

SPOTLIGHT

**Have you been born
again? P.7**

EXPLORING WORLDVIEWS

THE GOSPEL & FREEDOM OF SPEECH P.14

WORD MATTERS

**Serving God all the
days of our lives P.13**

BARNABAS

BIBLICAL ENCOURAGEMENT >> NEWS >> CULTURE >> MEDIA

FALL 2025 / WINTER 2026

**KIDS
PAGE
P.15**

COVER STORY

CHRIST OUR SABBATH REST

GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE SABBATH DAY

PAGE 9





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FEATURES

7 Have you been born again?

Our need to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus.

BY ROGER FELLOWS

COVER STORY

8 Christ our Sabbath rest

God's purpose in the Sabbath day and how it relates to God's rest after creation and Christ's victory over sin and death

BY ANDY OSBORNE

COLUMNS

12 Culture comment

Dying traditions

13 Word matters

Serving God all the days of our lives

14 Exploring worldviews

The gospel and freedom of speech

DEPARTMENTS

4 News & events

Newsbytes and upcoming events

13 Off the shelf

Books worth reading

15 The kids page

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sgfcanada.com

NEWSBYTES

+ Tilbury Regular Baptist Church, Tilbury, ON

On Sunday, October 19th, Tilbury Regular Baptist Church (TRBC) celebrated its 76th anniversary with Reid and Sky Ferguson from Rochester, New York. TRBC was founded on September 11, 1949, as an evangelical witness and remains committed to biblical truth and the purpose and vision of the Sovereign Grace Fellowship of Canada. Reid ministered to us in two messages from the letter to the church in Philadelphia from Revelation 3, after which we enjoyed a fellowship luncheon together. TRBC praises God for his faithfulness to us in the past and prays that we would remain faithful to him until Christ returns.

—Dale Nevelizer



76 YEARS: Tilbury Regular Baptist Church celebrated another year of God's faithfulness in October.

+ Midland Park Baptist Church, Toronto, ON

It was a day of wonder, a day of fresh mercies from our sovereign and loving God. Midland Park Baptist Church reached a milestone on June 29, 2025, in celebrating 65 years of God's goodness and faithfulness to the church. The theme was "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad" (Psalm 126:3). Friends and family were on hand to join the church in this joyous occasion. A short historical slideshow was presented during the service. Ellen Eusebio, the pastor's wife gave a stirring testimony of how God gave her the new birth in Christ and the strength to endure persecution for her faith. The Lord also added two new members through the waters of baptism. Junior Farias and Dibya Neupane likewise gave moving narratives of how God changed their lives, granted them repentance from sin and as they put their faith in Christ alone. Pastor Carl Muller delivered the anniversary sermon entitled, "Our Cares and His Care" based on 1 Peter 5:7. The event was capped with a sumptuous dinner after the worship service. To God alone be the glory! —Steve Eusebio



MORDENS: Daniel and Ruth-Anne Morden and their three children are heading to Sudbury for Daniel to take up the pastorate at Berean Baptist Church.

+ Berean Baptist Church, Sudbury, ON

Daniel Morden has answered our call and has agreed to be our pastor starting in the new year. As you may know, Daniel is currently an associate pastor at Jarvis Street Baptist Church. We are very blessed, as we believe this is God's man for our local work. Coming this new year, if God tarries, we will have been four years without a pastor. Even so, we witnessed God working among us, as he is so very faithful. Many of our men stepped up to preach and serve where required; we all very much have a new appreciation for the work load of a pastor. Please pray that we will continue to share the load, even as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' arms. We also pray that Daniel and his family will be greatly blessed by God as they seek to do his will.—Cary McGlade, deacon

+ Pilgrim Baptist Fellowship, Hamilton, ON

After 27 years of existence, Pilgrim Baptist Fellowship in Hamilton, Ontario, has decided to migrate over to another local church in order to help us in our service of Christ. Since July 2025 we have been meeting for worship at Heritage Fellowship Baptist Church in Ancaster. Their entire church, along with their full-time pastor, Sean Rice, have been very welcoming of us. We are continuing our journey of getting used to a new local church, and we pray that this move will be beneficial for both churches and the cause of Christ. Remember us in prayer. Pilgrim Baptist Fellowship, as a separate local church, is therefore in the process of formally dissolving. We've appreciated all the support and love shared over the years by our sister churches in the SGF, and we pray that all of us will continue to faithfully serve our triune God.—From the elders: Benno Kurvits, Jeremy Johnston, Wyatt Graham

Do you have news to share (even a "newsbyte") of what God is doing in your church? Please email your news item to janicevaneck@rogers.com.

+ Sovereign Grace
Community Church,
Sarnia, ON

SGCC in Sarnia has hired a pastoral intern, Dunstan Zheng, a 2024 TBS graduate. Dunstan will serve from October 2025-January 2026. Please pray with us that this is a beneficial learning experience for Dunstan and also that we are a mutual blessing to each other.



UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2025
TGC CANADA WOMEN'S
CONFERENCE

Theme: Where are you God?
Finding God when
everything is broken.
Check website for details.
Held at Hope Oakville, ON
ca.thegospelcoalition.org

NOVEMBER 17-18, 2025
HERITAGE STUDENT SAMPLER
DAYS

Wondering if Bible College
is right for you? Stay in
residence, go to class and
chapel, meet current
students and learn more
about Heritage!
Heritage College & Seminary,
Cambridge, ON
discoverheritage.ca

NOVEMBER 28, 2025
TBS ANNUAL PRESIDENT'S
CHRISTMAS BANQUET

Time: 6:30-10 p.m.
For details and to register,
see website.
tbs.edu

DECEMBER 1, 2025
GRACE PASTORS FELLOWSHIP

Theme: William Burns
Speaker: Roger Fellows
Held at Grimsby Bible
Church, Grimsby, ON
sgfcanada.com/gpf

JANUARY 5, 2026
GRACE PASTORS FELLOWSHIP

Theme: The pastor as
peacemaker
Speaker: Don Theobald
Held at Grimsby Bible
Church, Grimsby, ON
sgfcanada.com/gpf

