



COVENANT

THE MAGAZINE OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

VOL. 29 NOS. 1-2

**A WORSHIPING
COMMUNITY OF
GRACE**

Dr. Mark Dalbey's
Inaugural Address

Embodying Theology

FIRST CALLING
The *Imago Dei*
and the Order of
Creation

**THE SAME-SEX
MARRIAGE DEBATE**
A Christian
Response

MARIJUANA
A Growing
Problem

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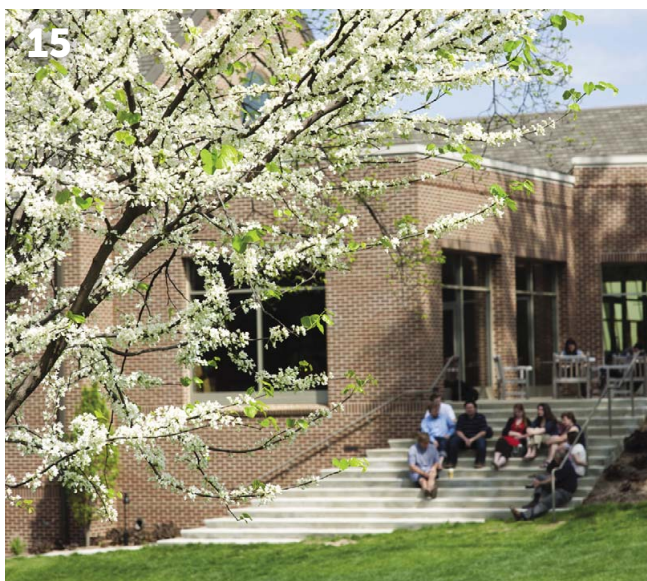
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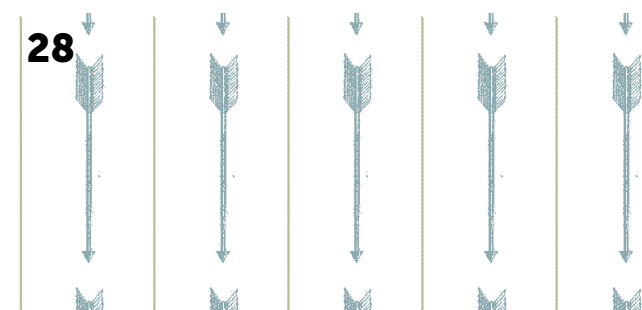
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"The Thistle" is your all-encompassing resource for news and information about Covenant Seminary. Read updates in each issue of *Covenant* magazine, or check out "The Thistle" online for the most recent posts at www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/.

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The purpose of Covenant Seminary is to glorify the triune God by training his servants to walk in God's grace, minister God's Word, and equip God's people—all for God's mission.



ON THE COVER

Detail from Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam."



Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

— 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Dear Friends,

As the only beings in all creation made in the image and likeness of God, we humans have a special role to play in the ongoing story of God’s world. We are his representatives, called to reflect both his character amid and his care for all that he has created. As my colleague Dr. Michael Williams notes in his article in this issue of *Covenant*, our physical bodies are not merely an important part of who we are, but are, in fact, essential to what we are called to be and do in God’s world.

Yet, how can we glorify God in our bodies, as the apostle Paul exhorts us to do in 1 Corinthians 6:20, when we know all too well the temptations and weaknesses that assail us on every side as the result of the sin of our first parents? How can broken, sinful people reflect even the tiniest hint of the majesty and glory of our holy and perfect God?

Redeemed by Christ and armed with the truth of God as revealed in his Word, we can face our own sin and that of the world around us with faith in the One who made us and hope in the fulfillment of the promises he gives his people. We know that Jesus has conquered sin and death

and that one day we will live with him in a world made new once more—indeed, it will be better than it was in the beginning! But for now, we live by faith, trusting in him to provide the grace we need to overcome the challenges that surround us and to reflect his loving character to others.

The stories in this issue speak to some of those challenges and how we can approach them faithfully and fruitfully as the embodied bearers of the image of our great and glorious God. I pray you will be blessed and encouraged by what you read here.

Your fellow servant in Christ,

Dr. Mark L. Dalbey
President



PHOTO: KATIE STORES

CMI Joins Citywide Community Workday

Last October, and again this winter, people from all over St. Louis displayed love in action by serving neighbors around the city. Serve St. Louis is a movement of churches and Christ-followers from throughout the region who unite for a weekend of practical acts of service. The goal is to make the metro area a better place to live while also bringing honor to the name of Jesus. Covenant’s City Ministry Initiative (CMI) participated in these events as an opportunity to assist residents of the city’s north side, where resources are more limited than in the South City area, where CMI had served last spring.

CMI plans to have two such service and learning events each year as a way of introducing Covenant students, especially those in their first year of studies, to ministry in an urban context. A strategic criterion for organizations with which CMI partners like this is the potential for ongoing opportunities. “The relational connection is key,” says Dr. Greg Perry, associate professor of New Testament and director of CMI. “We don’t want these to be just one-off events, but bridges for long-term ministry relationships.”

Dr. Perry says that he and CMI interns will evaluate annually what has worked well and determine the best places to serve. “We’d like to provide a variety of ministry opportunities so we don’t just offer the same experiences over and over—and of course we want to provide tangible assistance and gospel love where they are needed.” To this end, CMI plans to alternate service-learning events in South City, which offers a rich, diverse immigrant population, with opportunities downtown and on the north side, where historic African American churches and creative nonprofits have served children and families for years. Thus, this year, for the first time, CMI took part in worship, service, and learning opportunities in conjunction with the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday observance.



Yarbrough Concludes Term as ETS President

Dr. Bob Yarbrough, professor of New Testament, delivered his address as president of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) at the organization’s 65th annual meeting in November 2013. The event was held in Boston, Massachusetts, and centered on the theme “Evangelicalism, Inerrancy, and the Evangelical Theological Society: Retrospect and Prospect.” Dr. Yarbrough’s address was titled “The Future of Cognitive Reverence for the Bible” (read it online at www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/ets2013).

Dr. Yarbrough assumed the yearlong role of president of ETS in 2013. He is succeeded as president in 2014 by Thomas R. Schreiner, professor of New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.



Doriani Blogs for Gospel Coalition

Dr. Dan Doriani, vice president of strategic academic initiatives and professor of theology, has been a regular blogger for The Gospel Coalition since July 2013. He writes approximately once a month on a variety of topics. Recent posts have covered themes such as same-sex marriage (to read an article on the topic, see p. 24), the image of God as revealed in parenting, the value of work, and more. To read his posts, visit <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/>.

The Inauguration of President
Dr. Mark Dalbey

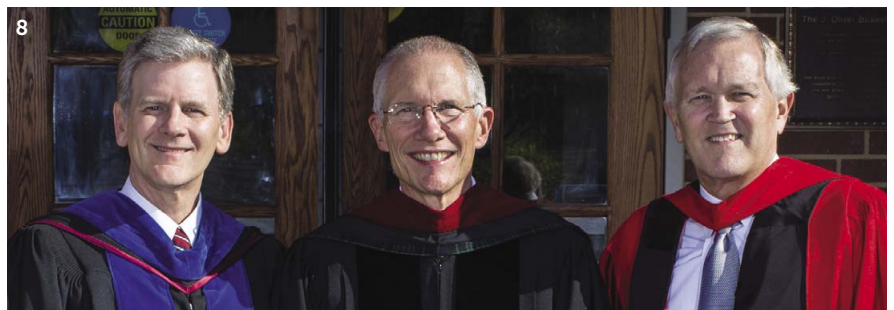
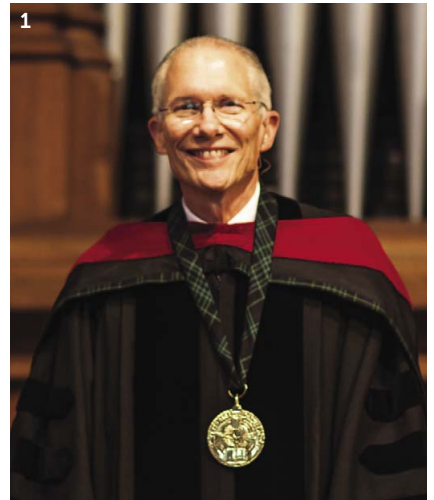
**Thursday,
Sept. 26, 2013**

The festivities began with a public Celebration of Worship in Song on the neighboring campus of Missouri Baptist University, followed by a desert reception. The evening featured the musical talents of many Seminary friends and staff. Highlights included son Steven Dalbey performing a solo rendition of "His Eye is on the Sparrow" (1); the award-winning Vocal Spectrum barbershop quartet, featuring son Eric Dalbey (3); a gospel choir led by Michelle Higgins (8); and a worship ensemble featuring Michael Brandenstein (2), Sarah Gothold (4), Joel Christie and Melissa Littlepage (5), and (not pictured) Joel Littlepage and Tony Barbara, with Kevin Twit of Indelible Grace. Billy Cerveny and Jeffrey Heyl also presented special music. Afterwards, guests enjoyed food, fellowship (6), and the chance to meet and talk with Dr. Dalbey, shown here with his mother, Mrs. Jane Dalbey (7).



**Friday,
Sept. 27, 2013**

The events continued with a formal inauguration ceremony in Rayburn Chapel on the Covenant Seminary campus, during which Dr. Dalbey was officially presented with the presidential medallion (1). The medallion features a depiction of the burning bush from Exodus 3, representing the authority of Scripture (6). Our faculty members and delegates from other educational institutions (2, 9) joined Seminary staff, friends, and other guests for Dr. Dalbey's inaugural address (3, 4, 5), after which the dignitaries processed out of the chapel to the music of a traditional Scottish bagpiper (7). Dr. Dalbey posed with guests, including President Emeritus Dr. Bryan Chapell (to his right) and Dr. Robert S. Rayburn (to his left), son of founding president and chapel namesake Dr. Robert G. Rayburn (8).



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Friday afternoon, Dr. Dalbey, with wife, Beth (3), spoke at a luncheon for faculty and visiting dignitaries held at the Algonquin Golf Club (2). Campus guests enjoyed special lectures by Rev. Mark Ryan, director of the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute (4), and Dr. Richard Winter, professor of practical theology and counseling (6). That evening, faculty and staff enjoyed an old-fashioned pig pickin' (5, 7) courtesy of master griller and Professor of New Testament Dr. Jimmy Agan (1).



Unconventional Schaeffer Lectures Explore the History and Roots of Jazz

"Jazz is an explosion of sound out of pain and tears. It's an exploration of the glorious ruin of mankind and how he, she, and we long after God." With these apt words Dr. Greg Perry, associate professor of New Testament, introduced "Heaven in a Nightclub," the fall 2013 Francis A. Schaeffer Lectures. The event, an information- and music-rich lecture and concert in one, explored the origins and history of jazz and its important place in American culture. Cohosted by the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute and South City Church in St. Louis in October, the event drew more than 250 people—seminarians, non-seminarians, Christians, non-Christians, locals, and even many from out of state as well as other countries. A pre-concert dessert began the evening and was accompanied by music performed by South City Church musicians. The crowd was treated to a delightful and informative performance by featured speaker and pianist Dr. William Edgar, professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary, along with vocalist Ruth Naomi Floyd and bassist Randy Pendleton.

Dr. Edgar explained that jazz is more than a musical technique; it is a reflection of the suffering and emancipation of the slave culture in which the music originated. It was through this story that he, Ms. Floyd, and Mr. Pendleton took their audience on an explorative and emotional journey, starting with the Harlem Renaissance, ending with the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, while touching down along the way at an auction lot in Savannah, Georgia, and connecting with fugi-

tive slaves seeking freedom on the Underground Railroad.

Each development of this narrative and musical journey took the audience deeper and deeper into the brokenness and beauty of humanity through the eyes and voices of those who have gone before us in the struggle for equality. The lens of jazz brought the audience closer to understanding and feeling the pain of those who have suffered great injustice and welcomed all present to the foot of the cross in repentance, empathy, humility, and joy.

For many, the highlight of the night was Ruth Naomi Floyd's vocal expression of "Motherless Child," a song that communicates a slave child's deep despair and hopelessness at being torn away from parents and sold at the auction lot. The ballad was hauntingly beautiful and reduced many to tears. Yet, the song's description of *sometimes* feeling like a motherless child indicates that all is not completely lost, even in the pit of sorrow.

The entire program left many speechless, with full hearts and a magnified picture of our Lord's faithfulness and mercy in the midst of lament. Through the medium of jazz, the audience was enfolded in the arms of Christ, where the message was clear: God will not forsake any of his children—then or now. — ALEXANDRA VAN RIJ



Professor of apologetics and accomplished jazz pianist Dr. William Edgar was the featured speaker and lead musician for the "Heaven in a Nightclub" event.



Hosted at South City Church in St. Louis, the event drew a large audience of local church and community members as well as students, staff, and friends of the Seminary.



Vocalist Ruth Naomi Floyd's stunning rendition of the traditional African American spiritual "Motherless Child" was a highlight of the evening and moved many in the audience to tears.

Equipping Church Leaders to Engage the Culture

While he was in town for the fall Schaeffer Lectures, Dr. William Edgar also graciously took time to share his expertise in apologetics with the Covenant Seminary community in other helpful and ministry-equipping ways.

