

Coram Deo

“Before the Face of God”

Page One....

The beginning of a new year is always a good opportunity to make some positive changes in our lives. Some call these “New Year’s Resolutions”, goals or something else. Here are a few suggestions for 2011:

- Begin a Bible reading program (if you are not already on one). There are several different options available. For years, I have used the daily readings in *Tabletalk Magazine* published by Ligonier Ministries. The most important thing is to get into the Word. In the church foyer you can find ‘A Year in Scripture’, a pamphlet which will guide you in reading through the bible in one year.
- Pray. Set aside a time or times each day to pray. Keep a prayer list or prayer journal.
- Join a K-Group. This has always been the best way that I’ve found to get to know the people of Christ Church.
- Memorize Scripture. I haven’t talked to many people who enjoy memorization work, but I have heard and read testimonies about how verses that have been memorized come to mind at just the right time and circumstance.
- Read good books. I realize that not everyone is a reader – an option would be to listen to audio books – but good books are a great way to learn, be inspired and grow in your knowledge and love for Christ.
- Take a free online course at Covenant Seminary. There are more than 20 free seminary courses available at the Covenant Worldwide Classroom site, including four new courses. You can find the site at: <http://www.worldwide-classroom.com/>
- Write an article for *Coram Deo* or submit a question for Pastor Bob. We are always looking for new contributors and fresh perspectives.
- Exercise. Whether you run, lift weights, or just begin a walking program, it’s good to get some exercise on a daily basis, and be outside enjoying God and His creation.

As we head into 2011, we do so Coram Deo, in the presence of, and before the face of God.

Soli Deo Gloria!









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Christ Church, PCA
1301 N. Linden
Normal, IL 61761
Phone: (309) 452-7927
Pastors Bob Smart, Jeff McCord
David Keithley and Duane Otto

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Editor & Mrs. E: Bill & Tammy Pence
Home Phone: (309)452-5438
Email: bntpence@msn.com




*Pastor's
Corner ~
Dr. Bob Smart*

Noise: Evil's Means to destroy Heaven's Music and Silence By Pastor Bob

As January commences, I look out my window at “a freshly fallen, silent shroud of snow,” and my thoughts went beyond Simon and Garfunkel lyrics to the enjoyment of music and silence. Whereas the sounds of hell are uninterrupted, piercing noise without relief, the “sounds” of heaven are but music and silence according to the book of Revelation. In one glorious chapter on heaven, there is silence for a half hour. This month I hope to woo the reader to treat their sense of hearing with spiritually edifying music and, better yet, silence before the Face of God; *Coram Deo*.

There are three earlier Christian writers who foresaw the dangerous encroachment of noise in the modern world coming—Tozer, Lewis, and MacDonald. A. W. Tozer said the evangelical church in America is noisy like a teenager unable to listen to God's voice of wisdom. He wrote in 1950 from his Christian and Missionary Alliance church in Chicago:

"The accent in the Church today," says Leonard Ravenhill, the English evangelist, "is not on devotion, but on commotion." Religious extroversion has been carried to such an extreme in evangelical circles that hardly anyone has the desire, to say nothing of the courage, to question the soundness of it. Externalism has taken over. God now speaks by the wind and the earthquake only; the still small voice can be heard no more. The whole religious machine has become a noisemaker. The adolescent taste which, loves the loud horn and the thundering exhaust, has gotten into the activities of modern Christians. The old question, "What is the chief end of man?" is now answered, "To dash about the world and add to the din (loud continual noise) thereof." And all this is done in the name of Him, who did not strive nor cry nor make His voice to be heard in the streets (Mat. 12:18-21).

Lewis depicts Evil's strategy to eliminate Heaven's music and silence in the earth with noise overload. In Letter # 22 of C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*, the demon in charge trains "Wormwood," his trainee on "How to Recognize Noise and to Resist Avoiding the Silence:"

My Dear Wormwood,

The whole house and garden is one vast obscenity. It bears a sickening resemblance to the description one human writer made of Heaven; "the regions where there is only life and therefore all that is not music is silence" Music and silence—how I detest them both! How thankful we should be that ever since our Father entered Hell—though longer ago than humans, reckoning in light years, could express—no square inch of infernal space and no moment of infernal time has been surrendered to either of those abominable forces, but all has been occupied by Noise—Noise, the grand dynamism, the audible expression of all that is exultant, ruthless, and virile—Noise which alone defends us from silly qualms, despairing scruples, and impossible desires. We will make the whole universe a noise in the end. We have already made great strides in this direction as regards the Earth. The melodies and silences of Heaven will be shouted down in the end. But I admit we are not yet loud enough, or anything like it. Research is in progress. Meanwhile *you*, disgusting little—

Finally, MacDonald's portrait of true rest and heaven after death is one where there is no more noise, because there is no more conflict with Evil and death. George MacDonald wrote in 'The Hands of the Father,' *Unspoken Sermons*, series I:

Nor shall we ever know that repose in the Father's hands, that rest of the Holy Sepulchre, which the Lord knew when the agony of death was over, when the storm of the world died away behind his retiring spirit, and **he entered the regions where there is only life, and therefore all that is not music is silence**, (for all noise comes of the conflict of Life and Death)—

Let's take some time this month to eliminate as much noise as possible, and treat our ears to the “sounds” of heaven above. Have you ever taken a walk in the snow near some pines at night when all the traffic noise is no longer heard? What a great moment to enjoy God!



A Word from Pastor Dave ~ "My i-Dol"

I just got a new iPad. The latest fad out there and it's MINE. Frankly, I'm surprised I have it so early in its existence... I'm the guy that didn't get parachute pants or my first (and last pair) of stone washed jeans until they were already no longer cool. And yet, as a very generous Christmas and next birthday present combined, I've got my new iPad. Maybe it should be called "eye" pad. I can't stop looking at, picking it up and experimenting with some of its features, just having fun with it (curse the creator of "Crazy Birds"... so many wasted minutes of my life already).

I'm not surprised that I'm having fun with it and I'm not surprised that I've enjoyed it so much. I was surprised about one thing though. That's what I wanted to chat with you about for a few moments. Here's the story...

It's Christmas morning at my in-laws house. Finally the gift shaped like what I imagine an iPad packaging to look like landed in my lap. This was IT. I was finally going to open the gift I had been waiting for, even anticipating (I found out I was getting it several weeks before). I removed the wrapping paper, tore off the clear plastic and removed the lid and there it was, my precharged iPad, waiting for me to bring it to life! So I pulled it out of the box, searched, found, then pushed the power button... instead of coming to life it told me I needed to sync it to my laptop (a flashy little image jumped on the screen to tell me as much). Apparently, without syncing it wouldn't start... at all. Ugh, the computer was in the van (at least I brought it)! Oh well, a little delay never hurt anyone! I ran to the van, jumping snow drifts along the way, grabbed it, returned to the house and slipped back on the couch to pretend to watch the kids open their gifts and "ooh and ahh" at appropriate times, all while turning on my Mac, plugging in the iPad and watching it pull up iTunes as soon as the iPad was connected. Then, another delay. "Can't access the iTunes store"? What?! Of course, it can't! My in-laws don't have wifi (or hi-speed internet access for that matter!) Why did it need to access the iTunes store? I wasn't buying anything. Still, it did and I couldn't. What was I going to do? Oh, I know, I'll swing over to McDonald's in the town nearby and use the free wi-fi there and I can sip on a Diet Dr. Pepper while I'm at it. Now THAT'S the life!

So the wait (seeming like eternity) was a bit longer while the presents continued to be opened and my family continued to enjoy every new gift they opened (this one big gift for me meant getting nothing else to open except a shirt and a gift card so I had to actually love the people around me and wait a bit longer!) Finally, a lull before lunch while everyone pulled gifts from packages and explored... now was my chance. "Wait, can you run these movies by Family Video for me?" Oh COME ON!!! (Where was that love I had a few minutes earlier?) Okay, sure, first Family Video's drop box, and then McDonald's! Finally, I pull into the (empty) McDonald's parking lot... "Open 24 hours... Closed Christmas Day." Really?! Arrgghh! Just as I was about to pull out of the parking lot, it dawned on me to try to grab the wi-fi connection from out in the parking lot. Surely it wouldn't work, the wi-fi connection and McDonald's always gives me fits anyway. I pull open my laptop, open the web browser and almost immediately, I'm signing in through McDonald's wifi and I'm online! Woohoo! I'm pretty sure I thanked Jesus at that point for being so kind. The iPad came to life in a new way, now it was syncing my entire music and movie library, iPhone applications that were compatible, and even my contact list. Wow, nice! Several minutes later, the sync is complete and I'm flipping through the screens and trying it out.

Then IT hit. You know what I'm talking about. It's where you've waited and waited for the big moment to arrive, excitedly start experiencing the moment, then this feeling washes over you. I actually heard myself say it. "So, um, that's it." As amazing as the iPad was (and is) I really think I expected it to do something in me that it didn't do. I guess I expected to feel some sort of "completeness" or what the Bible calls "Shalom." Strange, I know. I should know better, but in that moment, I was reminded of what the Bible says over and over again. We were built for more. There's only One Source that can feed that longing in our hearts. One Spring that satisfies my thirst. One Meal upon whom I can dine for eternal satisfaction. And His Name isn't "iPad." How about you? Did you open something up this Christmas that you momentarily (or are even still) confused with Jesus? I feel your pain. But I also know your forgiveness. It's the same one I got Christmas morning when I worshiped something else for a few minutes. God be praised!

