency of Scripture in answer to the question, *What is the Bible sufficient for?*

This article of our creed begins, “We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God.” The Bible teaches us about the will of God’s decree, that He has an eternal plan and purpose that embraces all things, and that it is realised in everything which comes to pass. The Word also contains the will of God’s command telling us what to believe and how to live.

*Belgic Confession 7* adds that “whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught” in the Bible. Scripture declares and explains that God alone saves His elect, that Christ accomplishes and applies His salvation to us by the Holy Spirit, that this includes His incorporating us into His church and that our salvation is perfected in the world to come.

The “whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them [i.e., the Scriptures] at large.” This includes especially the worship

of God in church services. Roman Catholicism is particularly opposed here for it uses its anti-scriptural tradition to bring idols, five false sacraments, the papacy, Mariolatry, unbiblical offices, etc., into the church. The Bible also teaches us how we must serve the Lord outside of church services and during every day of the week.

Scripture is sufficient for “doctrine”, the truth about God, man, Christ, salvation, the church and the last things, according to our Reformed confession.

To summarise, the Word of God is sufficient for our doctrine, preaching, sacraments, church discipline, church government, worship, ethics, etc. It is our standard in the church, at home, at work, in society and at all times. Thus, the heading of *Belgic Confession 7* reads, “The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to Be the *Only Rule of Faith*.”

### **Westminster Confession 1:6**

*Westminster Confession 1:6* is also excellent on the sufficiency of Scripture:

*The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.*

First, notice the scope of the sufficiency

of Scripture. The Bible teaches us “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for [1] His own glory, [2] man’s salvation, [3] faith and [4] life.” What rich content sufficiency!

Second, observe the method of the sufficiency of Scripture. The truths of the Bible are “either [1] expressly set down in Scripture, or [2] by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.” Heretics hate the good and necessary consequences of the Word for these expose their false doctrine. Instead, they plead for only the express statements of Scripture. Denying the good and necessary consequences of the Word leads them to charge Holy Writ with insufficiency, which in turn enables departing ministers, theologians and churches to bring in their own false traditions.

Third, since “nothing at any time is to be added” to the Bible, the sufficiency of Scripture excludes “new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”

This is in opposition especially to Charismaticism and Romanism.

Fourth, the objective sufficiency of Scripture does not rule out the need for the almighty, subjective work of the Spirit in us: “Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word” (John 6:45, 1 Corinthians 2:9-12, Ephesians 1:17-18).

Fifth, *Westminster Confession* 1:6 concludes that “there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.” Scripture determines that we meet on the first day of the week, “the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10), the day on which Christ rose from the dead, the Holy Spirit was poured out

and the apostolic church assembled (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2). But at what time on Sundays should we have our services? “Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word” will direct us. At the church’s Lord’s Day services, we sing the Psalms (Psalm 95:2, Ephesians 5:19, James 5:13). But how many Psalms should we sing and how much of each Psalm? Here again sanctified common sense will guide us.