- + At the Seminary's Friday morning chapel service, Dr. Edgar spoke on the topic of music and the book of Revelation. [Listen to Dr. Edgar's sermon online at http://www.covenantseminary.edu/resources/sermons/chapel-2013-fall/](http://www.covenantseminary.edu/resources/sermons/chapel-2013-fall/).
- + Students in Professor Jerram Barrs's Apologetics and Outreach class were blessed by Dr. Edgar's special guest lecture on apologetics and globalization.
- + At a ministry lunch for students, Dr. Edgar answered questions related to his newly published book *You Asked: Your Questions. God's Answers* (Christian Focus, 2013), which is aimed at young adults and gives biblical, common sense, and unpatronizing answers to 24 common questions.
- + Dr. Edgar also discussed contemporary apologetics issues with a small group of local pastors at a private luncheon on Saturday afternoon (below).



Professor Jerram Barrs (right) shared his insights on Christianity and the arts at the "Echoes of Eden" event. The event was hosted in one of our largest classrooms and quickly became standing-room only, with close to 150 attendees.

"Echoes of Eden": A Look at Christianity's Relationship to the Arts

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over *all*, does not cry: 'Mine!'" So goes the famous quote by theologian and diplomat Abraham Kuyper. Covenant Seminary is committed to living out the Reformed principle to which Kuyper spoke, namely, that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus affects every aspect of our lives.

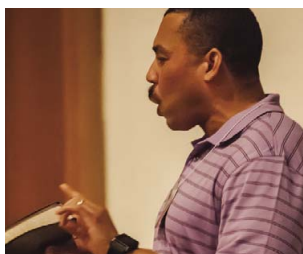
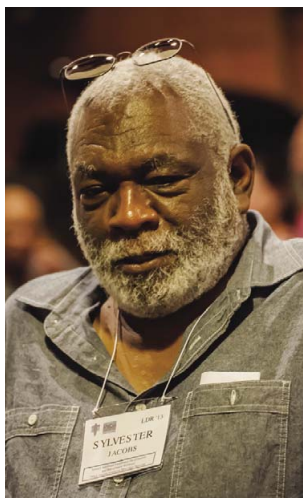
The Francis A. Schaeffer Institute (FSI) at Covenant Seminary continues to promote this truth as it equips students and community members to engage thoughtfully and biblically with the world around them. And Jerram Barrs, long-time professor of Christian studies and contemporary culture at Covenant and resident scholar of FSI, continues to make a profound impact on our students and our community through the gracious way in which he models the application of the gospel to all areas of life—including how he engages the creative arts.

Last September, for example, Professor Barrs, along with curator, author, and art historian Daniel Siedell and local artist John Early (MAEM '07), participated in "Echoes of Eden," an FSI-hosted panel discussion on the role of the arts inside and outside the church. Questions under discussion included:

- + Is there a theological foundation for the arts? Do we even need one?
- + Should the church be involved in the arts, and, if so, how and to what extent?
- + What are the responsibilities of a Christian artist? What about modern art?

Approximately 150 people attended the event, which was inspired by Professor Barrs's recent book *Echoes of Eden: Reflections on Christianity, Literature, and the Arts* (Crossway, 2013). The enthusiastic response was a strong indication of just how hungry people are for this type of conversation.

As the allotted discussion time ran out, the conversation continued outside after the event. Many visitors noted that they found the evening refreshing and encouraging to their personal love for the arts and greatly inspiring to them as they seek to serve the church and our culture in an area dear to them and dear to Christ. The event was co-hosted by the student-led Covenant of the Arts Club. —JOSEPH MCDANIELS



African American Leadership Development and Recruitment Weekend Offers Encouragement

Over Labor Day weekend, Covenant Seminary hosted the 2013 African American Leadership Development and Recruitment Weekend. The annual gathering, sponsored by Mission to North America (MNA), brings together current and prospective African American seminary students as well as missionaries, church planters, and ministry workers focused on urban or multicultural contexts. The weekend was a time of collaboration, fellowship, and encouragement.

Speakers, including many Seminary alumni, interacted on the subject of calling, facilitating discussion about the growing need for well-trained, Reformed, African American professional and lay leadership. Topics covered ranged from “Why do African Americans need to attend seminary?” to “How does a predominantly white denomination such as the PCA plant a cross-cultural church in a city like St. Louis?”

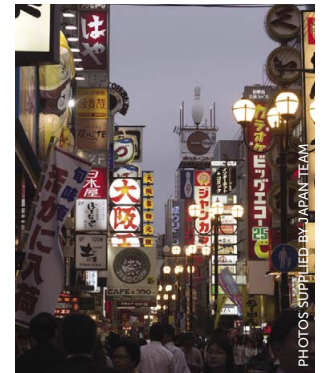
According to Dr. Mike Higgins, dean of students for the Seminary, the event was educational, celebratory, insightful, and challenging. “We felt like we were a part of something historic,” Higgins says. “As the PCA’s denominational seminary, we, together with the churches in St. Louis City, hope to capitalize intentionally on the ground gained this weekend. Our desire is to seek a ‘new normal’ in terms of how blacks and whites work together in our city and in the denomination for the good of Christ’s Kingdom.”

The conference was made possible through a unique partnership between the Seminary’s African American Student Fellowship and Reformed Theological Seminary-Jackson, South City Church, the New City Network, and the PCA’s African American Ministries Network.

Church and ministry leaders, along with families, friends, and even a gospel choir gathered at South City Church in St. Louis to enjoy fellowship and a fruitful and encouraging discussion about urban and multicultural ministry issues.



PHOTOS BY NEIL DAVIS



(Left to right) The Japan team at Tokyo Bay with alumnus and church planter Seima Aoyagi (far right, holding cup). Typical lifestyle scenes from Japan.

SEEing the Need: Bringing Gospel Healing to Japan

In spring 2013, Covenant Seminary sent a team of five students and one counseling professor on a service/ministry trip to Japan, a country where only 0.30% of the 128 million people are Christian. Here is one student's reflection on the personal impact of this trip.

Last May, I was blessed to join others from Covenant Seminary on a visit to Japan. Our goal: To SEE—Serve, Experience, and Explore—various ministries in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, and Chiba. Though our schedule was busy, the trip did include time for visits to many interesting Japanese temples and shrines, and the famous Tokyo Tower. We also had an opportunity to spend a night in a capsule hotel and relax in a tension-reducing *onsen*, or hot spring—which was much needed after a long flight and the labor of carrying heavy baggage on and off trains, subways, and through Tokyo, the biggest city in the world.

As is the case with many believers in the United States, I was largely unaware of the extent to which the Japanese are uninformed of the gospel. How has this nation gone completely under the radar of so many Christians who profess a desire to make Christ known? This is mind-boggling! Though such a situation does not baffle God as it does us, it does break his heart as it did mine.

Christians in populations with so few believers typically have a difficult time sustaining ministries without the Kingdom partnership of brothers and sisters from other parts of the world. Covenant Seminary planned this trip with the hope of nurturing and growing collaboration with the four ministries we visited. Our primary area of focus was to provide counseling ministry. We led workshops on marriage, the basics of Christian counseling, and personal healing.

God certainly made us more aware of Japan's needs, which we saw most acutely and poignantly at each location through people's obvious hunger for emotional and social healing. I knew about the extremely high suicide rate

in Japan, the large percentage of deaths from overwork (*karoshi*), and the great numbers of people who isolate themselves for more than six months at a time (*hikikomori*), but I was taken aback by the depth and intensity of the need we encountered. So many people received our teaching thirstily, like castaways adrift on the ocean for a long time without fresh water to drink. Without a doubt, Japan needs the blessing of a Christian counseling ministry. Though the country does have some clinical psychiatric counseling available, there is no practical applied counseling from a biblical perspective. And the very idea of marriage counseling is simply unheard of there. *This is why I went on this trip—to SEE Japan. I wanted to explore if God is calling me to use the training I have received at Covenant to go and be a blessing to those who do not know him, to give hope to those who live in a state of hopelessness in this country.*

I was surprised to discover that more than 61% of Covenant Seminary's counseling graduates ultimately remain in the St. Louis area. I began to wonder what it would be like if our MAC graduates could be dispersed to places in the world—such as Japan—that do not yet have emotional healing ministries. Can you imagine if even five trained counselors established a Christian counseling team in Tokyo? What an incredible opportunity that would be to bring the joy and hope of Christ's healing love to people who know so little of either! *How will they know if we do not go?*

This is the powerful truth to which God opened my eyes—and my heart—during our visit to Japan. —HEATHER MURRAY (MAC '14)

YOU ARE A VITAL PART OF GOD'S KINGDOM TRAINING MISSION

We live in a rapidly changing and increasingly relativistic culture. The need is great for well-trained pastors and leaders for God's church and Kingdom who can communicate effectively the grace and truth of the gospel, engage compassionately with the issues of the day, and encourage, equip, and motivate all God's people for the high callings we have to serve him between Sundays as

we work to advance his Kingdom in the places where he has strategically placed us. By God's grace, the support of many donors, friends, and PCA churches over the last year has enabled us to continue training such leaders to shape and shepherd the church in our denomination—and beyond—for decades to come.



"Training leaders for the church of today—and for 2025 and beyond—is a multiplying ministry across geography, generations, and into every area of life."

DR. MARK DALBEY
President

RECENT MINISTRY MILESTONES

- The inauguration of Dr. Mark Dalbey as the fifth president of Covenant Seminary.
- The return of Dr. Dan Doriani to our staff as vice president of strategic academic initiatives and professor of theology.
- The revitalization of our Francis A. Schaeffer Institute (FSI) and the expansion of our City Ministry Initiative (CMI) to foster greater cultural engagement, develop strategic partnerships, and seek more opportunities to minister in multicultural, multi-ethnic contexts.
- The revision of our Master of Divinity (MDiv) curriculum to better integrate classroom learning and formational experiences that equip pastors and other leaders for real-life ministry.
- Ongoing efforts to redesign and expand our online and field education programs.
- The planning of major renovations to our Community Center so that it better expresses and enhances our grace-centered, relationally based community life.



Pastors and Leaders for God's Church and Kingdom

YOUR GIFTS MAKE A GENERATIONAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL IMPACT FOR THE GOSPEL

- Our current student body represents 32 states and 17 countries. Our alumni currently serve the Lord in all 50 states and 40 countries.
- Historically, 75% of our MDiv graduates have served in pastoral ministry in the PCA. One-third of those currently in the PCA have planted a church.
- Since 2000, 399 MDiv graduates have served in emerging generation positions, working with students ages 6–21. Nearly half of our new students come to us through college campus ministries.
- Since 2000, 47 alumni and their families have entered the mission field with Mission to the World or Presbyterian Mission International; 15% of the missionaries with MTW and 100% of those with PMI are Covenant MDiv graduates.
- 19% of our MDiv graduates from 2000 to 2011 serve in a wide range of roles in academia, government, parachurch ministries, business, and in many other arenas.

See our video about the gospel impact of training church leaders at bit.ly/gospel-impact.

YOUR GENEROSITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE—now and for eternity. Thank you!

Please consider how you might continue supporting our mission and ministry.



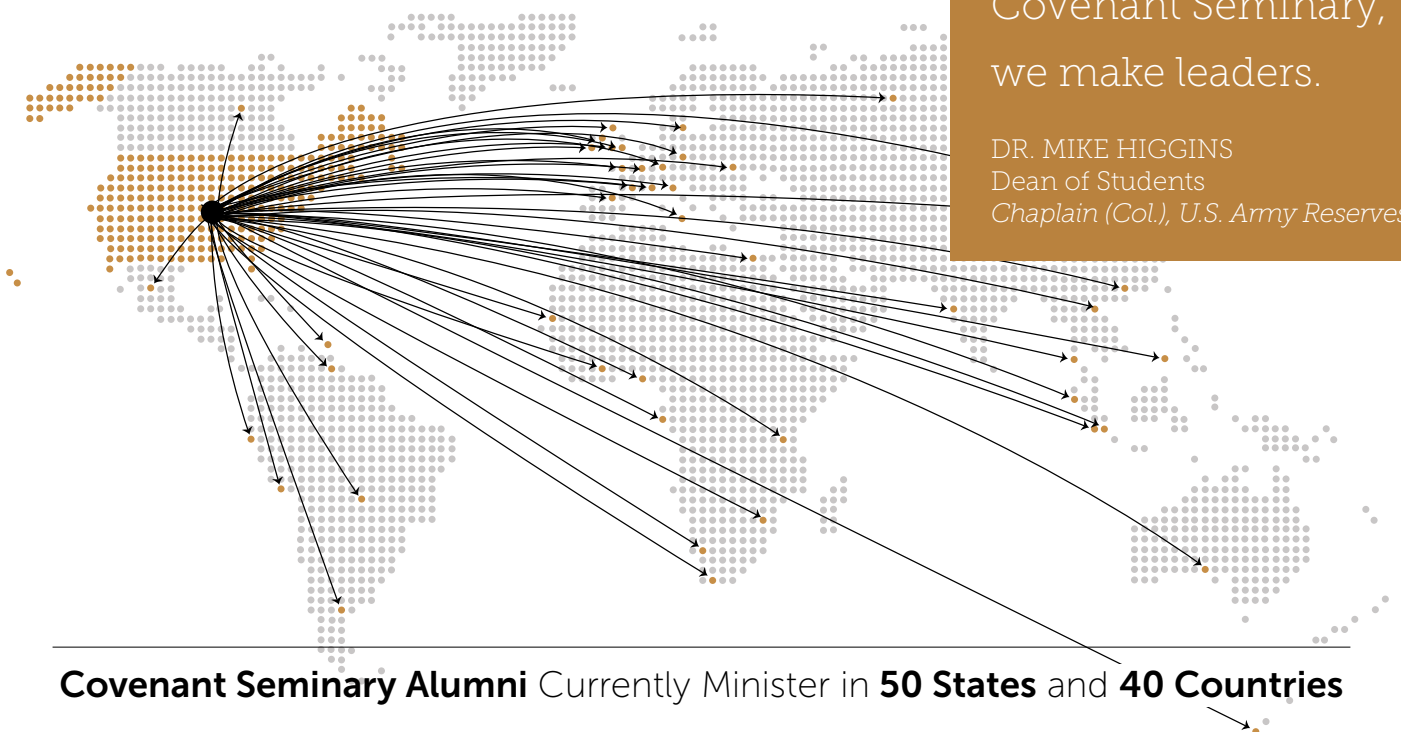
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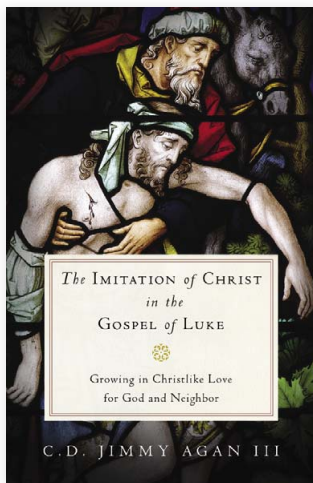
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I think leaders are
made, not born.
By God's grace, at
Covenant Seminary,
we make leaders.