Pastor Dave



small thought on kingdom living ~ Art Moser

On Black Friday, my wife was standing in line at a checkout counter in Macy's when she heard a voice behind her: "Mrs. Moser! Millie!" It was a lady she recognized but whose name she could not recall. It was at least 25 years ago that this lady's son was being evaluated for placement in a special education program. Some of the school personnel were attempting to get him placed in a category which would separate him from other students and provide a lower level of educational experiences. Millie, who had a master's degree and much experience in learning disabilities, recognized that this boy had much more potential than he was being given credit for. Using her position as leverage, she had insisted he be placed in a more appropriate setting. Her job, after all, was to see that students were placed in the least restrictive environment; it was not to see that teachers or principals were made comfortable.

Now this young man was in his thirties. As his mother related his story to Millie she learned that he was prospering, married with three children, holding down an excellent job and doing very well. The mother noted that his church was very important to him. (They are a Catholic family) She thanked Millie profusely for recognizing her son's potential and fighting for the best educational placement for him. It was one of those glowing moments that make the educational profession so worthwhile.

But I would suggest this experience represented more than that. It is, I believe, an example of something that might be called "kingdom living." It could be described as using all the gifts and experiences God has given us to bring *shalom*, peace and well-being, to those around us as we move through the daily experiences of life. The daily experiences may be at the work site where we spend most of our time, or they may be at home among our family, or they may occur at the incidental places we visit—the grocery store, the gym, the library, or at school.

In 1971, I commuted weekly to the University of Iowa for a National Science Foundation Institute on statistics, an area in which I had insufficient background. The professor in Applied Statistics taught his own text. Neither the text nor his lectures were clear expositions of the material. Nor was he of much help when questions were asked; he seemed to prefer not to be bothered by his students' lack of understanding.

On the other hand, my professor in Theoretical Statistics, which I had anticipated would be the more difficult course, was one of the best teachers I have ever encountered. His lectures were clear, his explanations understandable, and he never seemed disturbed when someone asked a question, even if it had also been asked yesterday. In fact, he welcomed questions and comments and spent as much time as needed to ensure that students comprehended the material. His kindness, gentleness, and compassion were evident in the way in which he related to his students. Clearly, he saw his profession as truly teaching the content and implications of the material for which he was responsible. He was sowing *shalom* in that classroom. His students felt valued and comfortable.

As I observed this teacher, I thought to myself, this man must be a Christian. After the last problem on my final exam, I wrote "PTL", a popular acronym in the seventies for "Praise the Lord." When I received the test back, he had written beside it, "He is worthy" and a reference to Psalm 96:4. As I spoke with him later, I thanked him for his exhibition of Christian living in the classroom and how I had surmised that he was a Christian. His response was that that is what he had hoped to convey. He was exhibiting kingdom living.

These examples have come from the field of education since that is my own experiential base. But these principles can be applied anywhere. Each of us, in our own primary field of endeavor, can find ways to spread the peace and joy of Christ's kingdom.

As we begin a new year, we can make this a memorable year by going about our common, everyday living in a memorable way. At home, we can treat the others in our family in a way that conveys we are living in God's kingdom. At work, we can treat our colleagues, our superiors, our employers or employees in ways which indicate that Christ rules in our hearts. By the grace and power of the Holy Spirit we can create a brighter day for the woman at the check-out and the guy who bags our groceries. We can bring our influence to bear at our children's school to reduce bullying. There are myriad ways in which we can demonstrate the character of God in our lives as we allow the Holy Spirit to sensitize us to the needs of people around us.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans 2:4, notes that "God's kindness leads you toward repentance". Maybe as we exhibit God's kindness toward those around us, some of them will be led to Him.

Article Review by Robert D. Smart on “Our Missional God -- Redemptive-Historical Preaching and the *Missio Dei*: A Test Case (Isa 48:16b)” by Willem A. VanGemenen

Dr. VanGemenen’s article fits wonderfully into the process of *semper reformandum*, which not only children of the Reformation but all children of the Church Fathers share in varying degrees. Dr. VanGemenen’s theoretical essay provides a “potential refinement” to laborers already committed to the redemptive historical approach and work of preaching, interpretation, and theology begun and articulated by Geerhardus Vos of Princeton, and further by Edmund Clowney and Richard Gaffin of Westminster Theological Seminary.

The scholarly reader may benefit from learning what the main scholars have been working on in the field of hermeneutics, the recent advances and discoveries for preaching and teaching, and the significant gaps in research that healthy debate promotes when “both sides of the brain” are employed. VanGemenen appeals to the pastor, in particular, to “indwell” the texts preached.

VanGemenen expresses his concern for practical theology by acknowledging the difficulty of redemptive historical preaching and recent contribution of the multifaceted interpretation of the Old Testament.¹ In connecting the two testaments, VanGemenen offers a pastoral orientation that encourages the pastor to preach from the Old Testament without judaizing it, nor seeing it as “an incomplete picture.”² He affirms Christopher Wright’s missional interpretation—the *missio Dei* (the mission of God)—as good way to tie both testaments into one grand narrative of participants in God’s mission: the God of mission, the people of mission, and the arena of mission.³

By building on what Vanhoozer’s form of connectivity, called a “synoptic vision,” VanGemenen sees the “need to undergo a change to bring the two hemispheres of the brain in connection with each other.”⁴ Referencing Ian McGilchrist’s strong plea for Westerners to understand the limitations of the left side of the brain and viewing only the self-contained “virtual world,” VanGemenen believes the right side of the brain (“the Master” and not “the Emissary”) enables the individual to behold “the lived world.”⁵ Giving weight to the right side of the brain enables one to view the text with synoptic vision, which connects the two hemispheres of the brain aright. “The left provides the data and the right integrates the data.” Theoretically, this would allow for a better integration of intersections, avenues, and bridges between Old and New Testaments, creating a web of providential patterning.

By presenting a test case from Isaiah 48:16b,⁶ VanGemenen demonstrates, using Kevin Vanhoozer’s nuanced language, how the pastor-scholar may better learn “to indwell the text.” In this manner, VanGemenen highlights how the focus on the mission, rather than the identity, offers much more participation in every stage of mission. The text predicts Christ’s particular ministry in redemptive history, but it is also an expectation typologically fulfilled in the pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic servants of the Lord. Although only the Lord Jesus can fulfill Isaiah’s vision of the servant, it intentionally includes all servants of the Lord in the same suffering service. This approach precludes the disintegration of meaningful purpose in the lives of every servant in every stage of mission, which must continue until the Last Day.

The servants of the Lord are invited through this approach to indwell Scripture by the Spirit of God and to incarnate the character of their Lord, who is Lord of Moses, the prophets, the sages, the apostles, and ministers of every missionary age.

It is my opinion that this approach will inspire people to experience the text, to research the historical context more thoroughly, and to identify with all the Lord’s servants as He identifies Himself with them.

Preaching is drama, cf. Galatians 3:1. Imagination and the right side of the brain have been given a long, over-due recognition from a well-respected intellectual and scholar to better integrate the information into the experience and lives of people in every missional age. Those who admire and respect Dr. Willem VanGemeran may also notice his integrity by chronicling his many trips around the world in sacrificial service and missions.

1. See Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Introduction," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: the Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (ed.), (Philipsburg: P & R, 1980).
2. Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 46-47, 127-51.
3. Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 27-29.
4. Kevin Vanhoozer, "Lost in Interpretation: Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics," in *Whatever happened to Truth?* ed. Andreas Köstenberger. Wheaton: Crossway, 2005, 121-22.
5. Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary: the Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (Yale University Press, 2009), 14,93, 174, 238-45, 441.
6. Dr. VanGemeran preached from this text at the Northern Illinois Presbytery in 2010.



Ask Pastor Bob...

1. What are your dreams for Christ Church in 2011?
2. We hear your book is soon to be published. Can you tell us more and how we can get a copy?

1. Pastor Bob: 2011 offers hope for one reason: Jesus Christ purchased an endless supply of future grace for His elect, which shall not cease to be lavished on us all the way through out eternity (Eph. 2:6-7). We look forward to every new issue of *Coram Deo*. We look forward to the congregational meeting in January, the ordination of the new officers in February, the new improvements to our nursery and children's church, the missions conference this summer, concerts of prayer, and short-term efforts. We anticipate the wonderful effects of our enthusiastic women's ministry leadership team, CCY's output of solid young adults, more family adoptions and the adoption conference in town, new births of covenant children, repeating our local outreach initiatives from 2010, paying down more debt on building improvements, musicians and sound teams gelling, choral and special services arranged by Lori such as Good Friday & Christmas Eve, another influential men's conference of some sort, supporting homeschoolers and Cornerstone Christian Academy by encouragements, investing in college campus ministries connected to Christ Church, teaching pastors and leaders here and there, and preaching the Gospel of John series through September at Christ Church. There is, however, nothing more thrilling than conversions to Christ and transformation of the lives of His people.

2. Pastor Bob: Thank you for asking. Since I've never done this before, there a similar question within. One of my favorite publishers Reformation Heritage Books has a wonderful connection with Soli Deo Gloria and Ligonier Ministries. The senior editor sent me this letter on November 9, 2010:

Bob,
My best guess is around the end of February. Right now, it is in Dr. Beeke's hands for his editorial review. (Ideally, that would have occurred before it went to typesetting, but that was not a live option at the time.) He was supposed to be finished with his review by now, but his rigorous speaking schedule and grading class papers have overwhelmed him. I spoke with him yesterday about this and he told me that he hopes to finish up with class papers and a couple of other speaking engagements in the next two weeks, and then he will turn back to your book. After his review is complete, we can send it to an indexer, and from there the printer.