JANUARY 24, 2026
TGC CANADA YOUNG ADULTS
CONFERENCE

Theme: By Faith: Rejoice
always—faithful living in
Christ.
Speakers: Robbie Symons,
Jonathan Griffiths, Dan
MacDonald, and more.
A one-day conference for
18-30 year olds.
Check website for details.
Held at Heritage College &
Seminary, Cambridge, ON
ca.thegospelcoalition.org

FEBRUARY 2, 2026
GRACE PASTORS FELLOWSHIP

Theme: Heiser and the
Divine Council
Speaker: James Kraskevich
Held at Grimsby Bible
Church, Grimsby, ON
sgfcanada.com/gpf

MARCH 2, 2026
GRACE PASTORS FELLOWSHIP

Theme: Gordon of Khartoum
Speaker: Carl Muller
Held at Grimsby Bible
Church, Grimsby, ON
sgfcanada.com/gpf

APRIL 10-11, 2026
SGF LADIES' RETREAT

Details: TBD
Held at Guelph Bible
Conference Centre
sgfcanada.com/ministries

APRIL 9-11, 2026
LIGONIER NATIONAL
CONFERENCE

Theme: Crucial Questions
Various speakers
Addressing fundamental
questions facing Christians
today: questions about our
God, our identity and our life
in a hostile society. Seeking
biblical clarity to strengthen
our faith and embolden our
witness in a world that
needs the truth.
Held in Orlando, FL
ligonier.org/events

JUNE 11-13, 2026
TGC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Theme: Turn Your Eyes—
Seeing the Savior in the
Psalms.
Registration and details
available on website.
Held in Indianapolis, Indiana
TGCW26.com

AUGUST 15-20, 2026
CANADIAN CAREY FAMILY
CONFERENCE

Main speaker: Christopher
Crocker
Theme: TBD
Be sure to mark your
calendars! You'll want to
make this week part of your
plans for summer 2026!
Check the website as details
are finalized.
Held at Braeside Camp,
Paris, ON
sgfcanada.com/carey

PLANNING OR HOSTING AN EVENT? LET BARNABAS KNOW. EMAIL JANICEVANECK@ROGERS.COM



END OF AN ERA: The folks from SGFC Belleville at the retirement of Cliff Linnard and the closing of the church.

CLOSING OF SOVEREIGN GRACE FAMILY CHURCH IN BELLEVILLE

It is with sadness and eager expectation that we, the members of Sovereign Grace Family Church (SGFC) announce the retirement of our founding pastor, Cliff Linnard, on May 4, 2025. Pastor Cliff was our pastor for fifteen-and-a-half years. He faithfully preached the whole counsel of God's Word. We will greatly miss his preaching in which he has enriched us and challenged us to walk by faith.

In addition, we are making public that, in as much as the Lord has not provided another pastor, the members further voted to close Sovereign Grace Family Church to

correspond with Pastor Cliff's retirement. Our final public service was held May 4, 2025, with special guests Pastor Brian and Kay Robinson, who sponsored us as a new church in the Sovereign Grace Fellowship of Canada in 2009, and past Sovereign Grace Fellowship co-ordinator Mark Hudson, whose grace and soft demeanor welcomed us into the SGF. Both these men and their wives became welcomed friends in our church.

Pastor Cliff gave a final message from John 10:1-29 titled, "Follow Him." He reminded us that "Closing Sovereign Grace Family Church does not matter because we are not the only place where you can hear the voice of Jesus. We do not follow a 'church.' We follow the great shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ." And he exhorted us, "You can trust God forever because God is forever trustworthy." And his concluding remark, after once again declaring the gospel, was: "My time has come to an end, and my joy is in knowing that I have made the voice of Jesus familiar to you so that you can trust him and follow him."

After the service we had a providential lunch and Pastor Linnard was presented with a glass plaque from the church family to thank him for his years of faithful ministry. Cliff and Berna gave each member of the congregation a personally selected book from the church library as a parting gift.

We are grateful for the love, support and friendships we have made among the SGF. We will continue to uphold you all in prayer and hope to see you at the SGF Ladies' Retreat, Pastor's Retreat and the Canadian Carey Family Conference, as the Lord wills.

To God be the glory: Sovereign Grace Family Church October 4, 2009-May 4, 2025.

REPORT

SOVEREIGN GRACE FELLOWSHIP OF CANADA ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 2025

Hosted by Bethesda Baptist Church of Delhi, ON, this year's annual meeting was a time of encouragement, renewed friendships and openness. The Friday afternoon began with worship led by the team at Delhi. All our member churches, save two, were represented and gave reports on what the Lord has been doing this past year in their communities. There was a brief report on Toronto Baptist Seminary. After an ample meal, our evening session was once again led by the Bethesda team, and the Word was delivered by Mike Tourangeau of Binbrook Baptist Church. The encouraging message centred around the "Sights and Sounds of Heaven" from Revelation 4-5.

On Saturday, Bethesda hosted breakfast, and then taught a new, homegrown piece of music emphasizing what humanity lost under the headship of Adam, the what we have gained by being in Christ. Before the business opened, Paul Hudson, of Carey Outreach Ministries presented a report of this year's activities. The business meeting was then chaired by Peter Dyck of Grace Baptist Church, Ottawa. The budget was passed, a new treasurer was welcomed, and



DELHI: The renewed and accessible entrance at Bethesda Baptist Church in Delhi.

Peter moderated an open and wide discussion of the future of the SGF. Two new directors were welcomed onto the Board of Directors for three-year terms: Steve Eusebio of Midland Park Baptist Church, and Tony Her of Churchill Baptist Church. Dale Nevelizer of Tilbury Regular Baptist Church was elected for a one-year extension. We are looking for a host church for our 2026 meeting, which will be held October 16-17, 2026. Will it be yours?—Daniel Morden

Have you been born again?

Our need to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus. **BY ROGER FELLOWS**

Read John 3:1–16.