DR. MIKE HIGGINS
Dean of Students
Chaplain (Col.), U.S. Army Reserves



Covenant Seminary Alumni Currently Minister in **50 States** and **40 Countries**



BOOK

The Imitation of Christ in the Gospel of Luke: Growing in Christlike Love for God and Neighbor
(P&R Publishing, 2014)

AUTHOR

Clarence DeWitt “Jimmy” Agan III
Professor of New Testament

REVIEWER

David Clyde Jones
Professor Emeritus of
Systematic Theology and Ethics

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

Refrain:
Oh, dearly, dearly has He loved,
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do.

“There is a Green Hill Far Away”
Cecil F. Alexander, 1847

There was a time—let’s just say, “in my salad days, when I was green in judgment”—when I took exception to the hymn “There is a Green Hill Far Away.” I don’t remember why, exactly. Maybe I thought that opener about a faraway green hill smacked a little too much of Romanticism. Or perhaps it was the “dearly, dearly” that struck me as a bit excessive: “Oh, dearly, dearly has He loved . . .” Mainly I think I was put off by the line that we must love Jesus and “try his works to do.” That sounded too “liberal” to my immature ears. Then I read that this hymn was the favorite of prominent theologian J. Gresham Machen, and I thought I should give it another look. When I did, I realized my youthful mistake: I had assumed the hymn meant that we are saved *by* following Christ’s example; the truth is, we are saved to follow Christ’s example. As the hymn says, “*trust in his redeeming blood*, and try his works to do” [emphasis mine].

When it comes to the neglected doctrine of the imitation of Christ, Jimmy Agan begins his book with some necessary ground-clearing work. He helpfully clarifies erroneous ideas of the role of the imitation of Christ in salvation and superficial ideas of what imitation means. Agan’s hope for this book is “to guard against *abuse* of the imitation of Christ by correcting the *neglect* of the imitation of Christ.”

The first chapter, “Why You Should Not Read This Book,” deals with arguments against imitation going as far back as St. Augustine and as recent as theologian and Anglican priest Alister McGrath. The second chapter, “Why You *Should* Read this Book,” sets forth the positive case for imitation using four forms of argument: biblical, historical, pastoral, and doxological.

The biblical argument is, of course, primary. Agan appeals to the clear testimony of the Scriptures to establish his key point: *deep reflection on Jesus’s example, leading to sustained effort to be like him, is a central feature of the Christian life.* The rest of the book is devoted to showing how the Gospel of Luke provides a framework in which to pursue authentic imitation of Christ.

Agan provides two chapters on “getting oriented” to this idea. The first focuses on the person of Christ and shows how the humanity of Christ is front and center when it comes to the doctrine of imitation: “[Jesus is] truly human in two senses: he really is a human being, completely sharing our human nature; and he is humanity as God intends it to be, remaining true to God’s purpose where we have strayed.”

The second orienting chapter explores thoroughly the evidence for imitation in Luke, beginning with its integral connection with discipleship, which leads to a fruitful discussion of the interplay of *prescriptive* and *descriptive* elements in the gospel. Agan’s conclusion: “The imitation of Christ is not concerned with any and all likeness to Jesus, but with being like him in ways that advance God’s saving plan, and in ways that embody the sorts of paradoxes we see in Jesus’s life.” Then follows the main body of the book, organized around four major principles manifest in the life of Jesus: (1) passion for the glory of God, (2) passion for the good of other people, (3) willing denial of self, and (4) patient endurance of hardship.

All in all, this is an exegetically sound, thoroughly practical call “to trust in his redeeming blood, and try his works to do.”



A Worshiping Community of Grace on God's Kingdom Training Mission

BY MARK DALBEY

Dr. Mark Dalbey was inaugurated as the fifth president of Covenant Theological Seminary in September 2013. In his inaugural address, Dr. Dalbey outlined his vision and hopes for the institution as we seek to remain effective in our mission of training leaders for the church of today—and for 2025 and beyond. Following is an abbreviated version of that address.

To hear audio from Dr. Dalbey's inaugural address, visit www.covenantseminary.edu/resources/sermons/presidential-inauguration.

Looking Toward the Needs of Tomorrow's Church—Today

When I became interim president of Covenant Seminary in May 2012, a number came to my mind: it was the year 2025. The reason was that one refrain I've often heard from

people connected with theological education is that seminaries do a great job of preparing pastors—for the church of 15 years ago. And I thought: If that's true, then eventually seminaries will fail the church in some very significant ways. So, as I assume my role as president, my desire for Covenant is for us to look to the future and ask ourselves:



Covenant Seminary's faculty of pastor-scholars, pictured throughout this article, are key to shaping future church leaders.

What will the church of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God need in its leaders in the year 2025? And how can we let those needs shape the way we train our students now?

To that end, I see three overarching principles or themes that must be true of Covenant Seminary if we are to be effective in preparing pastors and leaders for the church of 2025 and beyond. I believe that a seminary education must be *doxological*, *transformational*, and *Kingdom missional*—and it must reach beyond not only geographical and generational boundaries, but *beyond denominational boundaries* as well.

Doxological Education

The first two verses of Romans 12 provide a wonderful frame for what I want to convey here as Paul exhorts us to live our lives before the face of God as “living sacrifices” in all that we do. The posture of worship is bowing down before God and then rising up to serve him in everything. We cannot live life doxologically unless we get down low on our faces before our God that we might praise and worship him.

Pastor and preacher Zack Eswine reminds us in his book *Sensing Jesus* that ministry stresses and temptations abound for those in church leadership. We’ve been called to an impossible task in which we often believe that we’re being faithful to God if we can *be* God to the people we’re called to serve. But there is only one person who is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient—and that’s God himself. If we’re to be used powerfully in the lives of the people we’re called to serve, we must bow low, recognizing our own inadequacy for the task before us, and look up to receive the shining face of our God that we might have the strength and power to minister in his name. *Theological education must urge its students to embrace life as a constant doxological activity.*

Transformational Education

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we are told that God’s inspired Word is “profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, that the man of God would be competent, equipped for every good work.” The Word of God and a biblical theological foundation are central to a classical theological seminary such as Covenant. We are firmly rooted in a biblical, systematic, and historical theological education. We are as committed as ever to the inerrancy of Scripture and a solid biblical foundation for theology. We are centered in the gospel of God’s saving, transforming, renewing, and restoring grace. All of these are key to the kind of transformation to which I believe we are called.

But even the deep, biblical theological work that is part of what goes on in seminary is not an end in itself. It must always be done with the same posture of humility we noted earlier. And ministry must be done not only academically in the classroom, but also in a way that grapples with the practical applications of our theology in the life of the church and in our engagement with the world around us. Thus, every student; every professor; every preacher, teacher, and counselor; and every church elder must always be asking, “What does what I’m studying or saying or doing mean for me and my own growth into greater Christlikeness—and what does it mean for those whom God has put under my care?”

Again, this is an impossible task. There’s no way such transformational training can happen unless it has at its core gospel repentance. Transformed leaders who are willing to repent daily become mature in Christ and look to him—not themselves—for their strength. Yet, the mature leader also knows that he needs gifted and talented people around him—elders, lay people, men, women, and children—to help him navigate the troubled waters of the church and the culture. And so once again we’re back to having that humble posture: being on our faces before



Professors model the doxological, transformational, and Kingdom-missional lifestyle we desire for every Covenant student.

God, crying out to him to do this transforming work that we can't do apart from the powerful, intimate work of the Holy Spirit in us. But as he does that work, we become the very servant-leaders that God calls us to be. Our students need to see that kind of leadership lived out by us at the Seminary, and they need to see it lived out in the local churches where they serve as they train for ministry. *Theological education must strive for the transformation of its students into increasing Christlikeness.*

Kingdom-Missional Education

Psalm 51 speaks beautifully about David's repentance before the Lord and how the sacrifices that please God are a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart. I used to be puzzled, though, when the end of the psalm shifts to talking about the building up the walls of Jerusalem. I wasn't quite sure of the connection there. But I think that what the psalmist is telling us is that those who are on their faces in repentance before God and being transformed into greater Christlikeness must then rise to enter into Kingdom mission that builds up the walls of Jerusalem. This benefits the people of God and the whole world as God does his work in and through us.

Jesus preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He established the church to be the signpost and the instrument of that gospel. In Matthew 28, the Great Commission speaks of this same gospel of the Kingdom going forth geographically to the ends of the Earth, and how it will eventually be successful with every tribe and tongue and nation. But more than that, the gospel also goes forward from generation to generation. And it goes forward into every conceivable calling and vocation that God has ordained under the sun.

Covenant Seminary needs to be a place that equips pastors and ministry leaders with this vision of equipping the whole people of God for their high Kingdom callings

that happen *between* Sundays, not just *on* Sundays, so that they can then carry forward this gospel of the Kingdom into the places where God has called them—their homes and neighborhoods and workplaces and schools and places of recreation. Pastors should not see their own calling as somehow higher or better than those of people who aren't called into that office. Being a pastor is a distinctive calling, certainly, and we're passionately committed to it, but it's a calling for the sake of the Kingdom calling of all believers.

We need to ask ourselves these questions: Does the way we train our students to preach and teach and counsel and educate, and do all the things they're called to do, have at its core this gospel of the Kingdom? Does it include a view of engaging the world in such a way that the good news of the gospel actually connects with the issues of our day and the day to come? *Theological education must prepare students for a fully biblical passion for God's Kingdom mission.*

Looking Beyond Denominational and Generational Boundaries

Covenant is the denominational seminary of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), and that is a role that we love and cherish. Though we are not the only seminary that trains pastors for the PCA, we do have a privileged position that we desire to steward well. I believe that we are called not only to serve our denomination, but also to help shape the denomination through our graduates.

Yet, while we love that role and fully embrace our Reformed heritage and denominational distinctives, we also desire to be a seminary for the broader church of Jesus Christ and the advancement of his Kingdom. Just as the pastor's call to serve his church is part of a much larger Kingdom call, so our call to denominational service is part of our larger calling to serve Christ's church even beyond



Faculty members invest themselves in our students through teaching, mentoring, and nurturing Christlike growth in grace both in the classroom and outside it.

We desire to instill a vision for equipping God’s people for their high Kingdom callings that happen *between* Sundays, not just *on* Sundays.

the PCA. To set our sights on 2025 means seeing ourselves as serving within and beyond the PCA—both in terms of where our students come from and where they may go when we send them forth into ministry.

Setting our sights on 2025 also involves one more thing: a generational handoff of this kind of vision for training and ministry. The church as a whole has not always done a good job at this. So it is my passion to be part of a good, strong handoff of the baton to the rising generations—both at the Seminary and, to the degree that I have opportunity, in the denomination.

What kind of leaders do we want to graduate from Covenant Seminary? Humble, strong, courageous leaders, who will be known for the way they steward their gifts to the glory of God and share leadership with gifted people around them—leaders who, as they seek to follow our Savior in all things, would model, lead, and live out doxological, transformational, and Kingdom-missional lives that carry the gospel across geographical, generational, and denominational boundaries into every area and aspect of life.

Dr. Mark Dalbey is president and associate professor of practical theology at Covenant Seminary. After two decades in pastoral ministry, he came to Covenant in 1999 as dean of students and later served as vice president of student development and assistant professor of practical theology, vice president of academics and faculty development, and interim president. He continues to teach classes on worship as well as a class on gospel-centered parenting that he co-teaches with Beth, his wife of 39 years. Mark and Beth have three grown children and six grandchildren.