Cordially, jay

Note from the Editor: As of this print date, the publishers are working on the cover art, so Pastor Bob's book will be released in March. **If you have a question for Pastor Bob, just send it to bntpence@msn.com.**

Upcoming Events and Conferences

January 21-22 – 2011 Ligonier Academy Conference will be held on the campus of Ligonier Academy. The theme will be "History. Truth. Faith. – Pillars of Christian Orthodoxy. Speaker are R.C. Sproul, Carl Trueman and Stephen Nichols. For more information and to register, go to <http://www.ligonier.org/events/2011-academy-conference/>

January 31-February 4 – Moody's Founder's Week will be held on the campus of Moody Bible Institute and at Moody Bible Church in Chicago. Some of speakers scheduled are John MacArthur, James MacDonald, Joni Eareckson Tada. Among the musicians are Fernando Ortega and Sara Groves. For more information, go to <http://www.moodyconferences.com/foundersweek>

March 18-20 – the **2011 Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology** will be held in a number of cities in February, March and April. The closest city for us will be Grand Rapids, Michigan. The theme will be "Children of God: Adopted into the Father's Love". Speakers in Grand Rapids will be Joel **Beeke, Steven Lawson, Richard Phillips, Derek Thomas. For more information, go to** www.alliancenet.org

March 24-26 – 2011 Ligonier Ministries National Conference will be held at the First Baptist Church in Orlando, Florida. The topic will be "Light & Heat: A Passion for the Holiness of God". This special conference will feature three lectures each by John Piper and R.C. Sproul, and one session with them together. Other speakers are the newly named Ligonier teaching fellows Sinclair Ferguson, Robert Godfrey, Steven Lawson and R.C. Sproul Jr. For more information and to register, go to <http://www.ligonier.org/events/2011-national-conference/>

April 1-3, 2011 - Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology will be held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The conference will also be held in Portland, Oregon, Greenville, South Carolina, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania during the months of February, March and April. The topic for the conference will be: Children of God: Adopted into the Father's Love. More information will be available soon at www.alliancenet.org

April 12-14, 2011 – The 2011 Gospel Coalition National Conference will be held at the McCormick Place in Chicago. An excellent alignment of speakers has been assembled, including Tim Keller, Matt Chandler, Mark Driscoll, Albert Mohler, Alistair Begg, Thabiti Anyabwire, C. J. Mahaney, Josh Harris, Scotty Smith, Ligon Duncan, D.A. Carson, Bryan Chapell, James MacDonald and many others. For more information go to www.thegospelcoalition.org/conferences/2011

May 9-11 – the **2011 Basics Conference** will be held in Chagrin Falls, Ohio (Cleveland area). This year's speakers are Alistair Begg, Rico Tice and John Dickson. The conference theme for this pastor's conference is "Do the work of an Evangelist". For more information, go to park-sidechurch.com/partners/basics/

QUOTE:

As long as you and I understand salvation as checking off a box to get to God, we will find ourselves in the meaningless sea of world religions that actually condemn the human race by exalting our supposed ability to get to God. On the other hand, when you and I realize that we are morally evil, dead in sin and deserving of God's wrath with no way out on our own, we begin to discover our desperation for Christ. -David Platt (from the book Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream)

Upcoming Concerts

- February 10** – John Hiatt and Lyle Lovett will be in concert at the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts
- February 11** – Michael W. Smith and Amy Grant bring their 2 Friends Tour to the Peoria Civic Center.
- February 12** – Michael W. Smith and Amy Grant bring their Two Friends Tour to the Rosemont Theatre in Rosemont, Illinois.
- February 13** – The Rock and Worship Roadshow comes to the US Cellular Coliseum for a 6:00pm concert featuring Mercyme, Jars of Clay, Thousand Foot Krutch, Matt Maher and the Afters, along with speaker Bart Millard. All seats are general admission, just \$10 and only available at the door the night of the concert.
- March 26** – the Winterjam tour comes to the Assembly Hall on the University of Illinois campus for a 6:00 pm concert. Among the acts scheduled to perform are the Newsboys, David Crowder Band, Kutless, Francesca Battistelli and Newsong. All tickets are general admission and are only \$10.
- April 3** – the Winterjam tour comes to the Peoria Civic Center for a 6:00 pm concert. Among the acts scheduled to perform are the Newsboys, David Crowder Band, Kutless, Francesca Battistelli and Newsong. All tickets are general admission and are only \$10.
- April 29** – Third Day and special guest Tenth Avenue North bring the Make Your Move Tour to the Life Changers Church in Chicago.
- April 29-30** – the 35th annual Agape Festival will be held in Greenville, Illinois. Bands include Third Day, Needtobreathe, Hawk Nelson and Tenth Avenue North. For more information, go to www.agapefest.com
- June 30-July 3** – The annual Cornerstone music festival will be held in Bushnell, Illinois. Bands have not yet been announced. For more information, go to www.cornerstonefestival.com
- July 5** – U2 returns to Solider Field with their U2 360 tour and opening act Interpol.
- July 17** – U2 brings their U2 360 tour to Busch Stadium in St. Louis. Interpol will be the opening act.

QUOTE:

Hammer away, ye hostile hands;
Your hammers break, God's anvil stands.

From 'The Great Grey King' by Samuel Valentine Cole

⊖ This and That ⊖

- Respected Reformed-Baptist theologian Roger Nicole went home to be with the Lord on December 11. He had turned 95 years old the day before. Nicole, though not as well known as contemporaries as J.I. Packer, was nonetheless as well respected. He was a founding member of the Evangelical Theological Society, established in 1949; served as an assistant translator for the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible in 1970's; taught for 41 years at Gordon-Conwell, and in 1986 moved to Orlando where he taught at Reformed Theological Seminary. Dr. R.C. Sproul, who served with Nicole at both Gordon-Conwell and Reformed Theological Seminary, referred to him as "one of the great titans of the Christian faith", in his reflection upon his death. He stated that "The respect that Roger engendered among scholars and among students was unparalleled. The contributions that he has made are profound".
- The US Cellular Coliseum welcomes the Rock and Worship Roadshow on Sunday, February 13 at 6:00pm. The concert will feature Mercyme, Jars of Clay, Thousand Foot Krutch, Matt Maher and the Afters and speaker Bart Millard. All seats are general admission, just \$10, and only available at the door the night of the concert.

Gary Ayers wins the best decorated Christmas tree award
at the 2010 Christ Church Christmas Banquet.



Essential Truths of the Christian Faith

This month we continue our study of theology by looking at the topic of the **assurance of salvation** from R.C. Sproul's book *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, published by Tyndale House Publishers (reprinted with permission). You can find out more about the books Tyndale publishes at www.tyndale.com.

Can anyone know for sure that he is saved? For someone to declare that he is certain of his salvation may seem to be an act of unspeakable arrogance. Yet the Bible calls us to make our salvation a matter of certainty. Peter commands, "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10).

It is our duty to seek assurance of our salvation with diligence. This is not done out of idle curiosity about the state of our soul, but to enhance our growth in sanctification. Christians who remain uncertain about the state of their salvation are subject to all sorts of questions that paralyze their walk with Christ. They stumble in doubt and are vulnerable to the assaults of Satan. So we must seek to be assured of our salvation. There are four possible positions with respect to one's assurance of salvation.

Position One: There are people who are unsaved and know that they are unsaved. These people are aware of the enmity they have in their hearts toward God and clearly want nothing to do with Christ as their Savior. They are bold to proclaim that they do not need Christ. Such people are often openly hostile to the gospel.

Position Two: There are people who are saved but do not know they are saved. These people are actually in a state of grace but are uncertain of it. Perhaps they are wrestling with sin in their lives and doubt their own salvation because of a troubled conscience. In this group are those who have not yet made certain that they are among the elect.

Position Three: There are people who are saved and know they are saved. This is the group who are certain of their election and calling. They have a clear and sound understanding of what salvation requires and know they have met the requirements. They have believed the testimony of the Holy Spirit when He witnessed to their spirits that they are the children of God (Romans 8:16).

Position Four: There are people who are not saved but confidently believe that they are saved. These people have assurance of salvation. Their assurance is a false assurance.

Because it is possible to have a false assurance of salvation, how do we know if we are in group three or group four? To answer that we must look more closely at group four and ask how it is possible to have a false sense of assurance.

The easiest way to have a false assurance of salvation is to have a false doctrine of salvation. For example, if a person holds to a universalist view of salvation they may reason as follows:

Every person is saved.
I am a person.
Therefore, I am saved.

Because their doctrine is faulty, their assurance has no firm basis.

Another way that people falsely assure themselves of salvation is by believing that they will get to heaven by trying to live a good life. Those who think they are living a good enough life to satisfy the demands of a holy God are only deluding themselves into thinking they are saved.

But what if a person has a sound doctrine of salvation? Is it still possible to have a false assurance? We must answer yes. A person might think he has saving faith but not really possess it. The test for authentic assurance is twofold. On the one hand, we must examine our own hearts to see if we have true faith in Christ. We must see whether or not we have any genuine love for the biblical Christ. For we know such love for Him would be impossible without regeneration.

Second, we must examine the fruit of our faith. We do not need perfect fruit to have assurance, but there must

be some evidence of the fruit of obedience for our profession of faith to be credible. If no fruit is present, then no faith is present. Where saving faith is found, fruit of that faith is also found.

Finally, we seek our assurance from the Word of God through which the Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are His children.

Summary:

1. It is our duty to diligently pursue assurance of salvation.
2. Assurance of salvation enhances our sanctification.
3. There are four possible groups or positions regarding assurance:
 - a. Those who are unsaved and know they are unsaved.
 - b. Those who are saved but don't have assurance that they are saved.
 - c. Those who are saved and know they are saved.
 - d. Those who are unsaved but believe they are saved
4. False assurance is primarily based on a false doctrine of salvation.
5. To gain authentic assurance we must search our own hearts and examine the fruit of our faith.
6. Full assurance comes from the Word of God coupled with the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Next month we'll look at the intermediate state.