Nicodemus came to Jesus not with questions, but with a statement of what he believed. Perhaps he thought he was commending Jesus as he expressed his opinion that he was a teacher sent from God, and that he performed signs. However, Jesus made it clear to Nicodemus that his understanding was very limited, and that he lacked one major experience—he needed to be born again (verses 3 and 7). That was a new and strange concept to Nicodemus. How could a man be born when he was old? Of course that would be impossible *physically*, but *spiritually* it is the greatest need that anyone could have.

What does the Bible tell us about the new birth?

The new birth is a big topic—too big to be covered in a short article. But perhaps there is a need to counter false views about it. I remember hearing a famous evangelist once say: “The new birth consist of three things: two, you do, and one, God does. You repent; you believe and God grants the new birth.” But that is not what the Bible teaches.

To say that faith brings about the new birth is to put the cart before the horse. Notice what John says in his first epistle:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God (1 John 5:1).

To see the true meaning of this, note two other verses in the same epistle with the same construction. In 1 John 2:29, we read:

Everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him (1 John 2:29).

And again:

Whoever loves has been born of God (1 John 4:7).

Does practicing righteousness bring about the new birth? Of course not. Practicing righteousness is the *evidence* of the new birth. Does loving bring about the new



birth? No. When we truly love, that is *evidence* that we have been born again. In both cases, it would be salvation by works if our righteousness or love *brought about* the new birth. So with faith: faith does not bring about the new birth. Rather, it is the *evidence* of the new birth.

We are reminded again that the new birth is a sovereign work of God. We are, by nature, dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1). We are as dead spiritually as Lazarus was physically after four days in the tomb (John 11). Lazarus is actually a wonderful illustration of the new birth. When Jesus, outside the tomb, asked for the stone to be rolled away, it became clear that he was going to call and bring about something marvellous. Perhaps those around the tomb thought, *If Jesus called Lazarus, he couldn't hear, so what was the point of such speech? He was blind, so how could he see to come out of the tomb? And anyway, Lazarus was dead, so the whole exercise was futile.* But Jesus called anyway, and with that call, came *power* to bring Lazarus to life and enable him to respond. So it is with the new birth.

How can those who are spiritually dead respond?

When we preach to unconverted sinners, or witness individually to them, they are dead in sin, so how can they respond? Think of Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). He is addressing Jewish people, set in their ways, dead in their sins, including some who were involved in the crucifixion of Jesus. How could they possibly respond to Peter's command to repent (Acts 2:38)? But with the command came the enabling grace of God through the Holy Spirit, and 3,000 turned to the Lord.

Let me put the question to everyone reading this article: *Have you been born again? Have you received a new heart from*

God that has transformed your life? You may go to church regularly; you may be a church member; you may read your Bible every day; you may pray; you may give generously to your church or some other charity, but you can do all those things without experiencing the new birth. Think of Nicodemus: he was a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council), a well-known teacher, yet he was not born again—and so could not understand what Jesus was talking about. Before we can do anything pleasing to God, we need to be born again.


How can I be born again?

We need to see that God didn't give Nicodemus directions as to how he could be born again: he just told him his *need*. If we read the messages of the apostles in Acts, we will find that they did not speak about the new birth. Rather, their emphasis was on *repentance* and *faith*. Those are things sinners need to do, yet by nature they cannot do them. Only God can grant these things (Acts 11:18; Ephesians 2:8). When sinners repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is the evidence that God had granted the new birth.

We are in the realm of mystery. In John 3, Jesus uses the illustration of the wind. Can we see the wind? No, but we see the effects of the wind—tree branches moving, etc. So it is with the new birth. If you were with someone when they were born again, you would not see any change at that moment, but from then on you would begin to see changes in their behaviour.

So when we challenge unbelievers, we do so by urging them to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If they do respond positively, that is the evidence that God has renewed their hearts. They have been born again. We can tell them of their need of the new birth, but their need is to repent and believe.

Once again I ask my readers, “Have you been born again?” If you are honest and confess that you have not, then turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider the cross, and him who died upon it for sinners. If you do that, you will have been born again. **B**

 Roger Fellows is a retired pastor and continues to minister at churches throughout Ontario. He is an elder at Providence Baptist Church, Burlington, ON.

CHRIST OUR SABBATH REST

GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE SABBATH DAY AND HOW IT RELATES TO GOD'S REST AFTER CREATION AND CHRIST'S VICTORY OVER SIN AND DEATH

BY ANDY OSBORNE

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Genesis 2:3 ESV).

The topic of “Sabbath” is one of the most important, though often overlooked, themes in the biblical storyline. It is one that is, sadly, often confined by the context of covenantal hermeneutics and the question, *Should Christians keep the Sabbath Day?*

Of course, this is a fair question. The way we answer it reveals much about how we interpret the relationship between the Old Testament and the New, and between God’s covenant with Israel established by Moses (Exodus 19–24) and the new covenant established the night Jesus was arrested (Matthew 26:27–28) and ratified in his death and resurrection. However, this conversation often overlooks an important question that, if answered, would give us both context for the original command and help in understanding its New Testament relevance.

The question is simple: *What was the point?*

Why did God give us the Sabbath to begin with? Among the Ten Words (Commandments) it is unique in that it alone reflects the creation week and establishes itself on events that happened before sin occurred

and humanity had fallen. Commandments like “You shall not murder” or “You shall have no other gods before me,” assume a world that has been tainted by sin (Exodus 20). The first murder occurred some time after the Fall (Genesis 4:8), and God’s unique presence with Adam and Eve would make idolatry unthinkable. So why *this* command to keep the Sabbath?

Many casual explanations exist, but few, if any, seem to take the full force of the command seriously. *God knows we need to rest* just doesn’t seem to justify listing it beside commands that secure our relationship with God and with other people. *We need time to spend with God* is certainly accurate, but why a specific day? Is it not possible to rest and spend time with God on any day of the week? Besides, Sabbath keeping is never directly connected to the other worship practices commanded in the Old Testament.