// Our Mission //

The purpose of Covenant Theological Seminary is to glorify the triune God by training his servants to walk in God’s grace, minister God’s Word, and equip God’s people—all for God’s mission.

// Our Core Values //

Seven Core Values amplify, clarify, and support our mission:

Christ-Centered Ministry

Biblical Authority

Grace Foundation

Relational Emphasis

Pastoral Training

Church Leadership

Kingdom Perspective

ARTICLE PHOTOS BY DAVID J. CERVEN, ROBERT G. GRIMM PHOTOGRAPHY, CHRISTOPHER PAUL HILTON, NATHAN LUCY, ORANGE BLOCK, AND KATIE STOKES.

FIRST CALLING

The *Imago Dei*
and the
Order of Creation

by Michael D. Williams

What does it mean to be created in “the image of God?” And what are the implications of this profound truth for our lives and work? The Genesis story of creation gives us some hints. »

What if we had no creation story, no Genesis 1–2 in our Bible? What if the Bible began with the story of Adam and Eve’s rebellion from God and fall into sin in Genesis 3? Would it make any difference for most Christians? We tend to think of religion as being about sin and salvation, the relationship of the individual soul to God, or finding our way to heaven. Everything else is seen as little more than a backdrop for our individual stories of sin and redemption.

But as important as the story of God’s saving us from our sin undoubtedly is, it is not a stand-alone, self-interpreting reality, nor is it where the Bible begins—or ends. Creation (Genesis 1–2) and restoration (Revelation 21–22), are the two great bookends of the grand drama of God’s story with his creatures. They define and name reality, paint the sweeping breadth and scope of God’s concern, and provide the values and principles for human existence in the world.

Our first calling in the biblical story is a calling to *the world*, a calling that comes for the sake of God’s purpose to *bless all things that he has made* (see Genesis 1). Should we miss this, we will in fact impoverish the biblical portrayal of calling itself.

Called to Creatureliness

Whatever else we might wish to say about humankind, Scripture is very clear: we must begin with the reality of our *creatureliness*. We have been bodily placed within a material creation without which we are inconceivable. We belong to the earth; we were made as part of it, made from it, and made for it. Genesis 2:7 is explicit here. The man was literally an “earthling,” being fashioned—by God’s own hand—of the dust of the ground. Even his name, *Adam*, is related to the word for “earth,” *adamah*. We are rooted in

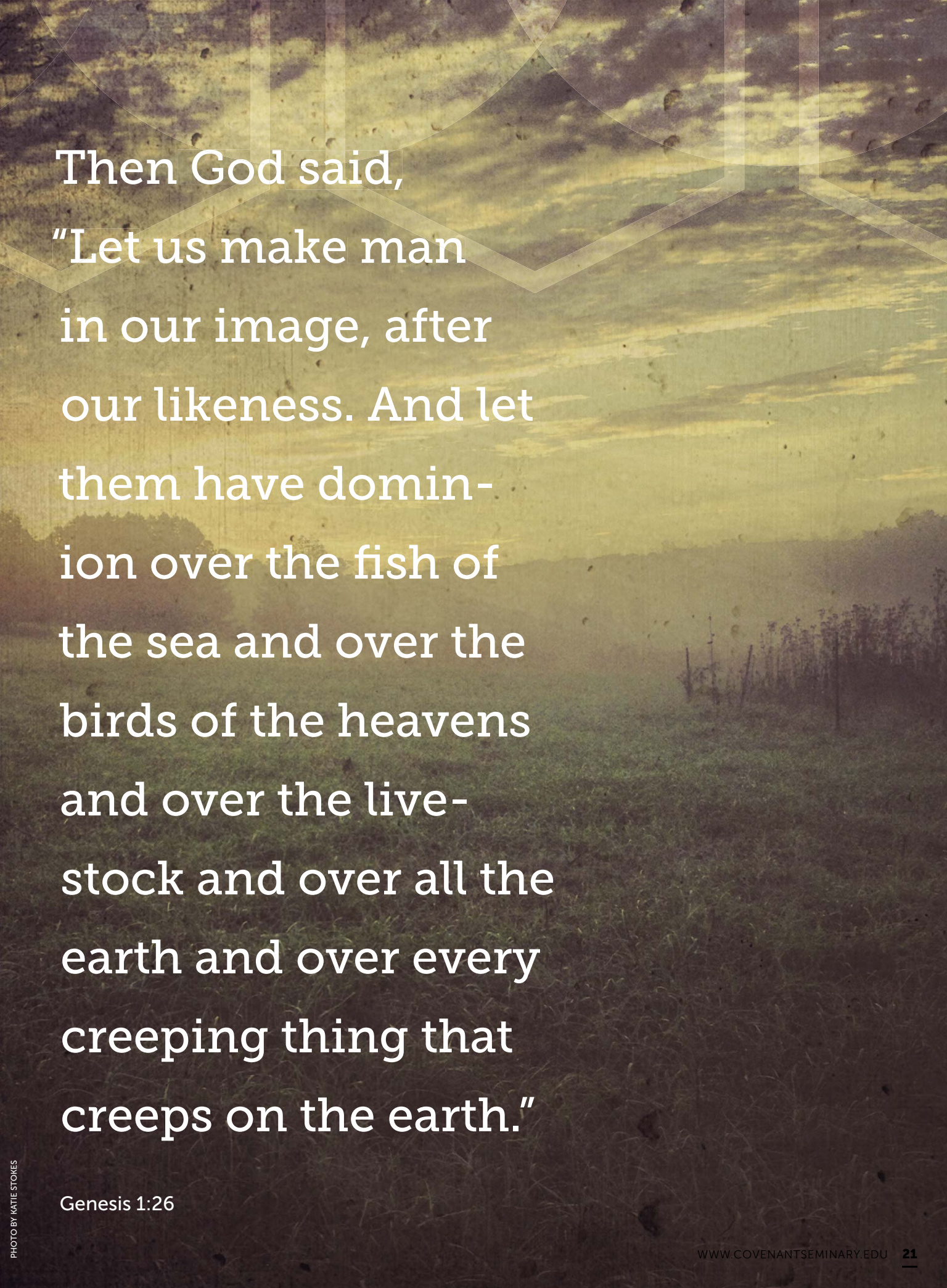
God’s creation no less than the animals, for like them, the earth is our home and we are ever dependent upon our Creator. Adam was called to creaturehood, to dependence upon God as his benefactor and Lord, and to citizenship in the community of God’s creatures. And one of the central aspects of our creaturely humanity is bodiliness—our physical, embodied nature.

Yet Christians have often treated the physical world and our own physical, embodied presence in it as a problem to be overcome, as if we are—or should be—ashamed of the body and its material goings-on. Indeed, Christian piety has often been presented as an intentional detachment from this-worldly affairs and concerns. But in imagining ourselves as spiritual beings belonging to a transcendent realm of pure soul rather than physical creatures made for the earth, we deny our first calling. We cannot bless the world for God’s purposes—important elements of which include worshiping, praising, and obeying our Creator as the very sorts of creatures we are—if we deny that we are part of that world.

God’s call to creaturehood creates and governs the bluebird and the wolverine just as it does the human. Genesis 1 does, however, declare a difference between the human and the nonhuman creature. Human beings enjoy a special place, a privileged relationship, and a unique role: We have been made *in the image of God*, as Genesis 1:26 tells us. It is not just that we have a particular biological structure—bipedal frame, stereoscopic vision, opposable thumbs, and big brains—but that we are *made for the purpose of bearing God’s image into the world in some way* (we’ll explore what this means later). This is unique among all God’s creatures.

Now we need to be careful here. This passage certainly draws a distinction between human beings and all the other creatures that the Lord has made. But it is not a

This article is adapted and abridged from a longer version originally published in two parts in Presbyterian: Covenant Seminary Review, vol. 39, no. 1 (Spring 2013), and no. 2 (Fall 2013), and is used by permission. For a fuller and more detailed discussion of the topics examined here, see the longer version online at www.covenantseminary.edu/the-thistle/first-calling.



Then God said,
"Let us make man
in our image, after
our likeness. And let
them have domin-
ion over the fish of
the sea and over the
birds of the heavens
and over the live-
stock and over all the
earth and over every
creeping thing that
creeps on the earth."

Genesis 1:26

distinction between the human on the one hand and the creation/creaturely on the other, or between the human and the earthly/physical. Genesis 1 seeks to situate the human *within* and *for* the material creation, not separate us from it.

Imago Dei: What We Are or What We Do?

Precisely what constitutes the “image of God” in man? This has long been debated by theologians. The text in Genesis does not give us specifics, and the phrase is used just a handful of times in the Bible. Because of this, Christians have often simply read their own current cultural notions about what it is to be human into the “image” idea of Genesis 1.

At different times the image of God has been identified as rationality, the soul, personhood, love, relational abilities, dominion over creation, moral sensitivity, representation, conscience, an orientation toward worship, the gift of speech, artistic and technical creativity, the ability to make culture, and many other things. Several schemes have emerged to organize and categorize all these suggestions. Basically, they all boil down to two sorts of ideas: the image of God is either something that we *are*, or it is something that we *do*. In short, it is a *noun*, a thing; or it is a *verb*, an action.

The immediate problem with any nominal concept is that no Scripture identifies the image with some aspect of our being, such as a soul or rationality. Further, the nominal interpretation allows us to treat the image of God as a more or less static thing, an endowment or entitlement that exists autonomously in humankind, devoid of relationship with our Creator.

The verbal, or functionalist, interpretation moves the focus to the human in relationship with God by seeing

the image as some action resulting from that relationship. Genesis 1 does associate the image of God with a *calling* that God entrusts to Adam: he is to rule over the earthly creation as God’s image bearer.

But, though the language of image bearing does show a dynamic, active, functional trajectory, we should not be too quick to dismiss a structural or ontological aspect to

it as well. If it were only a verbal idea, then when we are not performing the task or tasks for which we were created, we would bear no relationship to the image of God. But Scripture also speaks of fallen human beings as still bearing the image in some sense (see Gen. 9:6–7 and James 3:9, for example). Thus, there must be some constant about human beings that is irreducibly connected to the image of God. That is, imaging God is not *only* about something we *do*, but *also* something about who we *are*. In fact, the image of God is about *everything we are*.

An analogy may help us here. Think of a copy machine. It exists to make copies; that is both what it *is* and what it *does*. In human terms, the image of God both defines what we are (copiers) and our calling in God’s world (to copy him in some way). We exist for the purpose of imaging God, reflecting him into the world, copying something of him into the lives of the people and societies around us. But as a result of Adam’s sin, just like jamming or toner-starved

copiers that malfunction, we refuse to work as designed. We need repair and tending, the very thing that Jesus—the one who is himself the express image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3)—does. Then, repaired, refreshed, and stocked with the benefits of Christ, we are “transformed into [his] image” (2 Cor. 3:18) and again conformed to our Creator’s intention for us. Seen in this light, the call to be-

“

**Imaging
God is not
only about
something we
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the image of
God is about
everything
we are.**

lieve the gospel is designed to return us to our first calling to bear God's image in the world.

Vocation and Identity

What Genesis 1:26–28 gives us is, in essence, a definition of and rationale for what it means to be human. When we find that role, relationship, or use of our gifts and talents that seems to make sense of our lives and gives us purpose and joy, we are tempted to say, "I was *made* for this." A yearning for significance, the pursuit of the meaning of life, is hard-coded into each of us.

As modern secularists, we often locate this sense of calling in our occupations or professions. Indeed, we use the word "vocation" (a Latin word meaning the same thing as the Anglo-Saxon word "calling") to refer to our life's work, our occupations. There's nothing wrong with that; it's just too narrow. Calling touches *everything* about us. It is the very essence of our humanity.

The apostle Paul puts this in the context of redemption in Ephesians 2:10, but it is no less true of our place in creation that: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Thus the human is to embody or reflect something of God's character or ways in the context of his creation, and we cannot be understood in any other way than as creatures called to image God. It is in our office of image bearing, our walking in the ways of God—our transcribing of God's character into the world, we might say—that God's presence and rule are seen.

Adam's dominion, then, like God's own, is to bless all creation. As a son bears the family name and honor, so we are called to represent the presence of God in the world, to resemble and embody his care and rule in all things.

Made to Rule, Care, and Serve—Like Our Father

Though God is indeed truly sovereign over all things, it is also true that human beings are important to the biblical story. They have a real role to play within God's creation, a role that makes them covenantally responsible for the earthly creation under their care. As Gordon Spkyman put it in his *Reformational Theology*: "We are responsible to God and responsible for his other creatures, accountable to our Maker for his cosmos" (p. 251).

Created in God's image, human beings have been endowed with gifts and abilities from him and authority to employ those gifts on behalf of God's rule. Jesus gave his disciples power and sent them into the world to use it for the good of and in the service of his Kingdom. We see God working in the world through human beings even into the age to come, when the people of God will sit next to Jesus and rule the new earth with him in glory (Rev. 3:21; 5:10).

As a servant of God and a guardian of all that was entrusted to him, Adam was called to mediate the blessings of God's holy and righteous kingship to all creatures. Adam and Eve's rebellion from the Word of God and the attendant woe their sin brought upon themselves, their children, and the world around them, has not changed the creational design and mission. In everything we do, we, like Adam, are called to "do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31), bearing God's image into the world through our character and our care for all that he has created.