Submitted by Ross Wear ~

Two little boys, ages 8 and 10, are excessively mischievous.

They are always getting into trouble and their parents know if any mischief occurs in their town, the two boys are probably involved.

The boys' mother heard that a preacher in town had been successful in disciplining children, so she asked if he would speak with her boys. The preacher agreed, but he asked to see them individually.

The mother sent the 8 year old in the morning, with the older boy to see the preacher in the afternoon. The preacher, a huge man with a deep booming voice, sat the younger boy down and asked him sternly, "Do you know where God is, son?"

The boy's mouth dropped open, but he made no response, sitting there wide-eyed with his mouth hanging open. So the preacher repeated the question in an even sterner tone, "Where is God?! Again, the boy made no attempt to answer.

The preacher raised his voice even more and shook his finger in the boy's face and bellowed, "WHERE IS GOD?!"

The boy screamed & bolted from the room, ran directly home & dove into his closet, slamming the door behind him. When his older brother found him in the closet, he asked, "What happened?"

The younger brother, gasping for breath, replied, "We are in BIG trouble this time!" GOD is missing, and they think WE did it!"



Coram Deo Reviews

Reviews of books, films and music are provided in *Coram Deo* as a service to the Christ Church family. They are provided to help those who may be trying to decide if a particular book, film or recording would be appropriate for themselves, or their children. They represent the opinion of only the individual reviewer, and are not intended to be the official position of Christ Church. Articles providing differing opinions of books, films and music reviewed are welcomed, as we seek to live *Coram Deo*, in the presence of, and before the face of God.



Book Reviews

BOOK REVIEW
Art Moser

What Good is God: In Search of a Faith That Matters, by Philip Yancey. Faith Words, 2010. 287 pages.

This most recent book by Philip Yancey, one of my favorite contemporary authors, is his apologetic for the Christian faith in an age of doubt. His method of doing this is “to go out into the field and examine how faith works itself out...A faith that matters should produce positive results, thus providing an existential answer to the underlying question, ‘What good is God?’”

His technique is to focus on ten talks he had been asked to give in various circumstances and the background leading up to each of them. This forms the ten parts of the book, each with two chapters: the background story and the talk. It is an effective pattern, leading one into dramatic situations and then experiencing Yancey’s calm, compassionate, and insightful comments to those caught up in the drama of the circumstances.

His first talk was given in response to a request by a campus pastor at Virginia Tech shortly after the massacre there in April, 2007. Yancey himself was recovering from a serious accident, but he was able to arrange a flight with a survivor of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting and her father who had access to a corporate jet. He titled that talk “Where Is God When It Hurts?” In it he told the Virginia Tech audience that pain is not given as a punishment “but rather as a testing ground for faith that transcends pain. In truth, pain redeemed impresses me more than pain removed.”

Like many of us, Yancey had great admiration for C. S. Lewis of whom he writes, “I found in Lewis something rarely seen in either secular or sacred society: a delicate balance of embracing the world while not idolizing it.” Invited to speak at Cambridge, he followed Lewis’ understanding of this concept: “... Lewis recognized human creativity as a good, but not an ultimate good. The glory of God represents the ultimate good, which culture may well serve.” Yancey writes, “...Lewis unifies by bringing together two worlds, the visible and the invisible, this life and the next.”

Other venues in which Yancey spoke included a seminar for American businessmen in China in which he dealt with the effect of Christianity on China. While in China, he had the advantage of speaking with a number of Chinese Christians, some of whom had suffered severe persecution.

At Green Lake, Wisconsin, he spoke to a conference on ministry to women in prostitution. His message to them was titled, “Grace, Like Water, Flows Downward”

Yancey attended Bob Jones University when Bob Jones, Sr. was president. Although he does not mention the name of the school, he writes about being invited several times to speak on campus. He was not always an honored graduate; he speaks honestly and bluntly, yet with kindness and gentleness about life on campus when he was there and what he learned from that experience. The talk included in this book deals with things he wishes he had known when he was a student.

In 2009, after several previous visits to South Africa, Yancey spoke at a large church north of Cape Town. His topic: Growing in Grace in which he outlined the changes in South Africa since the end of apartheid.

Visiting the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Yancey wondered “how much of the average Christian’s politics gets formed by surrounding culture rather than by the gospel of Jesus. ... One question lingered as I left the museum: for what will the church be apologizing 150 years from now?” He spoke there to supporters of a medical organization called the Church Health Center.

Other talks included one to a group of Saudi Arabia expatriates in Bahrain, a meeting with Alcoholics Anonymous in Chicago, and the final one in Mumbai, India during the attack on Westerners by terrorists from Pakistan.

Yancey is a journalist by his own definition. As such, he knows very well how to tell a story, and all the stories in this book are fascinating. The technique of pairing his talks with the background stories is quite effective. Each of the ten parts is opened with a two-page illustration of the background story by Klaus Ernst. It is a very interesting book, easily read (that does not mean it is trivial), enlightening, and well worth your time.

BOOK REVIEW

Bill Pence

Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream by David Platt. Multnomah. 240 pages. 2010

While at a recent wedding reception, we were talking with Jerry McCorkle about what books we were all reading. He mentioned *Radical* by David Platt. I mentioned that I had seen it near the top of the Kindle “best seller” charts in the Religion and Spirituality section, but didn’t know anything about the book or author to know whether the book was any good or not. Jerry assured me it was, and so I told him that I would download the book that night and finished it within a week. The book reminded me a lot of John Piper’s *Don’t Waste Your Life* and even more so of Francis Chan’s *Crazy Love* in that its intent is to get us out of our comfortable Christian lifestyle.

Platt is the pastor at the Church at Brook Hills, a 4,000 member Southern Baptist congregation in Birmingham, Alabama. In his first book, he challenges believers to follow the Scriptures, rather than the “American Dream”. Platt is passionate about helping the poor by being generous, and by spreading the gospel. He uses many stories – from his church, personal travels, etc. that will engage the reader – and ends the book with the “Radical Experiment”, that he challenges the reader to try over the next year. The five components of the Radical Experience are:

1. To pray for the entire world
2. To read through the entire Word
3. To commit our lives to multiplying community
4. To sacrifice our money for a specific purpose
5. To give our time in another context

Platt introduced the “Radical Experiment” to his church on January 1, 2010. You can listen/watch via the Brook Hills podcast, available on iTunes. You can find additional resources related to this book at: <http://www.radicalthebook.com/>. This book is recommended *only* for those who might be willing to step out of their comfort zone and live a radical life for Christ.

BOOK REVIEW

Bill Pence

Don't Waste Your Life by John Piper. Crossway Books. 2003. 191 pages.

Desiring God partnered with christianaudio and Crossway for the month of November 2010 to offer a [FREE download of the *Don't Waste Your Life* audiobook](#). We thought it would be a good time to reprint a review of the book from the April 2004 *Coram Deo*.

Tammy and I always look forward to picking out our “vacation books”. This book was my “vacation book” for our recent trip to Orlando. This is a powerful book, and may just be life changing. In this extended look at the book, I will try to focus on the use of the concept of a **wasted life**. My recommendation to you is to READ and meditate on this book!

In the “Preface” to the book, Dr. Piper writes: “It was not always plain to me that pursuing God’s glory would be virtually the same as my joy. Now I see that millions of people **waste their lives** because they think these paths are two and not one.” “Please know that I am praying for you, whether you are a student dreaming something radical for your life, or whether you are retired and hoping not to **waste your final years**. My joy grows with every soul that seeks the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Remember, you have one life. That’s all. You were made for God. **Don’t waste it.**”

Dr. Piper tells his story in the first two chapters of this book so the reader can know what he means by glorifying God. “Compounding the problem was that many who seemed to emphasize the glory of God in their thinking did not seem to enjoy Him much. And many who seemed to enjoy God most were defective in their thinking about His glory. But now here was the greatest mind of early America, Jonathan Edwards, saying that God’s purpose for my life was that I have a passion for God’s glory and that I have a passion for my joy in that glory, and that these two are one passion.”

“God created me – and you – to live with a single all-embracing, all transforming passion – namely, a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying His supreme excellence in all the spheres of life. Enjoying and displaying are both crucial. If we try to display the excellence of God without joy in it, we will display a shell of hypocrisy and create scorn or legalism. But if we claim to enjoy His excellence and do not display it for others to see and admire, we deceive ourselves, because the mark of God-enthralled joy is to overflow and expand by extending itself into the hearts of others. The **wasted life** is the life without a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples.”

Piper, who is not ashamed of his affection for Jonathan Edwards, writes, “I thank God that Edwards **did not waste his life**”. Later in that same chapter, “**We waste our lives** when we do not pray and think and dream and plan and work toward magnifying God in all spheres of life.” A few pages later, in writing about loving people, he writes: “Every good work should be a revelation of the glory of God. What makes the good deed an act of love is not the raw act, but the passion and the sacrifice to make God Himself known as glorious. Not to aim to show God is not to love, because God is what we need most deeply. And to have all else without Him is to perish in the end. The Bible says that you can give away all that you have and deliver your body to be burned and have not love (1 Corinthians 13:3). If you don’t point people to God for everlasting joy, you don’t love. **You waste your life.**”

In discussing the single passion for which we were made, he writes: “God created us to live with a single passion to joyfully display His supreme excellence in all the spheres of life. The **wasted life** is the life without this passion.” Later in that chapter, “**Life is wasted** if we do not grasp the glory of the cross, cherish it for the treasure that it is and cleave to it as the greatest price of every pleasure and the deepest comfort in every pain.”