While it is true that the Sabbath is based on an event from the creation week, it is too far to say this was a command *at* creation. There is no biblical evidence that anyone before Moses was expected to keep the Sabbath day, and it is not until the giving of the Law at Sinai that this command is explicitly given to God’s people. The biblical evidence shows that the Sabbath is more than a simple command to rest, to devote some days to God or to protect society from unfair labour practices, though it certainly did these things. It is a way in which God’s

promise of future glory was being carried through the ages in eager expectation of the coming Messiah.

WHAT IS THE SABBATH?

God does not need to rest. This is an easy statement to accept from a biblical perspective, but it begs the question, *Why did God rest?* It certainly was not because God was out of energy; to say so would be heresy! The question becomes more intriguing still when we recognize a major difference between the seventh day and every other day of creation: the absence of evening and morning. This would seem to suggest that, unlike the first six days, this day has no ending and does not give way to a subsequent day. To understand these two significant mysteries, it is helpful to go back to the beginning of Genesis 1 and ask ourselves what God was trying to accomplish during the creation week.

Genesis 1:1 shows God creating the heavens and the earth with two problems to be overcome: the earth was *formless* and *void*. These two words, though easily overlooked, are very necessary because they prepare the reader for the coming week. God has created the heavens and the earth but there are two problems God is about to fix.

In the first three days, God addresses the first problem: *formlessness*. He does so by creating a world that is ordered and habitable. He separates the chaotic waters to



form sky and land. He fills the world with plants as food for its future inhabitants. On the second set of three days, God fills this now formed world with these inhabitants, addressing the problem of *void*. No longer are the heavens empty, they are filled with sun, moon and stars. No longer are the waters and sky lifeless, they are filled as well. Finally, the land is filled with animals and people who feast off the vegetation. The problems are solved: the earth is now formed and filled with inhabitants.

It is here that God institutes not a single day of rest, but an unending age of rest. Rest from what exactly? Well, what was God working against? Formlessness and void—two problems that are now addressed forever. The Sabbath is not about God kicking off his work boots and

enjoying himself: it is a statement about his victory over the two problems. When we read the creation myths contemporary to the time of Moses, such as the *Enuma Elish*, these stories always portrayed chaos and disorder as an enemy to be fought. In those stories, chaos was illustrated as a great sea monster who was killed by the god Marduk and her body dissected to form the cosmos. Notice in the biblical account, that the Spirit of God hovers over the chaotic waters. God does not fight chaos—he wields it and shapes it into order. God is not like the gods of the pagan world, gods who created through violence. Instead, God is in complete control over these forces and is able to harness them and fill them with life until the universe can no longer be called *formless* and *void*,

but rather *ordered* and *living*. This victory was not temporary, as the pagans feared every time a storm from the sea struck the land. Their fear was that the chaotic waters and the monsters therein would take over the ordered land. God's rest is *permanent* and *sustainable*, and it will grow—and his image-bearers maintain such order in their care of the Garden of Eden.

THE FALL AND A HOPE FOR FUTURE SABBATH

At least, that is what was supposed to happen. Instead, humanity followed a rebel voice and disobeyed God. As punishment, curses were given, and Adam and Eve were banished from Eden and the life-giving tree therein.

God's curse on the ground is another

FEATURE

element of this story that is often overlooked. This is not some random punishment God is imposing on Adam's ability to garden—it is far worse! There are two parts to this curse. First, despite his labour, Adam would struggle as thorns and thistles would grow. Second, from this desperate living Adam would eat of the dust until to dust he would return (see Genesis 3:17–19). The point here is not that thorny plants have their origin in the Fall. When God created the Garden of Eden it was not just a garden: it was a temple and a place where the reality of Sabbath existed. It was a place where humankind could share in God's rest.

So, if the Garden was a place of Sabbath rest, *Why did Adam and Eve work in the Garden?* Here we remember once more that God's rest did not mean cessation from work, but rather a victorious rest at creation when he defeated chaos and emptiness. Now in the Garden, human beings are invited to live in that victory and take advantage of it, to walk in its fulfilment. Everything Adam did succeeded, and his life would not expire thanks to the Tree of Life. Now, after sin entered the world, things will be different. Adam will work against chaos, but his labour will be in vain. He will try to keep himself alive but will eventually die and undo God's making of him from dust. In other words, God's curse of Adam was a slow reversal of

This makes the Sabbath day a prominently redemptive picture of God's reversal of our sin and its consequences.

creation and thus an exclusion from the victorious Sabbath. Whereas God rested because his work had been done, now Adam will never rest but continue to work against those forces until they overcome him—until his labours, and he himself, are formless and void.

This is what makes the Sabbath Day in the covenant at Sinai so significant. God is not simply giving his people a day off; he is giving them a promise. Think of the miracle of the manna on the Sabbath while Israel was in the wilderness (Exodus 16:22–26). Manna saved overnight on any other day of the week decayed and bred maggots, but on the Sabbath it did not spoil. The forces that normally ruin our labour, that bring chaos and death into our lives, have no power here. Instead, the Israelites experience the victory of God



over both rot (formlessness/chaos) and starvation (void/death) by his preservation of the food he gives them.

The Sabbath, as the seal of the covenant, is telling God's people something special. God is including them in *his* Sabbath, in his restful defeat of chaos and death. For at least one day a week, God's people get a rest from the curse. This makes the Sabbath day a prominently redemptive picture of God's reversal of our sin and its consequences.

Keeping the Sabbath day was not optional because it was the mark of the covenant. You cannot be part of God's people if you refuse God's rest. Life and rest are gifts from God that come with being in God's presence; refusing to acknowledge that is to cut yourself off from those gifts entirely. While we may wonder at the harshness of stoning someone to death for breaking the Sabbath day, it makes sense when viewed in this way. To refuse the Sabbath is to choose death over life; it is to reject God's promises and his presence.

THE LORD OF THE SABBATH

With the advent of Christ, the way the Scriptures talk about Sabbath changes significantly. While there are many passages we could go to demonstrate this, Matthew 12 is perhaps the clearest and most well-known example of this shift. In verses 1–8

we have this famous scene where Jesus is walking with his disciples through fields of grain on the Sabbath. The hungry disciples pick heads of grain to eat, and the Pharisees use this as an opportunity to point out that Jesus' disciples are breaking the Sabbath command.