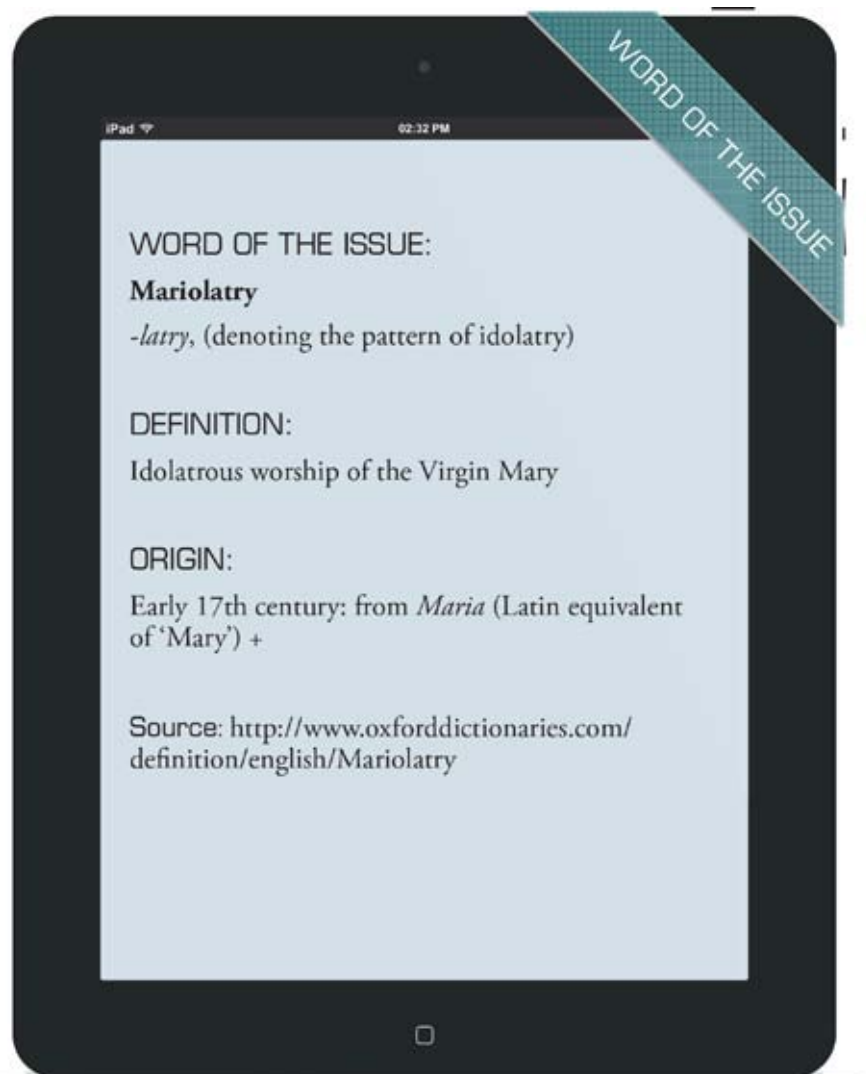
With regard to church government, the church must have at least two elders because the Bible requires a plurality of presbyters (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, Proverbs 11:14). But the precise number will depend on the size of the church and the amount of work. Since elders rule together, they will hold a consistory or session meeting. But how frequent should their regular meetings be? Most churches reckon it wise to have an elders’ meeting once a month but additional meetings may also be required.

Two key texts are cited by *Westminster Confession* 1:6 in this regard: “Let all things be done unto edifying” and “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:26, 40). Church office-bearers and members must apply Biblical principles so that decency and order is the manner or way in which “all things” are done in the church and that the goal of edification is served.

Next time, Lord willing, we will prove the content sufficiency of Scripture from the Bible and see how the believer learns and knows this truth in his heart and life.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by the sufficiency of Scripture as regards its content?
2. Why was the sufficiency of Scripture crucial at the Reformation?
3. How is the sufficiency of Scripture undermined and denied today?



## Church Camp Echo: Confessing the Covenant of God in the Psalms

>> Jonathan Langerak, Jr.



*Jonathan Langerak* is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in West Michigan, USA. He is currently studying in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

At the 2014 CERC church camp, we were reminded of why we as Reformed people love the Psalms so dearly and love to read, pray, and sing them in our churches and lives. The Psalms, with the rest of Holy Scripture, teach the doctrine of God's sovereign, unconditional, eternal, gracious Covenant, which Covenant is the living, personal, relationship of love and friendship Jehovah has established between Himself and His elect people in Jesus Christ. This is the only doctrine of the Covenant that brings all glory to Jehovah and to Jesus Christ, the Covenant Saviour, and comforts and assures the sinful human members of that Covenant of their salvation.

The Triune God has established this Covenant in eternity with the man Jesus Christ, firstborn of the elect of God. The Psalms tell us of this eternal reality in Psalm 2:7: "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," where the Psalmist records, by inspiration, the declaration of the Triune God to the man Jesus Christ, Jehovah's king on Mount Zion

and typified in David, who ruled the kingdom of the 12 Tribes from the same mount. And again in Psalm 89:3-4, where Jehovah God speaks, again concerning David, as the type of Jesus Christ: "I have made a Covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations."