In discussing the passion of the apostle Paul, Dr. Piper says, “Nobody had a more single-minded vision for his life than Paul did. He could say it in many different ways. He could say: ‘I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord

Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God' (Acts 20:24). One thing mattered: 'I will not **waste my life!** I will finish my course and finish it well. I will display the Gospel of the grace of God in all I do. I will run my race to the end".

In discussing the God-glorifying life, he writes: "Therefore every enjoyment in this life and the next that is not idolatry is a tribute to the infinite value of the cross of Christ – the burning center of the glory of God. And thus a cross-centered, cross-exalting, cross-saturated life is a God-glorifying life – the *only* God-glorifying life.

All others are wasted.

Dr. Piper mentions that the book that "set fire" to the faith of thousands in his generation was ***The Cost of Discipleship*** by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. "Probably the most famous and life-shaping sentence in the book was, 'The cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die'. Fleeing from death is the **shortest path to a wasted life.**

On that same page, Piper continues with "A life devoted to making much of Christ is costly. And the cost is both a consequence and a means of making much of Him. If we do not embrace the path of joy-laden, painful love, **we will waste our lives.**

"If Christ is not made much of in our lives, **they are wasted.** We exist to make Him appear in the world as what He really is – magnificent. If our life and death do not show the worth and wonder of Jesus, **they are wasted.** That is why Paul said that his aim in life and death was "that...Christ be honored".

In discussing running from pain, he writes: "This design for the Christian life is so crucial that we should open our eyes to see how extensively the Bible speaks about it. Untold numbers of professing Christians **waste their lives** trying to escape the cost of love. They do not see that it is always worth it. There is more of God's glory to be seen and savored through suffering than through self-serving escape".

In discussing the promise and design of God, he writes: "But when all is said and done, the *promise and design* of God for people **who do not waste their lives** is clear: 'All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted' (2 Timothy 3:12). A few paragraphs later, Dr. Piper continues: "What a tragic waste when people turn away from the Calvary road of love and suffering. All the riches of the glory of God in Christ are on that road. All the sweetest fellowship with Jesus is there. All the treasures of assurance. All the ecstasies of joy. All the clearest sightings of eternity. All the noblest camaraderie. All the humblest affections. All the most tender acts of forgiving kindness. All the deepest discoveries of God's Word. All the most earnest prayers. They are all on the Calvary road where Jesus walks with His people. Take up your cross and follow Jesus. On this road, and this road alone, life is Christ and death is gain. **Life on every other road is wasted.**

In a chapter on risk, the author writes: "If our single, all-embracing passion is to make much of Christ in life and death, and if the life that magnifies Him most is the life of costly love, then life is risk, and risk is right. To run from it is to **waste your life.**" "But what happens when the people of God do not escape from the beguiling enchantment of security? What happens if they try to live their lives in the mirage of safety? The answer is **wasted lives.**"

"On the far side of every risk – even if it results in death – the love of God triumphs. This is the faith that frees us to risk for the cause of God. It is not heroism, or lust for adventure, or courageous, self reliance, or efforts to earn God's favor. It is childlike faith in the triumph of God's love – that on the other side of all our risks, for the sake of righteousness, God will still be holding us. We will be eternally satisfied in Him. **Nothing will have been wasted.**"

He concludes the chapter with: "Therefore, it is right to risk for the cause of Christ. It is right to engage the enemy and say, 'May the LORD do what seems good to Him.' It is right to serve the people of God, and say 'If I perish, I perish!' It is right to stand before the fiery furnace of affliction and refuse to bow down to the gods of this world. This is the road that leads to fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore. At the end of every other road – secure and risk-free – we will put our face in our hands and say, **'I've wasted it!'**"

In his chapter on "Gladly Making Others Glad in God", Piper begins with: "Don't start raising objections about the hard cases. I am talking about a spirit, not a list of criteria for when we do this or that. Nor am I talking

about wimpy grace that can't rebuke or discipline or fight. The question is, do we lean toward mercy? Do we default to grace? Do we have a forgiving spirit? Without it we will walk away from need and **waste our lives**". "Forgiveness is essentially God's way of removing the great obstacle to our fellowship with Him. By cancelling our sin and paying for it with the death of His own Son, God opens the way for us to see Him and know Him and enjoy Him forever. Seeing and savoring Him is the goal of forgiveness. Soul-satisfying fellowship with our Father is the aim of the cross. If we love being forgiven for other reasons alone, we are not forgiven, and we will **waste our lives**." "By gladly pursuing the gladness of others in God – even at the cost of our lives – we love *them* and honor *God*. This is the opposite of a **wasted life**."

In the chapter entitled "Living to Prove He is More Precious than Life", the author writes: "To make others glad in God with an everlasting gladness, our lives must show that He is more precious than life. 'Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you' (Psalm 63:3). To do this we must make sacrificial life choices rooted in the assurance that magnifying Christ through generosity and mercy is more satisfying than selfishness. If we walk away from risk to keep ourselves safe and solvent, we will **waste our lives**."

"Oh, how many **lives are wasted** by people who believe that the Christian life means simply avoiding badness and providing for the family. So there is no adultery, no stealing, no killing, no embezzlement, no fraud – just lots of hard work during the day and lots of TV and PG-13 videos in the evening (during quality family time), and lots of fun stuff on the weekend – woven around church (mostly). This is life for millions of people. **Wasted life**. We were created for more, far more."

In writing about television, Dr. Piper writes "Television is one of the greatest **life wasters** of the modern age. And, of course, the Internet is running to catch up, and may have caught up. You can be more selective on the Internet, but you can also select worse things with only the Judge of the universe watching. TV still reigns as the great **life-waster**."

Late in that chapter, he writes: "At these moments, when the trifling fog clears and I see what I am really on earth to do, I groan over the petty pursuits that **waste so many lives** – and so much of mine. Just think of the magnitude of sports – a whole section of the daily newspaper. But there is no section on God. Think of the endless resources for making your home and garden more comfortable and impressive. Think of how many tens of thousands of dollars you can spend to buy more cars than you need. Think of the time and energy and conversation that go into entertainment and leisure and what we can and what call "fun stuff". And add to that now the computer that artificially recreates the very games that are already so distant from reality, it is like a multi-layered dream world of insignificance expanding into nothingness."

After quoting a passage from James Bradley's *Flags of our Fathers*, he writes: "As I read that, I thought of all the things that high school kids think is cool. I sat on the porch where I was reading and thought, *O God, who will get in their face and give them something to live for? They waste their lives in a trance of insignificance, trying to look cool or talk cool or walk cool. They don't have a clue what cool is.*"

"Of course, we do not use the word *cool* to describe true greatness. It is a small word. That's the point. It's cheap. And it's what millions of young people live for. Who confronts them with urgency and tears? Who pleads with them **not to waste their lives**? Who takes them by the collar, so to speak, and loves them enough to show them a life so radical and so real and so costly and Christ-saturated that they feel the emptiness and triviality of their CD collection and their pointless conversations about passing celebrities? Who will waken what lies latent in their souls, untapped – a longing **not to waste their lives**?"

In the chapter on work, Dr. Piper writes: "In this way we fellowship with God, listening to Him through His Word and thanking Him and praising Him and calling on Him for all we need. It is an honor to God if you stay in your secular job "with God" in this way. This is **not a wasted life**." "When you work like this – no matter what your vocation is – you can have a sweet sense of peace at the end of the day. It has **not been wasted**." "So the third way we make much of God in our secular work is by having such high standards of excellence and such integrity and such manifest goodwill that we put no obstacles in the way of the Gospel but rather call attention to the all-satisfying beauty of Christ. When we adorn the Gospel with our work, we are **not wasting our lives**."

“We honor God by earning our living because this clears the way for non-Christians to see Christ for who He really is. Aimless, unproductive Christians contradict the creative, purposeful, powerful, merciful God we love. They **waste their lives**”. “Jesus calls us to be aliens and exiles in the world. Not by taking us out of the world, but by changing, at the root, how we view the world and how we do our work in it. If we simply work to earn a living – if we labor for the bread that perishes – we will **waste our lives**. But if we labor with the sweet assurance that God will supply all our needs – that Christ died to purchase every undeserved blessing – then all our labor will be a labor of love and a boasting only in the cross.”

At he concludes the chapter on work, he writes “...secular work is **not a waste** when we make much of Christ from 8 to 5. God’s will in this age is that His people be scattered like salt and light in all legitimate vocations. His aim is to be known, because knowing Him is life and joy. He does not call us out of the world. He does not remove the need to work. He does not destroy society and culture. Through His scattered saints He spreads a passion for His supremacy in all things for the joy of all peoples. If you work like the world, you will **waste your life**, no matter how rich you get. But if your work creates a web of redemptive relationships and becomes an adornment for the Gospel of the glory of Christ, your satisfaction will last forever and God will be exalted in your joy”.

In his chapter on missions, Dr. Piper writes: “...so He raised up leaders for the Layman’s Missionary Movement who spoke up with such prophetic power that thousands of laymen caught the vision for God’s global purposes. The leader of the movement was not a missionary and not a pastor. He was a businessman. The partnership that emerged between students, who were going, and businessmen, who were sending, was profound, because there were God-centered visionary leaders in both groups. Both were moved by the same passion **not to waste their lives**.”