Truly, we have been made for *this*.

Michael D. Williams is professor of systematic theology at Covenant Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Far as the Curse is Found* (P&R, 2005) and *This World Is Not My Home* (Christian Focus, 2003), and co-author with Robert A. Peterson of *Why I Am Not an Arminian* (IVP, 2004).

Selected Resources on Creation and the Image of God in Man

Find these and other resources for life and ministry at www.covenantseminary.edu/resources.

Free Online Courses, Lectures, and Interviews

Caretakers of God's Creation, The Fall 2006 Francis A. Schaeffer Lectures, featuring Cal DeWitt, Greg Pitchford, and Tim Keyes

Humanity, Christ, and Redemption, course taught by Dr. Robert A. Peterson (see especially lectures 1–5)

"Noah and the End of the World," lecture by Dr. Michael D. Williams

Books

Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience, by Ranald Macaulay and Jerram Barrs (IVP, 1978)

Far as the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption, by Michael D. Williams (P&R, 2005)

Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good, by Amy L. Sherman (IVP, 2011)

FEATURE

THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE DEBATE

A Christian Response

by Dan Doriani

In its June 2013 ruling in *United States v. Windsor*, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a key part of the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) that blocked federal recognition of same-sex marriage and denied federal benefits to same-sex couples, even if married in a state where such marriages were considered legal. This decision had the effect of advancing America's shift toward accepting and affirming same-sex marriage.

In his majority opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote that DOMA is unconstitutional because of its "interference with the equal dignity of same-sex marriages." Kennedy stated, "DOMA's principal effect is to identify a subset of state-sanctioned marriages and make them unequal." DOMA's "principal purpose is to impose inequality . . . to disparage and to injure" people who, Kennedy says, live in less respected forms of marriage. Analysts disagree about the implications of this, but many believe that the language in Kennedy's opinion prepares the way for the Supreme Court to declare a constitutional right to same-sex marriage. Given that the current tide of legal opinion favors or at least tolerates gay marriage and that actual law seems to follow such opinions eventually, we can assume that, wherever we live, same-sex marriage may be coming soon.

Christians will have a variety of responses to these developments. Some will see them as indicative of the decline of our culture. Others will be pleased that civil rights have been extended to an often oppressed group. Whatever our view of marriage, we know that the law of Moses insists on equal legal protection for all (e.g., Exod. 23:1–9; Deut. 16:18–20).

Many of us are troubled by the Supreme Court's decisions because they show the erosion of our nation's long-held allegiance to biblical norms. When our land adopts an ethical position based on such decisions,

believers commonly have two questions: "Am I sure I understand what the Bible says about this?" and "How does this change things for the church and the cause of Christ and the gospel?"

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF SAME-SEX ACTS

Let's consider biblical teaching first. Romans 1—the passage of Scripture with the longest teaching about homosexuality—begins with the problem of idolatry. Paul says that sin becomes rampant when people turn from God to worship idols. When they suppress the truth about God, they also suppress the truth about creation, including his order for sex and marriage (Rom. 1:22–27). Paul says same-sex acts are unnatural, "dishonorable," and "debased" (Rom. 1:26–28). He says that men who commit "shameless acts" with men will receive "in themselves the due penalty for their error" (Rom. 1:27). Ultimately, then, when people reject God, he gives them over to their sinful desires (Rom. 1:28–32).

Today, when people read Paul's words they ask: Why is he so harsh? Is he condemning everyone who feels same-sex attraction? Do his comments apply today, or was the problem different in his day so that his comments no longer apply?

Societies do create habits of sin that vary from place to place. For example, communist and capitalist societies will manifest economic injustice in different ways. Polygamous and monogamous nations will stray from God's norms for marriage in different ways. Similarly, homosexuality manifests itself in different ways, even

Today, when people read Paul's words in Romans 1, they ask: Why is he so harsh? Is he condemning everyone who feels same-sex attraction . . . or was the problem different in his day so that his comments no longer apply?

as it did within the Roman Empire of Paul's day.

It was common in ancient Greece but not elsewhere, and took several forms depending on region or city-state. Sometimes it was connected to forced acts of slavery or warfare; sometimes it was part of coming-of-age rituals; and sometimes it was simply sexual experimentation by men who had wives and families. But Paul knew that most Romans—whether Christian or not—admired masculinity and scorned open homosexuality.

In Romans 1, Paul wasn't saying anything new; he was simply confirming the biblical view. Christians who try to explain away Romans 1 must realize that the Bible speaks with one voice. God created Adam and Eve and told them to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). We have the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, in which homosexual acts are condemned (Gen. 19; Jude 1:7). The law of Moses says, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination" (Lev. 18:22; see also Lev. 20:13). Jesus says, "He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'" (Matt. 19:4–5 ESV). These passages can be hard

The Bible doesn't condemn people who sinful. It is no sin to feel a pulse of envy and give in to envy or hatred.

to hear if we have loved ones who experience same-sex attraction, but the testimony of Scripture is not in doubt.

Yet there is more to say than, "Homosexuality is wrong." Sexual experimentation is one thing; unwanted desires and temptations are another. We must be compassionate toward friends and neighbors who wish that they desired traditional marriage but do not. The Bible doesn't condemn people who struggle with desires that God considers sinful. It is no sin to feel a pulse of envy or anger. It is a sin to *indulge* that pulse and give in to envy or hatred. Some experience same-sex attraction and do not act on it. Surely we should be faithful to those who struggle with this and treat them with compassion, especially those who strive to remain true to their Christian convictions while dealing with this difficult issue.

All of us at times feel unwanted and unruly desires. The great message of Scripture is that we all run from God and hide our sins, but there is redemption by grace through faith in Christ.



Our second question is: how does this recent court decision change things for the church and the cause of Christ and the gospel? In a vital way,

nothing changes. Jesus is still our living Lord. As Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, said in a blog post, "The gospel doesn't need 'family values' to flourish." Real faith, Moore says, "often thrives when it is in sharp contrast to the cultures around it. That's why the gospel rocketed out of the first century from places such as Ephesus and Philippi and Corinth and Rome."

None of those cities had moral systems that promoted healthy marriages. In fact, the very contrast between Christian and pagan concepts of marriage probably aided the cause of Christ. The state of pagan marriage was disastrous: many men had slave concubines; divorce was easy to obtain for those who were formally married—and even easier for those in informal marriage-like relationships. This sort of problem strengthened the appeal of Christianity and its concept of a lasting union between one man and one woman.

The recent ruling on gay marriage hardly marks the first time an American court or legislature has promoted or tolerated actions that are contrary to biblical morality. Think of abortion and *Roe v. Wade*, for example. And, sadly, many states don't just allow gambling but actually promote it. The state cannot, however, force us to gamble. And while compulsory abortion is practiced in parts of China, our laws in the U.S. still give us every freedom to promote life. Indeed, through the persistence

and courage of many, abortion rates, while still high in some states, have actually declined in many states over the last 30 years or so. Though the use of the so-called "morning-after pill" may have some effect on such statistics, it does seem that gentle persuasion can help to create a moral consensus. Not long ago, such progress in the protection of the unborn seemed impossible.

The recent decisions of the Supreme Court in no way restrict the freedom of a man and a woman to marry, have children, and love each other. If anything, these decisions should prompt married believers to rededicate themselves to Christlike love in marriage. The Christian marriage ideal attracted many pagans to Christ in the apostolic age. And when the Reformers restored the biblical teaching on marriage nearly 500 years ago, it enhanced the call to the gospel of Christ. When Reformers such as Martin Luther married and became faithful husbands and fathers, their conduct adorned the gospel. We should love our spouses, repent of sin and selfishness, and open our homes to many so that our marriages can become an ongoing testimony to the goodness of God's way.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "From the beginning of Creation, 'God made them male and female' " (Mark 10:6). We use this statement to promote God's ideal—and rightly so. But let's remember that Jesus made that statement in order to correct the tragedy of rampant and arbitrary

struggle with desires that God considers or anger. It is a sin to *indulge* that pulse

SELECTED RESOURCES ON MARRIAGE

divorce. It was a problem in his age, and it is one in ours—even, unfortunately, in the church. To be sure, divorce is sometimes unavoidable, but divorce rates among Christians should ideally be lower than those of the general population.

Sadly, the rise in same-sex marriage is possible in part because our culture has strayed so far from God's plan for marriage. Casual cohabitation, promiscuity, and easy divorce all erode the appeal of God's ideal. And the conduct of those in the church looks all too similar to that of the rest of society. What then? How can we be witnesses for the gospel given such circumstances?



First and foremost, we should tend our marriages, steadily regarding our spouses as God's great gift: "House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Prov. 19:14). At its best, Paul says, the love of a Christian marriage reflects the love of Christ for the church. A strong marriage can adorn the gospel (Titus 2:10). Waves of good marriages will make the case for God's plan more effectively than any state or federal law.

Last year, while attending a wed-

ding reception, I sat next to a Christian professor who did his doctoral work at a very secular university and now teaches at another. He said that the great majority of his fellow professors are secular and non-Christian. Nonetheless, they love their Christian students. Why? Because, on the whole, the Christians are more likely to come to class faithfully and to be well prepared. They are willing to argue their convictions and are active in campus life. They volunteer to do worthwhile things, and they keep their commitments.

The Christian faith and Christian ethics have lost the home-field advantage in our culture. But we are still free to present our faith and the gospel. We can do this with words and with lives that show forth the beauty of that gospel. That is the surest way to promote God's good plan for marriage.

Dr. Dan Doriani returned to Covenant Seminary full time in 2013 as vice president for strategic academic initiatives and professor of theology, following 10 years as senior pastor of Central Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri. During that time, he also served as adjunct professor of systematic theology at the Seminary. In his spare time, he plays tennis, enjoys his friends, and, in tandem with his wife, Debbie, smiles at his new granddaughter. This article is edited and adapted from a blog post originally published online in July 2013 by *The Gospel Coalition* (thegospel-coalition.org).

FREE ONLINE COURSES AND ARTICLES

Find these and other helpful resources for life and ministry through the Resources section of our website at www.covenantseminary.edu/resources.

"The Art of Living and Loving: Lessons from Proverbs," by Dr. Richard Winter

"The Good Marriage in a Relationally Traumatized World," by Dr. Dan Zink

Marriage and Family Counseling, taught by Dr. Dan Zink

BOOKS

Find other books on this and other topics through our online bookstore at www.covenantseminary.edu/bookstore.

The Divorce Culture: Rethinking Our Commitments to Marriage and Family, by Barbara Dafoe Whitehead (Vintage, 1998)

Each for the Other: Marriage as It's Meant to Be, rev. ed., by Bryan Chapell with Kathy Chapell (Baker, 2006)

Marriage and Family in the Biblical World, edited by Ken M. Campell (IVP, 2003)

The Meaning of Marriage, by Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller (Riverhead Books, 2011)

FEATURE

Straight Talk About Sex

by Joel Hathaway

To say that Western civilization is addicted to sex would be to understate the case absurdly. Statistics on the topic are ample. Counseling groups aimed at treating the addiction abound. The situation is worse than we know—or want to know.

As a representative snapshot of our culture, it is sobering to know that, according to the most recent *RUF at a Glance* (Reformed University Fellowship's annual report) nearly all RUF campus ministers reported that they spent part of this past year speaking about sex, sexuality, relationships, and marriage with student groups.

Surveying the Landscape of Sexual Formation

With so many people confused or on the wrong track when it comes to understanding sex and sexuality, one wonders where the fault lies. Are young people learning what they need to know about sex and sexual issues? Are parents "getting it wrong" in the way they teach their children about such things? Are there any adults who have dealt sufficiently with the shame of their own sexual sins and their inherited inability to see sexuality through a properly biblical lens and who are ready to speak about sex at length with their children or other young people in the church?

I recently put that very question to 60 Covenant Seminary graduates who are serving in youth, family, and college ministries. Every one of these ministers regularly addresses aspects of sexual purity or brokenness in their sermons, Sunday school lessons, and small group discussions. These people aren't avoiders. However, not one of these ministers could tell of a single student whose view of sex and sexuality reflected a mature and deeply biblical perspective. Yes, some students abstain from the act of sex for various reasons, but many of them

are also struggling with pornography, masturbation, and other forms of self-gratification.

Brad Tubbesing (MDiv '06), RUF campus minister at Indiana University Bloomington, summarized the situation by saying, "I don't often talk with students specifically about how their parents handled the issue of sexuality with them. By the time they're in college, they have so many other factors contributing to their sexual brokenness that these other issues need to be addressed."

There are no foolproof formulas for how to approach such brokenness. Any claim to have all the answers belittles our need for Jesus. Salvation and deliverance come through Christ alone. When entities—such as the family, the church, youth groups, accountability groups, or special programs—presume to provide in themselves deliverance from temptation of any kind, these have assumed the role of Christ.

A contributing component to the direness of the situation is the general silence of the church. Most adults today who grew up in the church heard two messages with regard to sex: "no" and "wait." As **Ryan Laughlin** (MDiv '04), senior pastor of The Covenant Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri, put it, somewhere "the message that God's first word on sex is that it is good" was lost. Ryan and his pastoral staff recently spent a month preaching on sex and sexuality. Dr. Richard Winter, professor of practical theology and counseling at Covenant Seminary, spoke candidly to the church's adult Sunday school class, raising the

difficult issues of pornography and homosexuality.