Of course, they were doing no such thing. Jesus could very easily have defended his disciples by pointing out that they were only in violation of Pharisaical rules, not a biblical command. However, this is not the way Jesus argues for his disciples' innocence. Instead, he brings up two cases from the Old Testament where breaking ceremonial law was allowed, and the conditions in which it was allowed.

First, he brings up David during his flight from Saul in 1 Samuel 21. Bread that was only for priests was given to David and his followers, provided they had kept themselves holy on their journey. Second, Jesus mentions the priests who perform their priestly duties on the Sabbath and so are obliged to break its normal requirements. Following this, Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 where God clearly communicates his love for mercy over a strict imposing of ceremonial laws. He then closes this interaction with the most important and striking part of his speech, the claim that he, the Son of Man, is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8).

The implications of this simple exchange are notable:

First, it clearly implies that, if Jesus were to categorize the Sabbath command under the modern division of civil, ceremonial and moral law, it would fall under *ceremonial*. This is clear because of his reference to David and the shewbread, which was undoubtedly ceremonial in nature due to the observance being part of the worship system in the tabernacle. Just like every part of tabernacle worship, the Sabbath was a temporary institution which pointed to a greater eternal truth, similar to how the sacrificial system operated. It is, therefore, inappropriate to apply the Sabbath day command of the Old Testament to New Testament Christians.

Second, as Jesus points out in Mark's parallel (Mark 2:27), this shows the Sabbath to be a source of rest, benefit and promise for those observing it. The Sabbath, the mark of the covenant, was made for man, man was not made in order to serve through Sabbath keeping. The Sabbath day was strictly enforced by the law, not because God needs us to keep it but because of the promise attached to it. To keep the Sabbath under that covenant was to look forward to the promise of future rest in God from the curse. Therefore, the hungry disciples are allowed to break it because going hungry for the day would not be rest, it would be more reminiscent of the curse. It would forego the purpose of the command, and so it could not apply.

Third, Jesus has the authority to say how and when the Sabbath day command applies. David and his men were given the shewbread by the priests, and so it is implied that the priests in that case had the authority to determine when an exception to that ceremonial rule was appropriate. Likewise, the priests were obviously given a pass to perform their temple duties on the Sabbath. If these men have the authority to judge when exceptions are or are not appropriate, how much more the Son of Man? If David had the authority to give his men that bread, how much more is the Son of God allowed to give his disciples an exception from the law for the sake of its ultimate purpose of rest?

While there is much more that could be said about this text and about the attitude of Jesus toward the Sabbath day in general, these three implications demonstrate the New Testament shift toward the Sabbath day command. However, as Christ taught in Matthew 5:17 that he came to fulfil, and not abolish, the law, the New Testament does not do away with the

concept of Sabbath, but rather brings its theme into reality.

TIME TO REST

At the beginning of his sermon-letter, the author of Hebrews makes the case that Christ is the fullest revelation of God and therefore his gospel must not be ignored. In chapter 3 he gives a warning to his readers against being like the Israelites who, because of their disobedience and unbelief, died in the wilderness during the forty years of wandering. Then, in a quotation from Psalm 95:11, he reiterates a curse God put on those who lacked the faith to enter God's promises, "Therefore I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"

What follows is the most complete treatment of the Sabbath and what it means in all of Scripture. As you begin to

To rest from our labour as God did from his, means to reach the end of that struggle against formlessness and void and find a Sabbath at the end of it.

make your way into Hebrews 4, you see the author pick up on this theme of rest and connect it both to the seventh day of the creation week (Hebrews 4:4) and the Sabbath day (Hebrews 4:9). When God speaks of rest in Psalm 95, he is referring primarily to the promise of rest in the promised land (see Hebrews 4:8), but the author of Hebrews relates it to the theme of Sabbath rest. Just like Eden, the promised land is a sabbatical space.

As was explored earlier, this rest doesn't refer to inactivity. God never stops working, and neither do Christians. So why does Hebrews 4:10 say, "for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his"?

Evangelical readers may be a little quick to jump to an interpretation of *works righteousness*, but this simply is not in the context of the passage, although perhaps not completely unrelated. The key here is the phrase "as God did from his." What work did God finish doing on the seventh day? It was his work creating a world of order and life out of disorder and emptiness. The first three days showed God solving the problem of disorder by structuring the cosmos, and the second three had God solving the problem of emptiness by filling those structures he created. On the seventh day he rested because his work of creation

has successfully subdued the formlessness and void.

We saw Eden to be a sabbatical space where humanity's work was a fruitful participation in God's victory over these forces. Adam and Eve lived in a Garden, a symbol of divine order, dwelling and life, which God has provided. After the Fall, Adam was cursed with exclusion from God's Sabbath rest. He would work to order the ground, and it would produce chaotic thorns. He would eat to survive, but he would eventually turn back to the dust from which he came. Human existence became a war against time; a war against chaos and death, which we would never win, only hold off for a while. This is the meaningless labour of human existence so eloquently described in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is a rest from *this* that Hebrews 4 invites us into. To rest from our labour as God did from his, means to reach the end of that struggle against formlessness and void and find a Sabbath at the end of it.

Just as the seventh day had no evening or morning, our rest in Christ is an eternal rest. When God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden, they were separated from Sabbath rest and doomed to an existence of vain toil to which they would succumb. When God sealed his covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai with the establishment of the Sabbath day, this was an invitation into a promise. This was the promise that all that was lost on that fateful day when our primal parents sinned for the first time would be restored. The way back to the Tree of Life—the presence of God—and a fruitful and unending life of restful work was communicated every time Israel took the day to partake in holy rest.