In the final chapter, he prays: “O Father, grant your church to love Your glory more than gold – to cease her love affair with comfort and security. Grant that we seek the kingdom first and let the other things come as You will. Grant that the firm finality of our security in Christ frees us to risk our home and health and money on the earth. Help us to see that if we try to guard our wealth, instead of using it to show it’s not our god, then we will **waste our lives**, however we succeed”.

He concludes with this prayer:

“Forbid that any, Lord, who read these words would have to say someday, **‘I’ve wasted it.’** But grant, by Your almighty Spirit and Your piercing Word, that we who name Christ as the Lord would treasure Him above our lives, and feel, deep in our souls, that Christ is life and death is gain. And so may we display His worth for all to see. And by our prizing Him may He be praised in all the world. May He be magnified in life and death. May every neighborhood and nation see how joy in Jesus frees His people from the power of greed and fear”. “Let love flow from your saints, and may it, Lord, be this: that even if it costs our lives, the people will be glad in God. ‘Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy.’ Take your honored place, O Christ, as the all-satisfying Treasure of the world. With trembling hands before the throne of God, and utterly dependent on Your grace, we lift our voice and make this solemn vow: As God lives, and is all I ever need, **I will not waste my life...**”

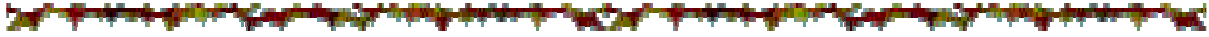
I cannot recommend this book too highly. How we so not want to waste our lives. I think of what Charles Spurgeon accomplished in his short life of 57 years. In a reading entitled “Mountains are Not Meant to Envy - Awed Thoughts of Charles Spurgeon” from his book **A Godward Life – Savoring the Supremacy of God in All of Life**, Piper writes this about Spurgeon”

- He added 14,460 people to his church membership and did almost all the membership interviews himself
- His collected sermons fill sixty-three volumes, equivalent to the twenty-seven volume ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and stand as the largest set of books by a single author in the history of Christianity.
- He read six books a week and could remember what was in them and where. He read **Pilgrim’s Progress** more than one hundred times.
- He could look out on a congregation of 5,000 and name the members.
- He founded a pastor’s college and trained almost 900 men during his 38 years of ministry.

-He once said that he had counted as many as eight sets of thoughts that passed through his mind at the same time while he was preaching.

-He founded an orphanage, edited a magazine, produced more than 140 books, responded to 500 letters a week, and often preached ten times a week in various churches as well as his own.

Spurgeon suffered from gout, rheumatism, and Bright's disease, and in the last twenty years of his ministry, he was so sick that he missed a third of the Sunday's at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Clearly, Spurgeon's life was not a wasted one.



Submitted by Clarissa Nation ~

A few years ago a group of salesmen went to a regional sales convention in Chicago. They had assured their wives that they would be home in plenty of time for Friday night's dinner. In their rush to catch the plane home, with tickets and briefcases, one of these salesmen inadvertently kicked over a table which held a display of apples. Apples flew everywhere. Without stopping or looking back, they almost all managed to reach the plane in time for their nearly missed boarding.

ALL BUT ONE! He paused, took a deep breath, got in touch with his feelings, and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand had been overturned. He told his buddies to go on without him, waved good-bye, told *one* of them to call his wife when they arrived at their home destination and explain his taking a later flight. Then he returned to the terminal where the apples were all over the terminal floor. He was glad he did.

The 16-year-old girl was totally blind! She was softly crying, tears running down her cheeks in frustration, and at the same time helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about her, no one stopping and no one to care for her plight.

The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them back on the table and helped organize her display. As he did this, he noticed that many of them had become battered and bruised; these he set aside in another basket. When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, "Here, please take this \$40 for the damage we did. Are you okay?" She nodded through her tears. He continued on with, "I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly."

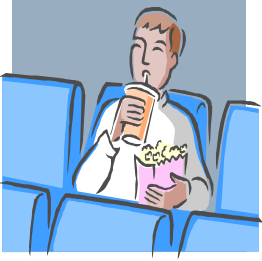
As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him, "Mister....." He paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, "Are you Jesus?"

He stopped in mid-stride, and he wondered. Then slowly he made his way to catch the later flight with that question burning and bouncing about in his soul: "Are you Jesus?"

Do people mistake you for Jesus? That's our destiny, is it not? To be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference as we live and interact with a world that is blind to His love, life and grace. If we claim to know Him, we should live, walk and act as He would. Knowing Him is more than simply quoting Scripture and going to church. It's actually living the Word as life unfolds day to day.

You are the apple of His eye even though we, too, have been bruised by a fall. He stopped what He was doing and picked you and me up on a hill called Calvary and paid in full for our Damaged fruit.





Movie & DVD Reviews

Star Rating:

**** Outstanding

*** Good

** Renter

* Save your money

The movie ratings are based on a number of criteria, including the message and worldview the film portrays, the overall quality of the film and acting, in addition to the amount of violence, sexuality and inappropriate language included. Be sure to go to www.kids-in-mind.com or www.pluggedinonline.com if you want a detailed breakdown of a movie's content.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, rated PG

Reviewed by Melody Green

In many ways, C. S. Lewis's *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* is a joyful book. Edmund and Lucy Pevensie return to Narnia for their third adventure, bringing along their reluctant cousin Eustace Clarence Scrubb whose greatest wish is to go back home. Unlike the first two books, the children do not have an obvious purpose for being in Narnia—instead, they join friends on an adventure filled with exploration and fun, each learning a little about themselves and their place in the world while the great lion Aslan weaves in and out of the story, sometimes holding long, gentle conversations, sometimes appearing suddenly and disappearing just as quickly, but always directing and guiding.

The movie, however, goes in a different direction. There are many great things about the film: for example, the Dawn Treader itself is an amazingly beautiful ship, while the annoying Eustace Clarence Scrubb is perfectly presented. Visually, this movie is amazing: beginning with the rich colors and intricate design of the ship itself, the movie continually presents new images and special effects that are, themselves, quite enjoyable.

Unfortunately, however, the visual presentation is the best part of the film. Some fans of the story may well be disappointed by the addition of a storyline that changes the grand adventure from seeing where the wind will take the ship to a quest for seven swords that will magically defeat evil when they are placed on Aslan's table. Others may find the addition of a subplot about a man whose wife was sacrificed to a green fog a bit pointless. The biggest problem I see, however, is in the character Aslan himself.

Near the end of the book, Aslan has a talk with the children just before sending them home. He has explained to them that Lucy and Edmund will not be allowed to return to Narnia because they must grow up, and Lucy responds:

"It isn't Narnia, you know," sobbed Lucy. "It's *you*. We shan't meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?"

"But you shall meet me, dear one," said Aslan.

"Are—are you there too, Sir?" said Edmund.

"I am," said Aslan, "but there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."

The Aslan in the book is warm and frequently present, both caring and powerful. It is clear why the children love him and want to spend more time in his presence. The Aslan in the movie, however, is quite different. To better understand the difference between these two presentations of the same character, a closer look at a few scenes will be helpful. On one Island, Lucy is coerced into opening a magical book and reading a spell that will make the invisible, visible. In the book, Lucy is tempted to read a spell that will make her as beautiful as her sister, but does not because she knows that she should not read any spells except the one that she was sent to find. As she continues to look for the specific spell, however, she finds another, even more tempting spell: a spell that supposedly will show her what her friends really think of her. After magically listening to a supposed friend say nasty things about her, Lucy feels deeply hurt. When she finally reads the cor-

rect spell, however, Aslan appears. The text says “He was solid and real and warm and he let her kiss and bury herself in his shining mane.” He then gently discusses with Lucy why she should not have listened to her friends’ conversation, focusing on the damage it has done to their relationship. He ends the discussion with Lucy with a promise that he will tell her a beautiful story “for years and years.”

In the movie, however, Lucy decides to read the spell that will make her beautiful, but is stopped by a roar from Aslan. She then tears the page with the spell on it out of the book and tucks it into her shirt. Other than that one roar, Aslan does not do or say anything in this part of the story. Later, back on board the ship, Lucy reads the incantation that will make her beautiful, and has a strange vision about becoming her sister. Aslan then appears in a mirror, where Lucy cannot touch him, and asks “Child, what have you done?” Even though he does encourage her to be herself instead of wanting to be someone else, this Aslan comes across as much more distant and unbending. He appears to be only interested in making sure that Lucy does the right thing. Unfortunately, as presented, this whole scene suggests that there is something wrong with the desire to be beautiful, while it does not address damaged relationships at all.

Later in the book, the Dawn Treader flounders into a dark fog surrounding the Island where dreams come true. In this fog, each crew member is haunted by his or her worst nightmares. Lucy whispers to Aslan that they need help, and an albatross appears. Anyone who has had to study “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” in an English class may remember that the albatross is supposed to be a symbol of Christ. In this book, the albatross appears, whispers in Aslan’s voice “courage, Dear Heart” to Lucy, and drives the darkness away. In the film, however, the ship sails into an evil Island surrounded by green and grey fog, and Lucy begs Aslan to help. The Albatross appears and flies around, but does not appear to actually do anything—the darkness stays and the crew of the Dawn Treader have to fight their own way out. The connection between Aslan and the bird is much less pronounced, and in this case, he seems rather ineffective.

A third difference between the two Aslans can be found in a conversation he has with King Caspian. Caspian desires to travel to the edge of the world and see Aslan’s country. In the book, Aslan appears on the ship to tell Caspian that he must return to Narnia to rule, while the children go on, because it is time for them to go home. In the movie, however, Aslan tells Caspian it is his choice whether or not he goes on to Aslan’s Country, only pointing out that if he does so, he can never return. He also appears to give Edmund, Lucy and Eustace the choice to go to his country, or to return home. The Aslan in the book has a clear plan and destiny laid out for the children from earth as well as the king of Narnia, while the Aslan in the movie is quite willing to let them make their own choices about some rather important issues. The Aslan in the book has a clear purpose for these people as well as a deep interest in them and even, at times, appears to enjoy them (at one point Lucy is sure that she hears Aslan purring), but the Aslan in the movie does not seem to care much either way.