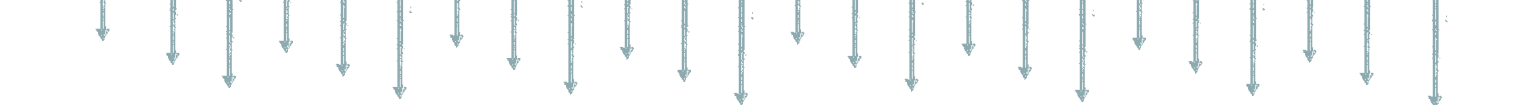
The broader church's general silence and mostly arbitrary admonitions have not contributed meaningfully to the battle for sexual purity—except by increasing discomfort and shame where honesty and encouragement are needed. For parents, the carnage of sexual decadence is a nightmare too dark at times to face. If 60 ordained pastors in the PCA cannot provide anything more than anecdotal stories of sexual wholeness among the flocks they shepherd, then what hope is there for our children? Others wonder, "*What hope is there for me?*"

Hope Against Hopelessness

Seeking more perspective, I changed the question to these pastors. I asked them what they are doing differently, or seeing others do differently, in addressing sex and sexuality with their children. Three themes emerged from their responses: Pastors and parents are speaking about sex earlier, more often, and with a demeanor that preserves the sacred and mysterious expression of marital oneness.

Talk About Sex Earlier Than You Think You Should

More than half of the pastors surveyed said that their parents either never talked about sex and sexuality with them or else did so only once—during "the talk." If the talk did happen, it happened when the future pastor was 12–14 years old. Most confessed that, by that age, they had



already been exposed to crass sexual humor, partial nudity in movies, or pornographic images in magazines. For most of these men, that was 20 years ago. Today, illegal content is available to even young children through social media and the Internet. You don't even have to look for it. It finds you.

The idea of talking about sexuality with your own young children may seem strangely age-inappropriate. Whether or not such conversations are happening, our children are being inundated with sexual messages. Explicit material pervades the covers of magazines at the grocery store and fills up the airwaves between otherwise innocuous radio or television programs. It seems that erectile dysfunction commercials are the most frequently aired advertisements during pro baseball games, right after those for alcohol and automobiles.

Even secularists are engaging the topic of sex with their children. Martin Daubney, former longtime editor of (the sexually steeped) *Loaded* magazine, writes repentantly, "I wanted to know what I could do to protect my own son from a seemingly inevitable exposure to hardcore material in just a few years' time." He goes on to suggest: "We need to get tech-savvy, and as toe-curling as it seems, we are the first generation that will have to talk to our children about porn[ography]."

Pastors seeking to frame their children's sexual awareness earlier start by using appropriate language for body parts. They don't use nicknames for sexual organs. Part of the power that others can try to wield over our children is knowledge of language. Our children should hear the words *penis* and *vagina* from their parents, not from schoolyard peers. This honesty of language is a reflection of ministers' view that sex is a sacred, reverent expression of marriage.

Other pastors use object lessons to teach their children about sex. One alumnus buys each of his children a United States Mint American Eagle Silver Bullion Coin (the only one-ounce silver bullion investment coins made by the U.S. government) for the child's fourth birthday. The coin, valued around \$25, is placed in a clear, airtight container. On the same birthday, the child begins receiving allowance. "I give them everyday money and special money at the same time," the alumnus shares. "I tell them to use their everyday money on gum and candy and baseball cards but to save their special money. Their allowance and Silver Eagle both say 'one dollar,' but the Silver Eagle is worth so much more. Then I tell my children that God gave them everyday body parts for everyday use, and God gave them special body parts to save and take special care of by covering them. Not because they are dirty or gross, but because they are good and wonderful. These are their inheritance."

He points to Proverbs 5:15–20, in which the Bible compares sexual purity to water. For the agrarian culture in which those verses were written, water was the greatest possession. Today, in many ways, it's money.

Talk About Sex More Often Than You Think You Need To

Forty years ago, parents had more control and oversight over the influences on their children. Today, technology and accessibility thrust sexually explicit material in our faces. Anonymity is a given. Sexual addiction can be indulged and remain hidden in any household—from siblings, parents, and even spouses. If ever "the talk" was sufficient, it isn't now.

Many ministry families practice a coming-of-age ceremony with their

children that builds on earlier conversations about their sexuality.

Lucas Dourado (MDiv '11), RUF campus minister at the University of Connecticut in Hartford, shares that, "When I was 12, my dad took me away for a weekend in Boston. Between soccer games and eating out, we talked about sex. Dad brought his Bible and an anatomy textbook. He covered it all: how the Bible says sex is beautiful and good, God's design for sex in marriage, how he grew up hearing that sex was dirty, how sex works, what an orgasm is, and even about masturbation. I was mortified at the time, but looking back, I am very appreciative."

This special weekend becomes the beginning of regular—emphasize *regular*—conversations with children about sex and sexuality, sexual temptation, and times of prayer for sexual purity.

Ali Brumbaugh, the wife of Josh Brumbaugh (MDiv '06), pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church in Evansville, Wisconsin, says, "We also take our children on a special trip to talk about sex. Dad takes the boys, and I take our daughter. However, we make it very clear that this is the beginning of a conversation, not just a one-time 'talk.'"

Declare a Humble Respect for the Joy of the Sacred Mystery

The third finding among pastors is that conversations about sex are incredibly powerful, formative, and meaningful when coming from parents who communicate with a humble demeanor. Why is that important?

Sex is, by God's design, powerful. People would not so easily be ensnared in the struggle we're discussing if it weren't. Sex is also intimate, as revealed in Genesis 2, where we see Adam and Eve naked and without

RESOURCES

PASSPORT2PURITY

An audio set by Dennis and Barbara Rainey, available from Family Life at <http://bit.ly/IRusse>

RUF AT A GLANCE

Reformed University Fellowship's annual report is available for downloading at <http://bit.ly/1dSsIws>

MARTIN DAUBNEY

"Experiment That Convinced Me Online Porn is Most Pernicious Threat Facing Children Today," *Daily Mail* online, Sept. 25, 2013; <http://dailym.ai/1kf32b4>

JAMES DOBSON

Preparing for Adolescence: How to Survive the Coming Years of Change (Gospel Light, 2005)

shame. This is an image of deep vulnerability, honest self-revelation, and the closest of relationships. Meditating on that combination elicits incredible reverence toward the sacred mystery of two people becoming one flesh.

Consider the contrast: parents can assume a sterile rigidity when talking about sex and sexuality. Discomfort causes us to discuss this topic of incredible reverence and mystery in cold, uneven tones. Consequently, a father struggling through "the talk" with his son is communicating a mixed message about the power, sacredness, and mystery of sex and giving his son a false picture of what God intends as a good and beautiful thing. Grown men say that it is this discontinuity that made their respective fathers seem unsafe: *If he can talk about something so mysterious and powerful as sex without any indication of reverence and joy then he must not know just how powerful it is. Therefore, he can't understand my struggles, and so I won't share them.*

Josh Vahle (MDiv '08), RUF campus minister at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, reflects, "A student of mine shared with me a chapter of a book he was writing about a time

when his mom and dad were having a conflict. He and his two brothers overheard it while they were playing video games. Afterward his dad came into the room and asked his sons to pause the game. Then, one-by-one, he had them look into his eyes and he asked: 'Will you forgive me for speaking to your mother that way and not loving her better?' They each looked stunned and said: 'I forgive you, Dad.'"

Josh confesses, "I broke down and wept for probably 15 minutes when I read this. It takes great courage for a dad to confess his sin to his children, but it's one of the most beautiful and powerful ways that the gospel of Jesus can be communicated within a family." When a father repents of his sins of anger, frustration, or impatience in the presence of the children, he is more trustworthy when it comes to approaching him with their own sexual struggles, according to many students.

Moving From the Wilderness to the Cross

No one can predict the recipe for pervasive sexual addiction, but the

ingredients in all the stories are related: curiosity added with extended, unmonitored accessibility; anonymity; isolation and a sense of loneliness; and a relational environment lacking appropriate affection.

Shame enslaves. Christ frees us. As believers, parents, and ministers, we need more than the ability to look back and say we "got it right," or the shame of realizing that we "got it wrong." All stories of redemption involve confession, repentance, and a celebration of the gospel that sees God's hand at work in the successes and failures of our bodies, minds, and souls.

Joel Hathaway (MDiv '04) is the director of alumni and career services at Covenant Seminary. In this role, he coaches Seminary graduates in ministry placement, consults with and advises church search committees in hiring practices, and encourages alumni in their first five years of ministry. Joel is currently working on his doctor of ministry in leadership, studying the role of assistant pastors as churches go through pastoral transitions. He and his wife, Shannon, have four children: Jonah, Isaac, Zeke, and Mary.



• BY JOHN PATTON •

To quote the often-insightful musician Bob Dylan, “The times, they are a-changin’.” The last decade has seen cataclysmic social shifts in the Western world, some good and some portending an uncertain future for the church. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with turmoil in Egypt and Syria, have transformed the landscape of the Middle East and have led to a new wave of youthful isolationist fervor in the United States. We have seen the election of the first black president in our history, truly a momentous event for a nation with our particular past.

Perhaps most visibly and recently, we have seen social opinion on the issue of same-sex marriage change with breathtaking speed. One poll found that roughly one-third of registered voters supported same-sex marriage in 2004, while more than one-half of registered voters did so in 2009 (the percentages are highest among young people).

Another hot-button issue currently gaining momentum is the legalization and normalization of *recreational* marijuana use. The landscape is clear. In 2012, Washington and Colorado became the first two states to legalize mari-

juana for recreational use. Yes, you read that correctly. This of course violated federal drug law, but in late August 2013, Attorney General Eric Holder declared that the Department of Justice would not compel Colorado or Washington to rescind their laws. Rather, the government will provide oversight but allow the states to regulate the marijuana industries themselves. Currently 21 states and the District of Columbia have laws on the books that legalize marijuana in some form. If we doubt that legal and recreational drug use could become so widespread and opposition to it could become passé, I would submit to you again the previous example: the lightning-fast cultural shift on same-sex marriage.

What does this all mean? How should the church respond to these developments? The legal ramifications are troubling for a number of reasons, but the first questions we ought to ask as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and members of his body relate to sanctification. This includes both personal sanctification and the corporate sanctification of our church bodies. If we want to understand this broader cultural movement and engage with it both as shrewdly as serpents and as wisely as doves, we must know how we ourselves approach it as individuals and as a church corporate. I want to suggest that we ask three questions that will help us think about the issue from the perspective of theologian John Frame's three-fold "normative, teleological, and existential" approach to ethics (see Frame's *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* [P&R, 2008] for a fuller discussion of this approach):

1. Do the Scriptures specifically address marijuana use? If so, what do they say? (*Normative approach*: the standard of determining rightness and wrongness.)
2. What kind of person will marijuana use make me? (*Teleological approach*: rightness is determined by an action's end.)
3. Why would I pursue the use of marijuana? What is the heart motivation? (*Existential approach*: grounded in existence or the experience of existence.)

BIBLICAL ANSWERS?

The first consideration is to determine what the Scriptures say. Though the Bible does not explicitly speak to the issue of mind-altering drugs, it does speak clearly about the intoxication of the mind as it relates to alcohol. Proverbs 20:1; 23:31–33; 1 Peter 5:8; and Galatians 5:19–21 are just a few of the many Scripture passages that teach the value of sobriety and the danger of intoxication. These verses help us to see clearly that in both the Old and New Testaments our Lord values self-control, clear thinking, and an orientation to living in the world as he has created it and not seeking to escape through mind alteration.

One may argue, of course, that alcohol and marijuana are not the same thing and that the effects of each on the brain are different. Though we don't have space here to go into all the physiological and medical details, we can say that this is indeed true. But we can also say that much study has shown that although intoxication from alcohol results from immoderate or abusive use, even small to moderate amounts of marijuana can, except in rare instances, lead to intoxication. Thus, abstaining from marijuana use would seem to be consistent with biblical principles related to intoxication. Additionally, if we live in a state where such use is illegal, a biblical respect for the legally established civil authorities (see Rom. 13:1–7) compels us to obey the laws of the land in which God has placed us.

ENDS AND MEANS

The second question worth asking is: What kind of person does someone become through marijuana use? This teleological approach asks us to think about the end of our actions. There is an abundance of data and research outlining the consequences of very moderate marijuana use over an extended period of time. For adolescents, it can mean lower grades, increased school dropout rates, struggles to maintain employment, higher rates of mental illness, and higher incidence of treatment for substance abuse. (Smart Approaches to Marijuana [SAM] is a movement dedicated to educating the public about the risks of marijuana use and arguing against legalization while recognizing the need for reform for penalties of certain offenses. See the SAM website at www.learnaboutsam.com/public-health/).

Stone-faced caricatures aside, there is a flood of hard scientific and sociological evidence that directs us away from purposely imbibing a substance that has been shown to inhibit our faculties in the short and long term.