Jehovah God makes us and our elect children members of this Covenant. Also, through His eternal decree of election in Christ, He brings us into the reality of the living, personal Covenant relationship through the work of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in regeneration. Psalm 25:14 expresses our experience of Covenant fellowship with God very vividly: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him: he will shew them his Covenant." As Prof. Dykstra explained, the word "secret" is, in the original language, the word "pillow." Astoundingly—unbelievably, were it not in Scripture—this verse teaches that God is as close to us as are a husband and wife with their heads on one pillow, whispering to one another secrets of tender love and affection which they tell no one else. Jehovah tells us His secrets—of salvation, justification by faith alone, sanctification, preservation, and eternal life—chiefly through the preaching of His Word in the gospel of Christ. He tells these secrets to none but His elect children. Though all—elect and reprobate—may hear the words of the secrets, only Jehovah's elect, who have the illuminating Spirit at work in their hearts, are shown, that is, understand and believe, those secrets. Since Jehovah tells the secrets

of His Covenant chiefly through the preaching of the Gospel, it follows that each one who calls himself a member of God's Covenant and a Christian also be and remain a member of a church where the Gospel of grace is proclaimed in all its purity.

The Psalms comfort us in our life of cross-bearing in this sin-withered world with the incomparable and inestimable consolation of God's Covenant. When we are in distress of soul and spirit due to temptation, sin, or doubt concerning salvation, we cry with the Psalmist in Psalm 74:19, 20: "O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor forever. Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." And no Covenant-conscious saint can read that most messianic of Psalms—Psalm 22—without being overwhelmed by the confession of David—really, of Christ himself—from deepest anguish: "But thou art he that took me out of my mother's womb: thou didst make me hope when I was yet upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly" (vv. 9, 10).

If the truth of the Covenant of God is to be this unshakeable assurance for us, then the Covenant must be absolutely established, maintained, and fulfilled by God alone. That is, the Covenant must be gracious, sovereign, and unconditional—dependant in nothing upon the sinful members of that Covenant. This is where the age-long controversy

whether God's Covenant is unconditional or conditional becomes practical and where an absolute and uncompromising rejection of the heresy of the conditional Covenant becomes the obligation and calling of every believer who stands consciously before God's face. It is for this reason and for the glory of the Covenant God—and not because they enjoy bashing churches and men—that pastors warn against certain specific churches where the heresy of a conditional Covenant is allowed to grow and spread unchecked and against certain men who privily—or not so privily—bring this damnable heresy into churches today (2 Peter 2:1). As soon as you believe that the Covenant becomes dependent

upon you, even in the smallest part, if not for its establishment, then for its maintenance and fulfilment, you cannot confess with David and with Christ: "But thou art he that took me out of my mother's womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts." You cannot confess without doubt concerning your elect, Covenant children: "A seed shall serve him; it shall be counted unto the Lord for a generation" (Psalm 22:30). If you cannot confess this, you cannot and do not properly glorify Jehovah the Covenant God. Therefore, the PRCA and her sister churches—two of which bear "Covenant" in their very names!—reject the heresy of the conditional Covenant and maintain without shame—yes, with

thankfulness and humility before Jehovah!—the gracious, sovereign, unconditional Covenant of God governed by God's eternal election.

Of this Covenant we read and sing, and upon it we meditate in the God-breathed Psalms. In the reality of this Covenant we consciously live, bringing forth, baptizing, and catechising Covenant children; marrying in the Lord without divorce and adulterous remarriage; and keeping ourselves consecrated to our Father in heaven and unspotted from the world in an antithetical walk. We look in hope unto the fulfilment of this Covenant in the new heavens and new earth in the day of Jesus Christ, waiting "to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13).

## Church Camp Echo: God's Glory Displayed O'er All the Earth

>> Sarah Kortus



*Sarah Kortus* is a member of Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan and is married to Matt Kortus. She graduated from Calvin College and is currently a third-grade teacher at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, Michigan.

The Church Camp in Malaysia was a delightful experience in many regards, from the speeches about God's Covenant, to the wonderful Christian fellowship, to the fun group activities.

Amazing, too, was the beauty of God's Creation throughout Malaysia.

A favourite Psalm of mine that often ran through my mind as I explored the Desaru Fruit Farm and the Pulai Desaru Resort was Psalm 57, specifically Psalter 155, which is a versification of the same Psalm. David wrote this Psalm when he fled from Saul through various caves in the land of Israel. David speaks of dwelling under the shadow of God's wings, how great God's mercy was, and how God's glory was displayed throughout the whole earth. The specific stanza that I recalled was:

*Be Thou, O God, exalted high,  
Yea, far above the starry sky,  
And let Thy glory be displayed  
O'er all the earth Thy hands have made.*  
Psalter 155, stanza 4.