Ultimately, then, the movie presents a visual feast but a weak Aslan. Where in the book Lucy declares “It isn’t Narnia, it is *you*,” the characters in the movie could just as easily say “it isn’t you, it’s *Narnia*.” The children in the film are told, just as the children in the book are told, that they have been brought to Narnia for the purpose of getting to know Aslan better. In the case of the film, however, the statement is anticlimactic: Aslan has not been presented as someone particularly worth getting to know.

P. S. Denver Green would like it to be known that the 3D version of this film is not worth the extra money. He enjoyed the film very much, but thinks it is just as good in 2D.

True Grit, rated PG-13

*****1/2**

This remake of the 1969 film in which John Wayne won his only Oscar, features a strong cast, which could result in a few Oscar nominations – for Jeff Bridges and Hailee Steinfeld. Steinfeld, just 13 years old when she filmed this movie, portrays Mattie Ross, who hires Bridges (Marshall Rooster Cogburn), to track down and kill Tom Chaney (Josh Brolin), who killed her father. The film is directed by the Coen Brothers, and they play it straight this time, even beginning the film with a quote from Proverbs and having familiar hymns playing on the soundtrack throughout the film.

Bridges, who won the “Best Actor” Oscar for *Crazy Heart* last year, should get a nomination for his portrayal of the gruff Marshall Cogburn this year. The real star of the film however is Steinfeld. She is out for the revenge of her father’s death, and she is outstanding in this role. Matt Damon, as LaBoeuf, a Texas Ranger, who is also tracking Chaney, and Brolin, as Chaney, round out this superb cast.

The film is rated PG-13 for scenes of western violence (some gruesome) and some language, including the misuse of God’s name.

The Fighter, rated R

This film, based on a true story, features Oscar worthy acting performances by Christian Bale as Dicky Ecklund, and Amy Adams as Dicky’s brother Micky’s (Mark Wahlberg) girlfriend Charlene.

Dicky once fought Sugar Ray Leonard and beat him. As a result, he is the “Pride of Lowell”. But Dicky has fallen on hard times, being addicted to drugs and alcohol, and is physically only a shadow of his former self. Despite that, he, and his loving mother/manager Alice, played by Melissa Leo, continue to talk about a comeback at age 40. Dicky is supposed to be helping his younger brother Micky prepare for a fight, but his addiction often keeps him from showing up at the gym.

After Micky is pummeled by a fighter he should have never faced, he begins to see that Alice, who also manages his career, and Dicky, don’t necessary have his best interests in mind. By this time, he has entered into a relationship with Charlene, a local bartender, who is not respected by Alice or her several daughters who live, and apparently live off of her (and Micky).

This is less of a boxing film than it is about relationships. Bale gives an incredible performance as the faded hero, but now addicted Dicky. Adams steps out of her normal genre to give a powerful performance and both are worthy of Academy Award nominations for their performances in this film.

As I thought about who “The Fighter” in the film is, the obvious answer would be Micky (Mark Wahlberg). However, thinking back on it, I think the real fighter in the film is Dicky, the one-time hero, who is now facing his addictions. Overall, I put this as one of the top films of 2010.

The film does earn its “R” rating for sexuality, adult language and violence.

DVD Review

Winter Bone, rated R

This is not an easy or particularly enjoyable film to watch. The positive review (number of stars) is based on the superb performance of 19 year old newcomer Jennifer Lawrence as Ree Dolly. At 17, Ree is running her family’s home in an extremely desolate area of the Ozarks. Her mother is mentally incapable, and her father was arrested for cooking methamphetamine. So Ree must care for her mother and brother and sister. She hunts squirrels for meals and also accepts the kindness of a neighbor. But it’s really Ree’s courage and determination that allows them to survive.

Then one day the sheriff comes by to tell Ree that her father has skipped bail. To meet his bond he had put up the house and land. So if he doesn’t show up in a week, the family will lose their home. Ree takes it on herself to go looking for her father, though nobody wants to help her find him, including John Hawkes, who portrays Teardrop, Ree’s father’s brother. Other than her friend, the people she encounters along the way looking for her father are all criminals. We assume that they are all involved in cooking meth as well, but it is obvious from their surroundings they aren’t making much money from it. The film, which was a double prize winner at Sundance 2010, is rated R for language, violence and some drug content/use.

EDITOR'S PICK'S FOR 2010

Here are my top picks for 2010 in a variety of categories:

Top Podcast

The Briefing – Albert Mohler

Top Books – this list reflects books that I read in 2010, some of which were published prior to 2010.

Top Pick: Crazy Love – Francis Chan

Honorable Mention:

- MacArthur Study Bible in English Standard Version (ESV)
- John: The Saint Andrews Expository Commentary – R.C. Sproul
- Generous Justice – Timothy Keller
- The Prodigal God – Timothy Keller
- Counterfeit Gods – Timothy Keller
- The Reason for God – Timothy Keller
- The Mentor Leader – Tony Dungy
- Decision Points – George W. Bush
- Willie Mays, The Life, The Legend – James S. Hirsch
- A Journey: My Political Life – Tony Blair
- A Better Freedom – Michael Card
- Forgotten God – Francis Chan

Top Concert

James Taylor and Carole King – The Troubadour Reunion Tour at the Scottrade Center in St. Louis

Top Songs

Top Pick: Our God – Chris Tomlin

Honorable mention:

City on our Knees – TobyMac

Top Albums

Top Pick: The Shelter – Jars of Clay

Honorable Mention:

And if Our God is With Us – Chris Tomlin

Tonight – TobyMac

Best Picture with *Coram Deo*

Top Pick: Pastor Bob reading *Coram Deo* floating in the Dead Sea

Honorable Mention:

Fred Martin reading *Coram Deo* in prison cell at Alcatraz



Top Movies

- Shutter Island
- Toy Story 3
- Inception
- The Social Network
- The Fighter
- Get Low
- The Town
- Secretariat

Worst Movies

- Hereafter
- The Back-Up Plan
- Eat, Pray, Love
- Green Zone
- Why Did I Get Married Too?
- The Lovely Bones

Honorable Mention:

- Crazy Heart
- Alice in Wonderland
- Waiting for Superman
- Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows
- Unstoppable
- True Grit
- How to Train Your Dragon
- Red
- Robin Hood
- Despicable Me
- Leap Year
- Nanny McPhee Returns

BEST AND WORST MOVIES OF 2010

Mr. and Mrs. Editor are a part of what we call our "Friday Night Movie Club". Here are some best and worst movie and album selections from members of "the club":

MARK WILLIAMS—AGE 29

Best Movies:

- #1 of 2010, Winter's Bone.
- #2 of 2010, True Grit
- #3 of 2010, Despicable Me
- #4 of 2010, The Other Guys

Best Albums:

- #1 of 2010, J. Roddy Walston and the Business, "J Roddy Walston and the Business."
- #2 of 2010, Frightened Rabbit, "The Winter of Mixed Drinks."
- #3 of 2010, The Hold Steady, "Heaven is Whenever."
- #4 of 2010, Sleigh Bells, "Treats"

DREW WILLIAMS—AGE 25

Best Movie: Social Network

JANA WILLIAMS—AGE 21

Best Movie: Inception; Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Worst Movies: Hot Tub Time Machine; Twilight saga: Eclipse

TAMMY PENCE—AGE 51 **Best Movies:** Shutter Island, Inception, Toy Story 3

AL WILLIAMS—AGE 54

5 Best Movies:

Shutter Island
Inception
Social Network
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows
The Switch
alternate: Alice in Wonderland

5 Worst Movies

The Lovely Bones
Jonah Hex
Grown Ups
Twilight Sage: Eclipse
Back up Plan
alternate: Green Zone