A CONTINUAL AND IRRECONCILABLE WAR

The third question in our list is perhaps the most relevant to the church's interaction with this issue, both individually and corporately. Why does someone use marijuana? What is the heart motivation? Sometimes the sense of escape offered by a substance like marijuana can matter more to a person than what Scripture and the church have to say—and even the prospect of long-term negative physical and mental outcomes will not deter many. Christians who have used and currently use marijuana or who may feel conflicted about how to think about its use may find chapter 13 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, titled "Of Sanctification," tremendously helpful in framing the issue. One sentence in particular is instructive:

“
Think about it
this way: if facing
the world and its
troubles can be
so hard for those
of us who are
in Christ, how
much more so is
it for those who
live in darkness
and do not know
the hope of
forgiveness in
Christ? They are
perpetually losing
the “continual
and irreconcilable
war” or else are
unaware that
there is even a
war going on!
”

This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war [emphasis mine], the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

Every Christian feels keenly the effects of this war. We know the experience of being new creations in Christ and yet having to fight daily against our “old man” (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–11). We know what it means to have victory over sin, and we also know what it means to fail in obedience and have to return to the cross for mercy yet again. One’s ability to fight this war is impeded greatly by the use of marijuana, and that is, I believe, the starting point for how we understand marijuana use generally. Such responses as “It’s just wrong,” “It’s against the law,” and “Your brain will be fried in ten years” are simply not persuasive to most people who use marijuana.

As a former marijuana user, I can say with certainty that both I and my compatriots (and everyone I ever spent time with while using marijuana) did so for basically one reason—escape. The reality of sin and pain drove me into the faux other-worldly state that a marijuana high offered. This is most likely the case for that young teenager in your congregation who was recently caught with a bag of pot or for your middle-aged coworker who seems happy but smokes marijuana on the weekends. There are reasons that humans seek escape from their lives, and we as the church must be aware of these escapist tendencies in our own hearts if we are to pursue people effectively with the love of Christ.

Think about it this way: if facing the world and its troubles can be so hard for those of us who are in Christ, how much more so is it for those who live in darkness and do not know the hope of forgiveness in Christ? They are perpetually losing the “continual and irreconcilable war” or else are unaware that there is even a war going on!

It is my hope that we can see marijuana use for the stumbling block that it is while also understanding why so many people choose to use it.

SO WHAT? BROADER SOCIETAL QUESTIONS

You may have read the previous paragraphs and thought, “Well, I already know drug use is bad. I want to know how to fight in the culture war on this issue. How do we stem the tide of states that want to legalize the recreational use of marijuana?” Though I do not presume to have all the answers to such a question, here are a few key points to keep in mind as the issue progresses in our country. I hope these thoughts prove helpful in understanding the issue as it comes up for debate in more and more states or regions.

First, the marketing efforts related to marijuana use in Washington and Colorado are directly aimed at young people and children. The approach seems reminiscent of the early marketing tactics used by cigarette manufacturers: If you can draw people in while they are young, they will be lifelong customers. (I am not drawing an analogy between the effects of tobacco and marijuana use, only between the marketing tactics employed.) At the 2013 PCA General Assembly, I spoke on the topic of marijuana with fellow PCA church member Dr. Christian Thurstone, a highly respected physician and professor in Denver, Colorado, who is board-certified in general, child, and adolescent and addictions psychiatry. He is also a recognized authority on the impact of marijuana on young people and drug policy. (You can learn more about him at www.learnaboutsam.com/about/leadership-team or www.drthurstone.com.) Dr. Thurstone outlined the public health risks of increased marijuana use. He is legitimately concerned about a brewing public health disaster resulting from the increased use of marijuana among kids.

Second, the issue of medical marijuana is a bit more complex. Dr. Thurstone out-

lined how medical marijuana prescriptions are abused in many states. For example, in Colorado, the average recipient of one of these prescriptions is a 32-year-old white male with a history of prior marijuana use. Though it appears that a few medical conditions have shown direct benefit from medicinal marijuana, there is an enormous amount of bad science and inconclusive data floating around. Dr. Thurstone strongly believes that the benefit of the mass amounts of medicinal marijuana being funneled to patients around the country is not nearly well enough supported by data and research. Much work needs to be done.

Finally, some Christians may oppose current marijuana laws because of the laws' seemingly punitive nature (especially as they affect young male minorities) and because

marijuana use and that we understand why it is occurring. Then we can offer perspective and hope to those around us who are deeply concerned about the recent laws as well as those who choose to use marijuana. On biblical grounds we must oppose publicly but legally much of the advancement of marijuana use, but we also must be ready to offer to individuals involved in the struggle the healing balm of Christ as a better respite than the temporary and hollow pleasures of a substance-induced, intoxicating escape.

John Patton is director of admissions and a ThM student in ethics at Covenant Seminary. He serves as a deacon at South City Church (PCA) in St. Louis. He and his wife, Annie, have three children.

“

THERE ARE REASONS that humans seek escape from their lives, and we as the church must be aware of these escapist tendencies in our own hearts if we are to pursue people effectively with the love of Christ.

”

they believe that we are wastefully spending billions on a “drug war” that we can never win. Those are legitimate concerns that cry out for well-reasoned responses. Both Dr. Thurstone and I believe that much reform is needed in the way that penalties are doled out for offenses such as simple possession. A great deal of the problem could be solved by reducing some of the penalties for these offenses and codifying in our laws a necessary distinction between marijuana and other harder drugs. Unlike the decision in Washington and Colorado, neither of us believes that legalization is the answer. Laws, even civil laws, do not merely *reflect* but in fact *teach and instruct* a civil society on what is and is not virtuous. We do not want laws to teach us that marijuana use is part of the healthy rhythm of life in our country in this time and place that God has given us.

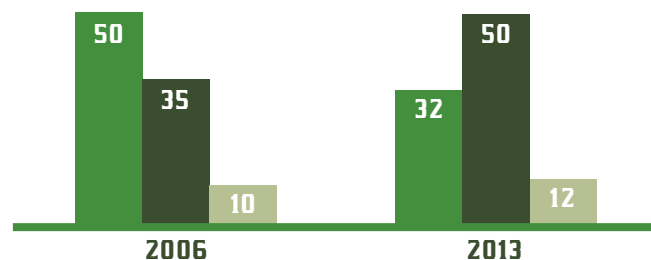
The scope of this issue is vast. An article like this can only scratch the surface of the intricacies involved. However, my sincere hope is that we as a church would become more aware of the negative impact of increased

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:

See the results of a study by the Pew Research Center: <http://www.people-press.org/2013/04/04/majority-now-supports-legalizing-marijuana/>

MORE TODAY SAY THAT SMOKING MARIJUANA NOT A MORAL ISSUE

MORALLY WRONG ■
NOT A MORAL ISSUE ■
MORALLY ACCEPTABLE ■



PEW RESEARCH CENTER January 9-13, 2013.



In this periodic feature, members of our faculty offer thoughtful, biblical responses to questions about life and ministry issues raised by Covenant Seminary alumni serving as pastors and ministry leaders in a variety of contexts. If you have a question you would like to be considered, please e-mail Joel Hathaway, director of alumni and career services, at joel.hathaway@covenantseminary.edu.

QUESTION

I often interact with pastors who are wrestling with how to minister to people, especially youth, who are using or abusing substances like marijuana, cocaine, alcohol, or even caffeine, each of which has its own set of problems. How can pastors lovingly confront those who are abusing stimulants or other drugs? And because there are so many social aspects to drug use—such as friendships and acceptance based on that use—how can pastors best counsel people to compensate for those social aspects when they're ready to stop using?

Joel Hathaway // Director of Alumni and Career Services // St. Louis, Missouri

ANSWER

Dear Joel,

The issue you raise is of particular concern to me as a counselor and a trainer of pastors and counselors. As with anything else, we cannot begin to speak into the sinful areas of people's lives unless we approach them with love and respect, which ideally will be based on an established relationship of trust. Then perhaps we can talk about how we all live on the edge of addiction to some degree as any of God's good gifts can be misused in ways that are harmful to us or to others. For example, one person may enjoy a glass of wine with a meal after a long day at work but soon finds that he needs that wine every night and gradually needs more of it to get the same effect. Another may have the same problem with caffeine, which can also result in fluctuating energy levels and mood swings. Even something like running or other forms of healthy exercise, which are great for our bodies and minds, can be overdone so that we become addicted to the stimulation they provide and can neglect other important life priorities.

Understanding why we misuse these things is vital to breaking any cycle of addiction. So often we do it to quell a deeper restlessness, boredom, anxiety, depression, frustration, or anger with life (and God). And when the normal means of dealing with these emotions don't work, we may turn to something stronger, like marijuana or cocaine—or worse—to help us escape reality. These things may give us relief for awhile, but they eventually will let us down because they don't solve the underlying problems. Most also have serious long-term effects on our minds and bodies. In biblical language, they are idols—and idols always betray us in the end.

Most pastors are not trained substance abuse counselors, but they can help in this situation by connecting people with someone who is and walking with them through the process of disengagement and withdrawal. A winsome presentation of good information on the health hazards related to substance abuse may influence some users to stop, but this will not work with everyone; and hammering a person with statistics and warnings will probably only result in resistance. Pastors can especially encourage the development of accountability relationships within support groups or with others outside the person's former "circle" and ideally including involvement with a Bible-believing church body.

The road to recovery will, in serious addictions, be long and difficult. Setbacks and relapses may be frequent. Much prayer, patience, and pastoral wisdom will be required. But God's grace is stronger than all our woes, and "he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Only God can heal such brokenness, but as we keep our eyes fixed on Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, openly displaying our trust in him for guidance, strength, and mercy, we encourage those struggling with addictions to do the same.



Grace to you and peace,

Dr. Richard Winter

Professor of Practical Theology and Counseling



Ministry **Through** Martial Arts

Evangelism and discipleship can take many forms. For recent MDiv student Ryan Brown, it often involves martial arts. No, he doesn't beat and kick people into theological submission. But once a week or so, Ryan can be found at an area martial arts studio helping to teach children and adults the basics of karate, sparring with fellow black belt holders, or hanging out after hours talking with other instructors about martial arts, life, and even, when the opportunity arises, matters

of faith. It's a pattern that developed early in life as the two great passions of his life—karate and the gospel—always seemed to converge.

Ryan grew up in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, where he attended Perimeter Church and School. His interest in karate began when, as child of 8 or 9 he saw the *Power Rangers* TV show and was hooked. Knowing of his interest, a neighbor gave Ryan a coupon for a month of free lessons at a local karate school. "I loved it and went every day that month that

the place was open," he says. "When I was ready to test for my gold belt, they realized I wasn't actually enrolled in the school. The free coupon was only supposed to be for one lesson a week! I convinced my dad to let me continue, and he paid for it, so I signed up to go for my black belt and kept on going."

Ryan soon switched to the adult curriculum and earned his first black belt before he was in high school. Within a short time, he was working on his second (out of a possible ten),



while also helping to teach some of the newer students. His desire for constant improvement eventually led him to seek out another school where he could continue learning beyond the level the first school was able to offer. The move turned out to be providential.

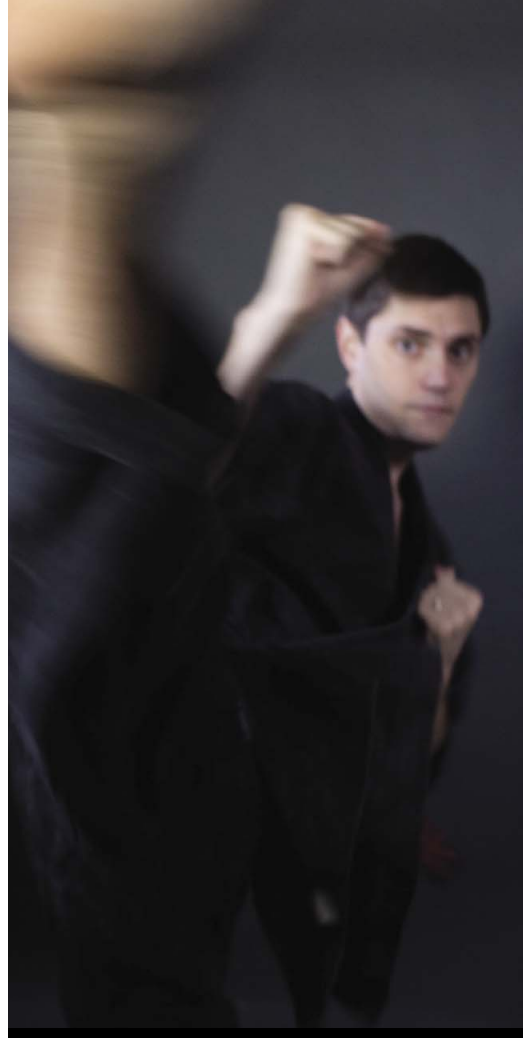
Hired as an assistant instructor at the new school, Ryan ended up taking on more of the instruction responsibilities when the owner, whose wife had also been the business manager for the school, went through a painful divorce. This difficult time became a God-given opportunity for Ryan to minister to the man in friendship. "He was one of the best martial arts instructors I've ever met," Ryan notes, "but the business side of things was not his strong suit. After his wife left, he tried to manage the books while I handled the classes. He had belts in many different forms of martial arts and was at times very much into the mystical aspects of some of those, so he was fairly open to talking about spiritual things. Almost every night we'd talk about karate and life. Eventually he agreed to visit my church, which he did a few times. Later, when I left for college, he thanked me for leading him to the Lord. I don't know when that happened, exactly, but I know that he did end up serving as a deacon in a charismatic church and has since remarried. We still keep in touch."