Now, as Christians under a new covenant, this ceremonial sign has passed away. This is not because God has changed his mind or that the Sabbath has reached its expiry date. On the contrary, it is because that promise of rest has come in its fullness. We are invited *today* to enter God's rest through faith in Christ. In him our vain labours are over. Our struggle against death, once futile, is now won for us by one who took our death to give us his resurrection life. Just as God defeated chaos and emptiness at creation, Christ has defeated these all over again at the cross and in the empty tomb so that a true Sabbath may be shared with those who believe. Let us not spend another moment in meaningless toil—our eternal Sabbath has just begun! **T**

➤ Andy Osborne is pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Scarborough, ON.

DYING TRADITIONS



BY DANIELLE GIGNAC >>

It seems like there are few activities left in our society in which we follow *tradition*. We've rejected, reinvented and redefined so many of them that they have little resemblance to the rituals of the past. Many of our holidays (originally "holy days") are like this, with Queen Victoria's birthday somehow turning into simply the unofficial start of summer in Canada, or Easter being a day for kids to hunt for candy left by an imaginary bunny. The solemnity and meaning of these significant moments have been lost in our consumerist and atheist culture.

However, one rite that has maintained its practices, to a large extent—though there are recent shifts and "innovations" as well—is the funeral. For many reasons, people have continued to lean on tradition for walking through the days and weeks after someone dies. They are in a vulnerable state, often with intense or unstable emotions. It can be hard to make one's own decisions and plans. Simply getting through each day can be enough of a challenge. Leaving arrangements to someone who is experienced is much easier and relieves a lot of stress. There may also be comfort in tradition and following recognized patterns.

While some traditions may be meaningless for families and they may choose to forego them, the basic framework of funeral activities tends to provide for the breadth of experiences that people desire at this difficult time. Some cultures have very different funeral rituals that provide significantly more time for the acknowledged grieving period, such as the seven days of sitting *shiva* for Jewish people. In North American culture, this typically involves a visitation, a funeral service and an interment.

It's worth considering that a funeral is a chance for all who knew the person to participate in collective grieving, as well as help with their personal grief. We may often think of funerals as being for the immediate family or to fulfil the wishes of the deceased, but we really should also consider the importance of it for those in the wider circle of relations who may need that time to reconnect and mourn. Our Western culture often fails to address collective needs like mourning.

The visitation gives an opportunity for



IT CAN BE A MOMENT IN THE MIDST OF SORROW WHEN HEARTS ARE SOFTENED AND RECEPTIVE TO SPIRITUAL MATTERS.

visitors to talk with the family, and possibly a last chance for viewing the body of the deceased. It's also an option for those who may not be able to attend the funeral service to still pay their respects in a personal way. It may seem like duplication or an extra step, but a visitation can be an important time for many people, and a valuable time during the grieving period to see and talk with people.

The funeral service itself often includes personal eulogies, as well as a religious component if the family chooses. For Christians, this can be an extremely meaningful time to share one's hope of eternal life through Jesus. This is one ritual that provides an opportunity for non-Christians to witness a religious ceremony, and by nature of the occasion, to receive it in solemnity and with respect. At its best, it can be a moment in the midst of sorrow when hearts are softened and receptive to spiritual matters, and an expression of faith can reach deeply. For those who mourn without hope, the assurance that there is hope for a life beyond death may at this time start to break down walls, and it may even be the first time they have heard of such hope. After the service, the graveside interment is often a more intimate


and solemn time—a final connection witnessing the placement of the remains in its final resting place.

Outlined here are the traditional steps in our culture. As generations change, there are certainly many changing practices as well, including keeping cremated remains in a home rather than interring, and organizing celebrations of life, rather than funerals. Tradition for tradition's sake is of course not worth pursuing. But traditions that possess meaning, have stood the test of time, and carry us through difficult moments, should have their place. As in all rituals, the meaning only exists if it is alive in those that carry it out. The structure of a traditional funeral can help provide time and space for grieving well, but still give opportunity for personalization.

We lose much when we shy away from the sorrow and difficulty of death by downplaying it with a "party" or even completely avoiding any collective practice altogether. We are in relationship to so many people throughout our lives, and funerals are a time for those people to gather and mourn collectively, to share memories and offer comfort and love. This is good and important, and helps us connect with the reality of death, and our need of salvation.

The finality of death is inescapable. Many people don't consider this finality until it is on their doorstep. Participating in funeral practices draws our attention to the reality of death in meaningful ways, and if done well, can help show what is needed to obtain eternal life. God's mercy is so great that, even as the final moments of life approach, he will welcome all who repent and turn to him, as he did for the thief on the cross.

Let's lean into the tradition of the funeral and see the beauty in taking each step to remember and honour our loved ones. But let's also take the opportunity to grieve and grasp the meaning of life and death, and to share the good news that while we must still suffer here on earth, Jesus has overcome death itself and has a place in his kingdom for all who will follow him. As is written on many a tombstone declaring Jesus' triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). **B**

 Danielle Gignac is an architect living in Guelph, ON. She attends Crestwicke Baptist Church.

SERVING GOD ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES



BY DALE NEVELIZER >> Christian missions has changed over the years. Today many people volunteer for short-term mission trips and even full-time missionaries come home periodically on furlough. But back when the modern missionary movement began in the late seventeen hundreds, missionaries often said a final goodbye to their homes and families to spend their lives spreading the gospel of Christ to the nations, as frequent flyer miles were nonexistent and many missionaries died of plagues or were martyred on the mission field.


Paul wrote to the Colossians to instruct them that neither legalism nor mysticism empowers us to live the Christian life, but that Christ is all and all that we need. As Paul drew his letter to a close, he sent his greetings to Archippus. Archippus belonged to the household of Philemon who housed the church of Colossae and

It is important not only to start well but also to end well.

may have been the son of Philemon and Apphia. To publicly endorse and encourage him to complete his ministry, Paul instructs the church in Colosse, “Tell Archippus: ‘See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord’” (Colossians 4:17 NIV).