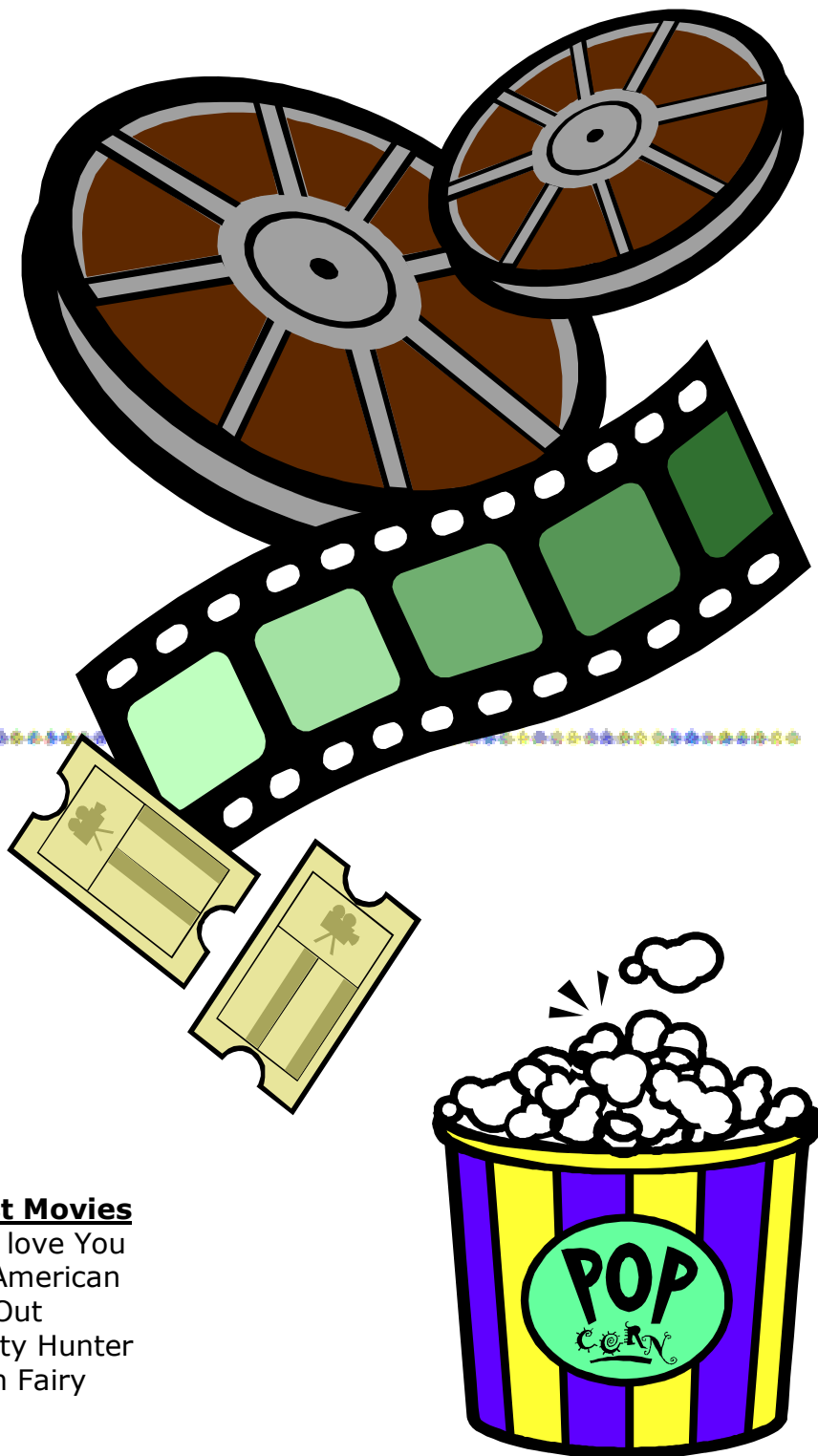
MIKE PENCE—AGE 51

15 Best Movies:

1. Salt
2. Unstoppable
3. The A team
4. Knight and Day
5. Sorcerers Apprentice
6. Prince of Persia
7. Burlesque
8. Up in the Air
9. Alice In Wonderland
10. Toy Story 3
11. Nancy McPhee
12. Harry Potter
13. Clash of the Titans
14. When in Rome
15. Avatar

5 Worst Movies

1. NY I love You
2. The American
3. Cop Out
4. Bounty Hunter
5. Tooth Fairy



TONY GUNTHER—AGE 21

Best Movies: Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows; Inception

Worst Movie: The Last Airbender



Music Review

Double Fantasy – Stripped Down – John Lennon and Yoko Ono

In celebration of what would have been his 70th birthday, Jack Douglas, the producer of *Double Fantasy*, Lennon’s last studio album released before he was murdered in December 1980, worked with Yoko Ono to strip down the recordings. The result is a project that brings his vocals front and center, with backing vocals and some of the instrumentation stripped away. As a result, Lennon’s voice comes across more powerfully and clearly.

For those not familiar with the original recording, Lennon had come out of a self-imposed five year retirement after the birth of his son Sean to record *Double Fantasy* with his wife Yoko Ono in later 1980. The album was well received resulting in a number one song “(Just Like) Starting Over” and enough songs were recorded for a second album, scheduled to be released in early 1981. After that, Lennon planned to go on the road. But he was murdered in New York City by Mark David Chapman.



We carry all of my books and teaching series here at Ligonier Ministries, but we also carry some of the best works produced by Christians today and in the past. My staff came to me recently and asked me which of these other resources I would most like to see our students have on their shelves. Here is my list, with a brief explanation of why I recommend each item. – Dr. R.C. Sproul

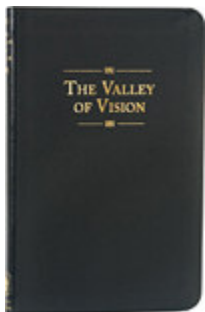


A Simple Way to Pray

by Martin Luther

No book has done more to revolutionize my personal prayer life than this little book by Martin Luther. I would recommend it for every Christian’s library.

[Learn More](#)



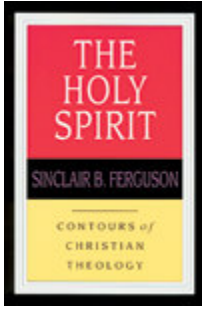
The Valley of Vision

by Arthur Bennett

The puritans were a praying people, and this book is a collection of some of their excellent prayers. I find *The Valley of Vision* to be a great aid for devotions.

[Learn More](#)

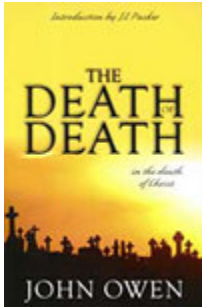
Note from Mrs. E—I LOVE this book of prayers!



The Holy Spirit

by Sinclair Ferguson

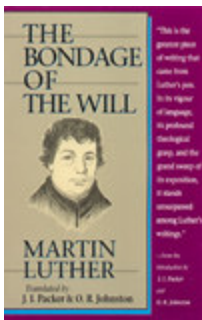
My friend Sinclair Ferguson is in my view the world's leading expert on the person and work of the Holy Spirit today. This work on the Spirit will benefit any believer. [Learn More](#)



Death of Death in the Death of Christ

by John Owen

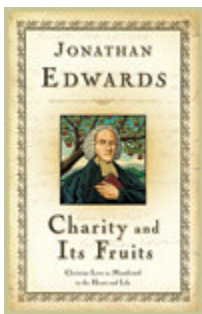
John Owen's exposition of God's intent in the atonement is the best work on particular redemption, which emphasizes that Christ died for His people alone. [Learn More](#)



Bondage of the Will

by Martin Luther

The Bondage of the Will is Martin Luther's finest theological writing. Few works more convincingly tell us of man's depravity and need for God's sovereign grace. [Learn More](#)



Charity and Its Fruits

by Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards, America's greatest theologian and a hero of mine, gives us this excellent exposition of 1 Corinthians 13. Here is a man who knew what it means to love Christ.

[Learn More](#)

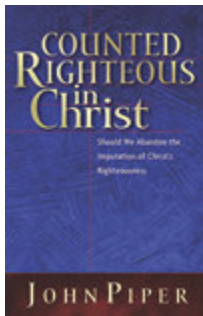


Contending for Our All

by John Piper

I love this book. John Piper reminds us that it is not enough to affirm or defend our faith, we must also be willing, under fire, to contend for our faith.

[Learn More](#)



Counted Righteous in Christ

by John Piper

This work by John Piper is a fine contemporary explanation and defense of the imputation of Christ's righteousness as our only hope in life and death.

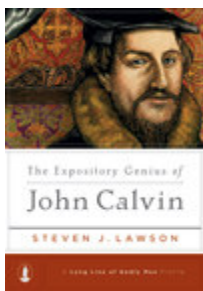
[Learn More](#)



Creation and Change

by Douglas Kelly

This book written by Douglas Kelly is perhaps the finest defense of the literal, twenty-four hour, six-day creation of the universe. My own thinking has been greatly influenced by it.

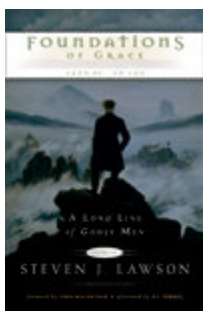


Expository Genius of John Calvin

by Steven J. Lawson

I heartily recommend this book by Steven Lawson as an impetus to the recovery of expository preaching. It is an especially good gift for pastors and seminary students.

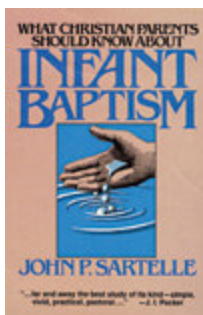
[Learn More](#)



Foundations of Grace

by Steven J. Lawson

My former student, Steven Lawson, does the church a great service in this work, a thorough look at how the entire canon of Scripture teaches the doctrines of grace.



Infant Baptism

by John Sartelle

I have known John Sartelle for many years, and this little booklet is one of the best explanations of the Reformed practice of infant baptism.

[Learn More](#)



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in the presence of God,
under the authority of God,
to the glory of God.**

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1301 North Linden, Normal, IL 61761 (309) 452-7927
www.christchurchpca.org © Christ.churchpca@frontier.com
Office Hours: Monday-Thursday: 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Friday: 9-12

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rs.revival@frontier.com
- David Keithley, Youth & Family Pastor
pastordave.Christchurch@frontier.com
- Jeff McCord, Pastor of Ministries
jbmccord@gmail.com
- Duane Otto, Assistant Pastor
duaneotto@mac.com

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- Mark Swiger.....827-8102
- Pete Juvinall.....452-8917

**Beyond the Ark by
Doug Michael**



Thanks...

We would like to thank our contributors this month: Pastor Bob, Pastor Dave, Art Moser, Ross Wear, Clarissa Nation, the Williams family, Tony Gunther, Mike Pence and Doug Michael.

Coram Deo Submissions...

We welcome your submissions. Please deliver them in person, by mail or email to bntpence@msn.com. Send them for the February issue by 6:00 pm on Tuesday, January 25.