Upon entering Malaysia and driving through the country, God's glory was evidently displayed. I could not help but immediately notice a startling sight: there were monkeys on the side of the road! To you who live in Singapore, this may not be so strange, but to an American, only used to seeing monkeys inside a cage at the local zoo, this was quite a sight to behold! Besides seeing monkeys, I also saw hornbills, pelicans, lizards, and chameleons. Seeing all these different creatures in the wild was truly amazing to me and reminded me that God not only created these beautiful creatures,



but He also cares for them.

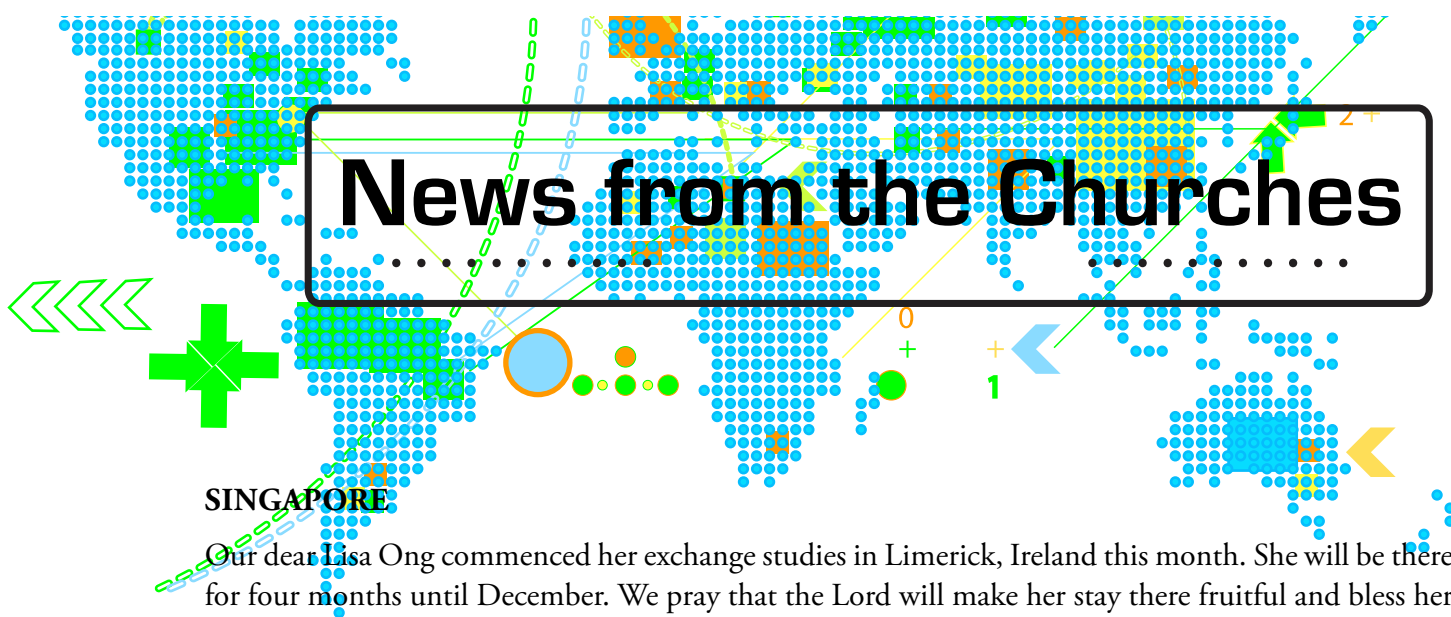
Besides many birds and animals, there were stunning displays in the creation throughout Malaysia. Fields upon fields of palm trees stretched out as far as the eye could see, each one created and upheld by our Father's hands. Visiting the Desaru Fruit Farm showed the diverse the fruits grown in Malaysia, such as mangosteens, durians, and many others. Even in this hot climate, God provides fruit-bearing trees for the sustenance of His creatures. It was remarkable to see all the fruits hanging from the trees, bushes, and vines, every one needing specific care so that each one carefully ripens.