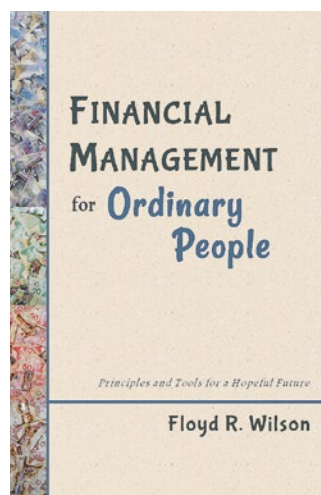
Paul never tells us what sort of ministry Archippus had, only that he was a fellow soldier in the Lord. It may have been that he pastored the Colossian church when Epaphras left to be with Paul in Rome, but whatever his ministry was, it was something he had received from the Lord. The uncertainty as to what Archippus’s ministry was means that whatever ministry God calls us to, he not only equips us, but he also gives us a desire for it. And if God has called and gifted us to serve him in a particular sphere of ministry, then the calling and gifting becomes evident and is recognized and encouraged by the church as well.

But the ministry that Archippus received was not a short-term mission trip. He was called to a lifetime of faithful service. If his ministry was to pastor the Colossian Christians, then Archippus was to fulfil his ministry by defending the truth of the gospel against the Colossian heresy. Whatever gift God may equip us with, he calls us to a lifetime of faithful service. The Christian life is not a sprint, but a marathon. We do not start and then stop ministering based on our feelings or because the going gets tough. We keep on keeping on and complete the calling that God has appointed us to as we encourage each other in the ministry God has entrusted to us.

The Christian life begins at the foot of the cross as we turn from our sin and trust in Christ alone for our salvation. But it is important not only to start well but also to end well so that we are received by the Lord as his good and faithful servants. To that end, we should encourage one another to serve him all the days of our lives. 

 Dale Nevelizer is pastor of Tilbury Regular Baptist Church, Tilbury, ON.

Reviews OF NEW & RECENT books



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE

Principles and Tools for a Hopeful Future

BY FLOYD R. WILSON

Self published (rev. ed. 2025); 190 pgs
ISBN 978-1738729029

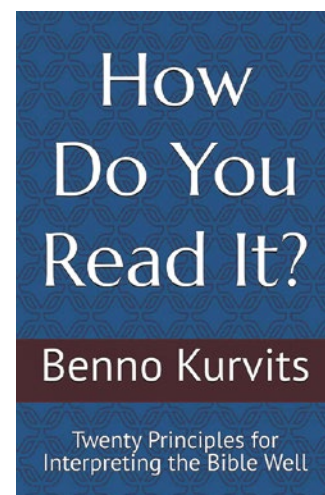
What a gift this book is—especially to the ordinary people of God. Money is a big part of everyone’s life, and it isn’t easy to navigate the many roads with their twists and turns, as we seek to be good stewards of God’s financial resources.

The author of *Financial Management*, Floyd Wilson and his wife, Helen (lifehope-foundation.ca) raised six children on a pastor’s wage and these principles under God’s grace enabled them to live debt-free and stress-free.

This book is well organized under eighteen chapters covering a wide range of financial issues such as earning wages, biblical giving, saving, investments, buying a car or home, and retirement and the making of a will.

Each chapter begins with thought-provoking questions and concludes with practical questions and exercises to carry out. The book is easy to read and understand. It is filled with issue-appropriate Scriptures, along with sound, practical wisdom and pastoral care.

I highly recommend this book, especially to *ordinary people*. **—DON THEOBALD**



HOW DO YOU READ IT?

Twenty Principles for Interpreting the Bible Well

BY BENNO KURVITS

Self published (2025); 416 pgs
ISBN 978-1069444707

Pastor, teacher, elder Benno Kurvits (Pilgrim Baptist Fellowship) is also an author and writer. His latest book is one that is desperately needed in our day of large scale biblical illiteracy, even among many professing Christians. The Christian life is lived by faith. And true, saving, persevering faith must be fed and fueled by the persistent, ongoing study of the Word of God.

How Do You Read It? is written for ordinary believers as they seek to be regularly reading and studying the Bible. Kurvits’ book is divided into six parts that progressively lay out the twenty key principles that aid us in interpreting the Bible correctly and practically applying it in our lives.

These twenty principles focus on the work of God in proper interpretation, our personal responsibility in learning about the Bible and the various aspects of the Bible itself—grammar, context, history, etc. Kurvits’ chapters on the centrality of Christ, the covenants and the priority of the New Testament are exceptional. Make this book a lifelong companion as you study the Bible. **—DON THEOBALD**

THE GOSPEL & FREEDOM OF SPEECH



BY OWEN PIKKERT >>

The concept of freedom is, for many people, highly appealing. It motivates immigrants to travel thousands of miles, working people to save for retirement and those in bad relationships to stand up for themselves. Who hasn't experienced freedom's allure? At the same time, just because something is appealing does not mean it should be promoted. It might be appealing to strike someone, but that should be condemned. In fact it should be illegal.

Recently, there have been increasing calls to compromise a particular freedom, namely freedom of speech. Now free speech has always had its opponents. Historically, such opposition has been found both in the far left, such as Marxists, and in the far right, such as fascists. But it is increasingly true of people who don't identify as Marxist or fascists at all. Late-night host Jimmy Kimmel's recent cancellation, for instance, was loudly celebrated by those who would not self-identify as fascists, but who delight in removing freedom of speech from their political enemies.

I think that freedom of speech, short of direct incitements to violence, should remain a fundamental freedom. My reason is not philosophical, but pastoral: I want to be legally free to preach the gospel. By protecting free speech for everyone, that includes free speech for me. In my case, that includes preaching the gospel from whichever pulpit is offered to me. There are plenty of things on my mind before I preach: whether I got the Greek right, whether my shirt is properly tucked in and whether the lady in the seventh row will complain yet again. I have little interest in adding the fear of illegality to these otherwise mundane concerns.

Now it may be objected that by protecting free speech for everyone, that includes protecting free speech for those with opinions contrary to our own. Free speech for everyone protects Christian speech, but it also protects Muslim speech, Marxist speech and the speech of rather biased television hosts. How unpleasant! Surely there's an easier way to legally guarantee Christian speech: instead of guaranteeing free speech for all, only guarantee

My reason is not philosophical, but pastoral: I want to be legally free to preach the gospel.



free speech for those who preach the gospel. This requires removing the freedom to preach the Qur'an, the *Communist Manifesto* or deceptive setups to bad jokes.