The beauty and greatness of God's creation was also clearly displayed in the South China Sea. As I heard wave after wave crashing upon the shore and walked through the sand, I was reminded of God's Covenant with His people, how He promised to Abraham that his seed would be more than the sand that is on the seashore (Genesis 22:17). What an amazing God and Father we serve! Our God not only created the sea, and the heavens, and the earth, but He also continues to uphold them. May our Father ever give us eyes to see His beauty and glory throughout the entire Creation He has made, and having seen His glory, give all praise and honour to Him.

“

May our Father  
ever give us  
eyes to see His  
beauty and glory  
throughout the  
entire Creation  
He has made...

”



#### SINGAPORE

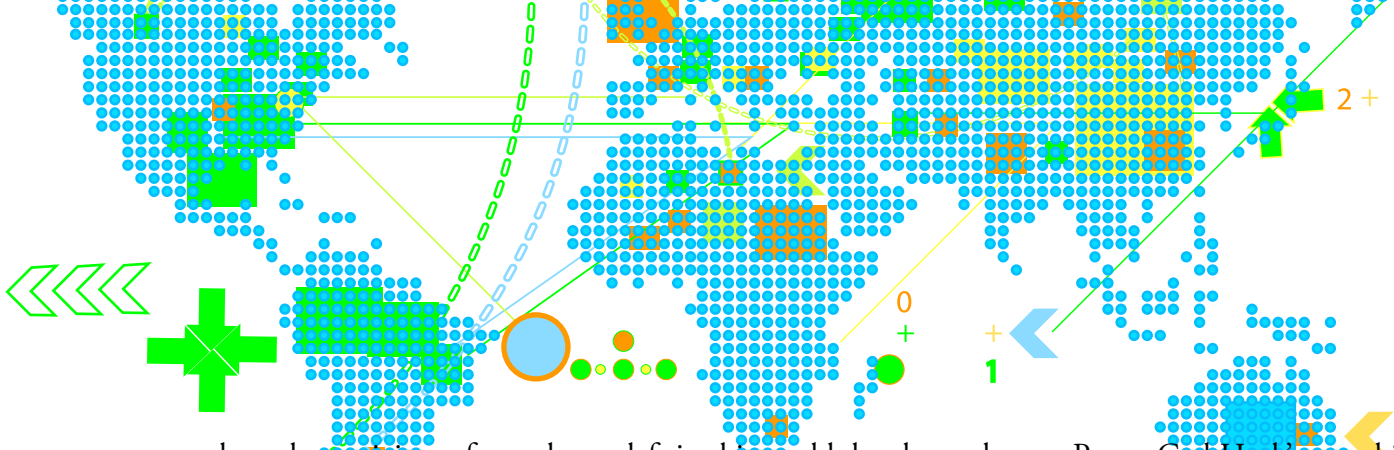
Our dear Lisa Ong commenced her exchange studies in Limerick, Ireland this month. She will be there for four months until December. We pray that the Lord will make her stay there fruitful and bless her in her studies.

CERC celebrated its 27th Anniversary on 21st September. Pastor Lanning preached on the theme “Praise be to our great and merciful God”, which was followed by a short Anniversary programme. We are thankful to our Almighty God for gathering His people into CERC and pray that God's guiding hand will continue to lead us.

Thank God for the recent “Mooncake Gospel Meeting”, on 13th September, in which the Word was preached in Mandarin. Elder Lee spoke on the theme “Righteous through Faith in Jesus Christ” based on Romans 3:21-26. We are encouraged by the number of visitors, especially older folks, who came to hear God's Word. May God be pleased to use our weak efforts for the gathering of His elect children.

#### INDIA

On 31st August, Pastor Lanning, on behalf of Session, gave a presentation about their investigation into a possible avenue for mission work in India. He introduced the contact in India that they have been liaising with: Emmanuel Singh. Emmanuel Singh is 35 years old, is married, and lives in Kolkata, India. He converted to Christianity when he was 14 years old and was originally from a Brethren Church. One day, by God's grace, he found and started to read a book “The Sovereignty of God” by A.W. Pink and became convinced of the truth of the Reformed faith. Just when he thought he was



the only surviving reformed man left in this world, he chanced upon Pastor Carl Haak's preaching on sovereign grace on Reformed Witness Hour, the PRCA's radio channel. Emmanuel then got in touch with Pastor Carl Haak, who put him in touch with three PRCA ministers, namely Pastor Kortering, Pastor Van Overloop, and Pastor Woudenberg. After a year of liaising with Emmanuel, the three Pastors contacted CERC because they were convinced Emmanuel required oversight. Session then formed a committee of three men: Elder Leong, Deacon Lim, and Pastor Lanning. Since then, the committee, Emmanuel, and the three PRCA Pastors have been having regular conference calls via Skype.