This objection sounds precise, but is actually quite vague. For it tells us nothing about which gospel, exactly, should be exclusively guaranteed by law. Is it the Catholic gospel, whereby salvation is achieved partly through works? Is it the mainline Protestant gospel, whereby salvation is not from sin, but from victimhood and oppression? Or is it the prosperity gospel, whereby salvation is conceived primarily in terms of increased health and wealth? Surely not. These are false gospels. Presumably the objection presupposes the true gospel, whereby salvation is from sin, through faith alone.

Let us grant this point, and imagine a society where you are free to preach the true gospel, and only the true gospel. You will not find any mosques nor communist utopias, because the freedom to publicly proclaim Islam and Marxism has been legally removed. Will your freedom to preach the true gospel be legally guaranteed? Absolutely. In fact it comes close to a tautology. But will the true gospel always be preached in such a society, for as long as the society exists? I doubt it. The human heart has a terrifying ability to deaden, distort and deny the true gospel. And this will happen regardless of social structures. Removing mosques does not fix the heart.

Thus what will happen is this. In our imagined society, only the true gospel can

be legally preached. But the hearts in this society are still human hearts. So they will find ways to distort the true gospel into a false gospel. Initially, this false gospel will not be publicly proclaimed, for that is illegal in our supposed society. But it will spread nevertheless. And it will spread to the point that it has enough adherents to take meaningful legal action. People will complain that their forebearers got it all wrong, for what their forebearers believed was the true gospel is in fact a false gospel. Hence, the law of the land must be changed to only allow the preaching of the new "true" gospel. All other gospels must be banned. After all, it has been done before. Time to round up those antiquated souls who still preach backward notions like salvation from sin by faith alone, and deport them from our great country.

That is what I find deeply concerning about limiting free speech to Christians alone: the legal guarantee of a short-term and (in a very narrow sense) pleasant result, at the cost of a long-term and unpleasant disaster. I want a legal guarantee to preach the gospel that is not hamstrung by bad precedent. And if that comes at the cost of legally guaranteeing free speech for those with whom I disagree, then I am willing to bear that cost. I may find their speech highly unpleasant. But, at the end of the day, I do not need to be around them all the time. And my remote does have a mute button, which I am legally allowed to press. **B**

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WHY DID JESUS COME AS A BABY?

BY JANICE VAN ECK >> Have you ever wondered why Jesus came into the world as a baby? There are many important reasons for this but I thought I would focus on a few at this special time of year.

Because the prophets said he would

Long ago it was foretold or prophesied that a Saviour would come, from the line of King David, who would rescue his people. We read about this prophecy as far back as Genesis 3, and many times throughout the Old Testament. Here's what Isaiah the prophet said back in Isaiah 9:6, about 700 years before Jesus was born:

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Because Jesus needed to be fully man (and fully God)

For Jesus to be a fit sacrifice for our sins, he needed to be made just like us—fully human. It was only then that he could show that he could live a sinless life. If Jesus was a sinner, he could not pay for our sins. He needed to be perfect. He needed to be someone who was tempted in every way like us yet did not sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus says in John 10:15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Because he was perfect and human, he was able to take on the penalty for our sin and "redeem" us, or make us whole again before God and, one day, fit to live in God's presence forever in heaven.

Because God wanted to show us true humility

We often read in the Bible that we are not to be full of pride or think of ourselves as way better than others. Indeed, the only one who is worthy of praise and worship is God himself. In Jesus' birth as a baby into a humble family, born in a stable, living a quiet life in Nazareth, he was showing us that true worth and greatness is not measured by this world's standards. After all, Jesus was the Son of God. He left the glories of heaven to come to the earth. If anyone deserved being heralded as a great King, it was him!

We also see the humility of Jesus in being willing to be crucified on a Roman cross like a common criminal. Jesus was willing to do this because he knew that he was the only human who kept God's laws perfectly, and could pay the penalty that our sins deserved. He was a man, crucified in our place so that we could be free!

So, next time you are reading about Jesus' birth, think of all the wonderful things this teaches us about Jesus! **B**

Janice Van Eck is editor of *Barnabas* magazine. She attends Crestwicke Baptist Church in Guelph, ON.



THE CHALLENGE

Match the words

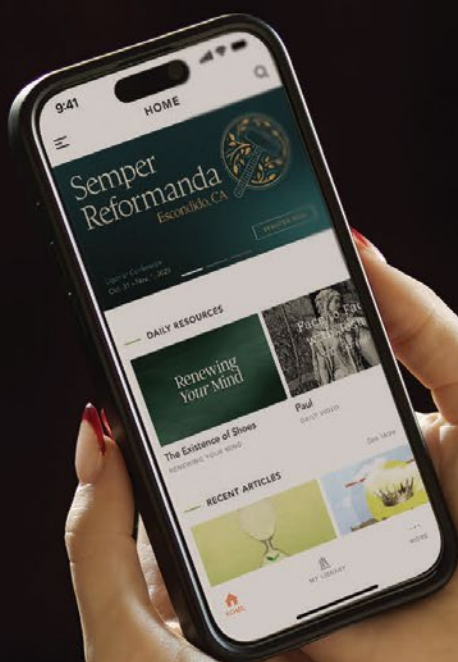
angel	Elizabeth	Joseph	virgin
Bethlehem	Herod	Mary	wise men
dream	Immanuel	shepherds	
Egypt	Jesus	son	

Use words above to fill the missing words in these sentences:

- _____, son of David, do not fear to take _____ as your wife.
- They shall call his name _____ (which means, God with us).
- After _____ was born in _____ of Judea in the days of _____.
- An _____ appeared to Joseph in a _____.
- Flee to _____ and remain there until I tell you.
- A _____ will conceive and bear a son.
- _____ came from the East.
- In the same region, there were _____ out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
- _____ was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women."

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