Currently, Emmanuel Singh preaches in his home each Sunday. There are typically about ten to twenty attendees. He is also involved in audio recording of the Bible in Bengali and in translation work because as of now there are no good Reformed books in Bengali.

Lord willing, Emmanuel and his wife will be coming to Singapore to meet with our Session and also to experience Reformed worship. The tentative dates are 5th to 12th November.

Isn't it amazing how God works in such marvellous ways to bring His people around the world together? We are extremely grateful for this opportunity God has given to us. May we remember Emmanuel and the Session in our prayers as they continue learning and instructing in the Reformed truth and as they discuss the possibility of setting up a mission field in Kolkata, India.

## USA

On 25th August 2014, the PRC Seminary commenced their 90th year of teaching of young men for the ministry of the Word (**1925-2014**). There are currently five pre-Seminarians for Greek and Hebrew, as well as nine Seminarians in their second year of study. Since 1st July, Seminarian Ryan Barnhill has been interning at Edgerton, MN PRC. He will continue to do so until the end of the year. Thanks be to God for providing men to proclaim His precious Gospel into all the world.

In other news, a public lecture, "Kuyper's Common Grace 'Christianizing of Culture'—Reformed Calling or Ecclesiastical Suicide?", will be given at Sunshine Christian Reformed Church on the East Beltline in Grand Rapids, MI on 26th September 2014, sponsored by Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. The speaker will be David J. Engelsma, Professor of Theology in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. **If you would like to participate, please visit <http://www.commongraceandculture.com>.**

On 8th August, the churches situated around the area were invited to Calvary PRC in Hull, IA for a lecture by missionary pastor, Pastor Wilbur Bruinsma. On 10th August, he gave a presentation on his work in Pittsburgh at Calvary PRC. Thank God for opening doors for His people to do mission work in various parts of the world.

## PHILIPPINES

Lord willing, the next classis meeting of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines is scheduled for 31st October 2014. The churches forming this new Classis are the Berean Protestant Reformed Church (Cubao, Metro Manila; Pastor Vernon Ibe) and the First Reformed Church of Bulacan (Muzon, Bulacan; Pastor John Flores).

The meeting will include various things, including meditation from Scripture as well as an opportunity to hear greetings and thanksgiving to God from other churches.

Should you wish to send your greetings, do send it to:

**P.O. Box 1173 ACPO, Antipolo City, Rizal 1870, The Philippines.**

# Faith of our Fathers Living Still

Isaiah 40:8 "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever, the word of our God shall stand forever."

Aloha Changi - Fairy Point Chalet 3  
December 17-20  
Rev. Andy Lanning



More info at [ck.cerc.org.sg/camp2014](http://ck.cerc.org.sg/camp2014)

## CERC Reformation Day Conference 2014

**Theme: Reformation  
and Development  
of the Truth**

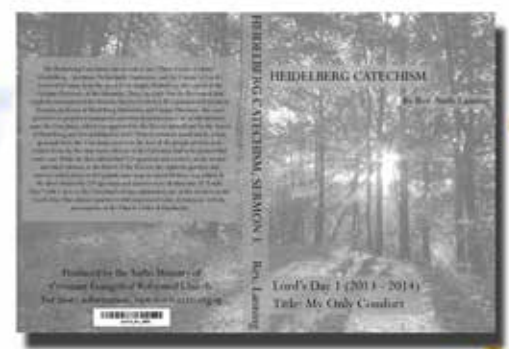
Date: 7-8 Nov  
Speaker: Rev Daniel Kleyn  
Venue: CERC

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Pastor Lanning giving a talk on starting a Christian School



Cake cutting at CERC's 27th Anniversary



Cook-off activity at CK/CKS meeting



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**Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church**

We are a Reformed Church that holds to the doctrines of the Reformation as they are expressed in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt.

Place of Worship  
11, Jalan Mesin #04-00  
Standard Industrial Building  
Singapore 368813

Time of Worship  
Morning Service:  
9:30am to 11:00am  
Afternoon Service:  
2:00pm to 3:00pm

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