The idea of using martial arts as a vehicle for ministry took further shape for Ryan when he went to college at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia, where he got involved with Campus Outreach (CO). He joined the CO staff for four years after his graduation and served as campus director for two of those years. The CO staff ministered to students in the campus dorms and often interacted with them through

sports activities. Among the most popular of these were the self-defense classes for women that Ryan taught, which proved to be a great way to meet people and develop the relationships that can lead to deeper discipleship. During this time, Ryan also met his future wife, Marianne—then a student at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia, and more recently an MAEM student at Covenant—while on a summer beach project for CO. They couple stayed in touch and were married a year after Ryan graduated from GSU.

During one of the CO staff training sessions, Ryan experienced another providential moment when he heard a presentation on Christ-centered preaching by Rev. George Robertson, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Georgia, and an adjunct professor at Covenant Seminary. "It was a watershed moment for me," Ryan notes. "It felt like I had never really read the Bible before. He made it come alive for me and helped me see the unity of Scripture and how all of it shows forth Christ. I had to have more of this and knew I wanted to come to Covenant."

Though there were some bumps in the road that occurred before this—including the sudden illness and death of his mother—Ryan and Marianne did eventually make it to Covenant in the summer of 2011. Again, evidence of God's hand in their lives abounded as he not only provided a free place for them to live until their campus-owned apartment was ready, but also met their financial needs in unexpected ways, including a full-tuition Kern Scholarship for Ryan



and a fifty percent Spouse Teamwork Scholarship for Marianne.

His experience at Covenant has deepened Ryan's love for the Lord and his desire to help others through teaching and discipleship. "All my classes have been helpful in giving me a broader understanding of what faith in action looks like," he says.

One highlight for him was a paper he wrote for his Calling, Work, and Vocation class. "The goal was to place the martial arts within the Bible's creation-fall-redemption-re-creation framework. I tried to show that what most people see as a violent activity wasn't needed until after the fall, but that now it can play a redemptive role, especially the physical/mental conditioning and self-defense aspects of it. As an instructor, I try to teach my students that doing karate is really about humility and discipline rather than power and pride."



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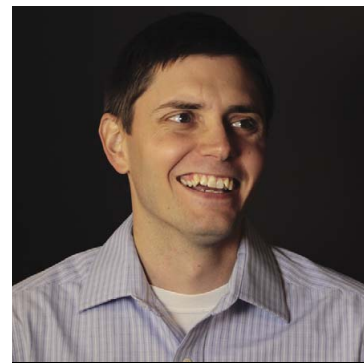
As for his plans after seminary, Ryan says, "I would like to be a lead pastor some day, but I also enjoy the training and equipping aspect of small groups. At CO I was part of a team that developed a four-year curriculum for small group leaders and would love the opportunity to work on something like that at a church while gaining experience and learning from the senior pastor."

For now, though, he seeks the Lord's leading and continues to pursue karate and evangelistic opportunities with people he knows through his martial arts work. "I have common ground with some of them because they're in college. They know I'm in seminary, so we talk about school and what we're learning. It's taken awhile to build a trust level in some cases, but we're getting there. I pray the Lord will use my limited time with them for good."

Rick Matt (MATS '05) is senior writer and editor for Covenant Seminary and a ruling elder in the PCA. When not hearing and telling the stories of how God is working through those connected with Covenant, he also enjoys reading (real books); watching movies; discussing theology, the arts, and cultural issues with friends; and spending time with his wife, Rebekah, and their four children.



Ministry and martial arts may seem like strange bedfellows, but seminary student and karate black belt Ryan Brown sees a redemptive connection between them.



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI AND CAREER SERVICES



It is a fact of life in the ministry that a large number of pastors will change positions within four years of their first call. Sadly, this is not a recent phenomenon. A review of the *PCA Yearbook* reveals that this trend among pastors actually goes back for decades. The assumption has been that it

usually takes four years or so for a pastor to determine his true ministerial gifts. However, many times a pastor's second call is only slightly longer than his first. Of course, there are exceptions. Over the past five years, I have studied this trend. Many factors are involved: family needs, ministerial growth, maturity, financial considerations, and so on.

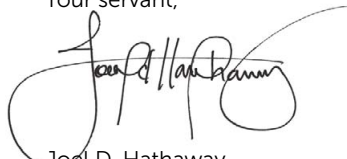
The largest and most repeated factor in pastoral turnover is what I call the "grow-or-move" crisis. In the first years of ministry, new pastors tend to depend upon seminary repetition: addressing pastoral issues from the trove of lessons they learned while in seminary. But as years go on, the people with whom the pastor interacts become more honest with him—or else they simply can't hide their real issues as well—and this presses the pastor's skills and knowledge beyond what he learned in seminary. He runs out of prepared answers. In terms of Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains, pastors at this point are driven beyond application toward evaluation. This process is demanding, requires humility, and is uncomfortably stretching. All of these costs tax ministerial resolve. Honestly, it is often easier to reset oneself to seminary repetition mode by moving to another call.

Becoming an active learner demands more of you as a pastor, but the rewards are great—and they are compounding more than additive. Necessary ingredients for an active-learning

environment are: knowledge to be mastered, an expert to help convey and process that knowledge, active engagement with a group of peers involved in the learning process, and critical distress that pushes one to move beyond the current comfort zone. Not coincidentally, these are also the core components of Covenant Seminary's Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program. The program is designed to further equip you as a pastor by helping you learn with and from other seasoned ministry practitioners under the guidance of experienced faculty mentors as you dig deeply into practical issues that will enhance your ministry. Below we've listed some recent DMin dissertation topics to give you an idea of the range and scope the program can take.

Beyond what seminary taught you during your MDiv studies is the next level of ministerial growth. As you consider the challenges that lie ahead this year, I encourage you to consider how the Doctor of Ministry program can be a means of growth and stability for you and the church you serve.

Your servant,



Joel D. Hathaway
Director of Alumni and Career Services

Let us know how we can serve you through this publication. E-mail your suggestions for *Covenant* magazine to editor@covenantseminary.edu.

INTERESTED IN A DOCTOR OF MINISTRY?

To find out more about the DMin program at Covenant Seminary, visit www.covenantseminary.edu/academics/degrees/dmin or contact the Admissions office at admissions@covenantseminary.edu or 314.392.4905.

A SAMPLING OF RECENT DMIN DISSERTATION TOPICS

The Dance between Vulnerability and Trust in Pulpit Leadership

Orchestrating Change

From the Edge of the Heart of the Congregation: Reaching Young Men In the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Pastors Thriving in Marriage and Ministry: Pursuing Health in Marriage While Leading Through Church Conflict

Overcoming Cultural and Systemic Barriers: Exploring How Minority Pastors Overcome Leadership Challenges in Majority Culture Congregations

Ordinations, Installations, and Transitions

Alan Avera (DMin '05) from director of Outreach North America (ARP) to executive director of Christianity Explored USA.

Luke J. Basler (MATS '10) is now board certified as an active duty chaplain with the U.S. Army.

Joshua Burdette (MDiv '12) ordained as an evangelist in the Chicago Metro Presbytery, Aug. 18, 2013. Joshua serves as community and campus pastor at Ethos Chicago (PCA), in Illinois.

Michele and Ray Call (MDiv '06) to missionaries in Montevideo, Uruguay, with Mission to the World.

Joshua Earman (MDiv '13) ordained as assistant pastor of discipleship at New Life Presbyterian Church in Dresher, PA, on May 18, 2014.

Brett Eubank (MDiv '02) from church planter at Grace Hill Community Church (EPC), Springfield, MO, to pastor of community and outreach, Rivermont Evangelical Presbyterian, Lynchburg, VA.

Alex Ford (MDiv '10) from assistant pastor at Westminster Presbyterian, Sumter, SC, to pastor of Sovereign King Church (PCA), Garner, NC.

Rob Fossett (MDiv '02, MAET '04) from assistant pastor, Trinity Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO, to senior pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, AL.



Caleb Galloway (MDiv '13) ordained as solo pastor, Covenant Presbyterian, Eufaula, AL, June 9, 2013.

Dave Greiner (MAGTS, '97) from senior pastor at Chatham Bible Church, Hazelwood, MO, to the Pastoral Leadership Development division of Acton International Ministries.

Robbie Griggs (MDiv '04) from senior associate pastor of evangelism and discipleship at Central Presbyterian (EPC), Clayton, MO, to Durham, England, for PhD studies at Durham University.

Scott Herron (MATS '07) from teacher at Bentonville High School, Bentonville, AR, to pastor of youth and families, Trinity Church (PCA), Bozeman, MT.

P. D. Mayfield (MDiv, MAC '12) ordained as assistant pastor, Northside Church of Richmond, Virginia, July 6, 2013.

Curtis McDaniel Jr. (MDiv '09) from assistant pastor, Grace Church of the Islands, Savannah, GA, to RUF campus minister, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN.

David Noble (MDiv '08) from assistant pastor, Grace DC, Washington, DC, to co-planter with **Troy Wilson** (MDiv '08) of The San Francisco Story, San Francisco, CA.

J. Kyle Parker (MDiv '03) from Cascade Presbyterian, Eugene, OR, to church planter, Coram Deo Presbyterian, Spokane, WA.

Paul Ranheim (MDiv '11) ordained as assistant pastor of Christ Presbyterian (PCA), Santa Barbara, CA, June 30, 2012. **Kyle Wells** (MDiv '06) and **Jeremy Weese** (MDiv, MAC '09) participated in the ordination and installation.

Richard "Chip" Reed (MDiv '11) to director of community ministries, Westminster Presbyterian, Sumter, SC.

Amy Roebke (MAEM '09) from children's ministry specialist at Redeemer Presbyterian, Manhattan, NY, to director of children's ministry-City Lights at North Cincinnati Community Church, Mason, OH.

Bethann Samuell Rohlfing (MDiv '04) to chaplain at Saint Louis University Hospital and Mercy Hospital, St. Louis, MO.

Ken Shomo (MDiv '03) from associate pastor, New Covenant Presbyterian, Virginia Beach, VA, to campus pastor, Redemption Church, Chesapeake, VA.



Simon Stokes (MDiv, MAC '13), ordained and installed as RUF campus minister, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Oct. 18, 2013. **Jeremy Jones** (MDiv '96) preached the service.

Brian Thomas (MDiv '12) from director of student ministries, Peace Presbyterian, Cary, NC, to RUF campus minister, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

George "Tag" Tuck (MDiv '12) ordained as assistant pastor, Grace Community (PCA), Charlottesville, VA, June 2, 2013. **Dr. Dan Zink** (MDiv '89) preached the service.

Family Updates

Kristen and **John Casteel** (MDiv '11) welcomed Wyeth James, Nov. 22, 2012. John is the youth pastor at Sycamore Presbyterian, Midlothian, VA.

Joseph (MDiv '11) and **Kristin Groeneveld** (MARC '11) welcomed John Carter on May 24, 2013.

Dorothy and **Steve Jamieson** (MDiv '04) welcomed Caitlyn Myra-Reid, June 30, 2013. Steve serves as associate librarian for public services, Buswell Library, Covenant Seminary, St. Louis, MO.

Robyn and **Brandon Lauranzon** (MDiv '09) welcomed Noelle Hope, April 28, 2013. Brandon is assistant pastor at Seven Rivers Presbyterian, Lecanto, FL.

Emily and **Matt Loveall** (MDiv '09) welcomed Abigail Jane, April 13, 2013. Matt serves as pastor of Oak River Church (PCA), Bonita Springs, FL.

Jessica Patterson (MDiv '02) married Bobby Long, Mar. 30, 2013. Bobby is a corpsman in the U.S. Navy. Jessica serves as the foreign policy advisor at Naval Special Warfare Command.



Jennifer and Nick Policow (MDiv '11) welcomed Matthew Kenneth, July 31, 2013. Nick serves as assistant pastor at New City Fellowship, Lancaster, PA.

Luke (MDiv, MAC '12) and Sara Frances Rasmussen (MDiv '12) welcomed Hollis Ames, July 21, 2013. Luke is director of life groups and transformational ministries at St. Michael's Church (NEC), Charleston, SC.

Damein (MDiv '10) and Leah Schitter (MAEM '11) welcomed Scarlett Belle, June 23, 2013. Damien serves as director of Harbor Ministry Institute and assistant pastor of Harbor Presbyterian, Chula Vista, CA.

Aubrey and Jeff Tell (MDiv '03) welcomed Naomi Ruth, Dec. 18, 2012. Jeff recently joined the pastoral staff of New Life Burbank (PCA), Burbank, CA.

Stacy and Tucker York (MDiv '03) welcomed Jonathan Michael, April 20, 2013. Tucker is associate pastor at Westminster Presbyterian, Lancaster, PA.

Celebrations



Luke H. Davis (MDiv '96) on the publication of his mys-

tery novel *Litany of Secrets* (Dunrobin Publishing, 2013).

Doug Fox (MDiv '82) on the publication of his article "Abraham Lincoln: The Old School Presbyterian Convert" in *Leben: a Journal of Reformational Life* 9, no.3 (July–Sept. 2013).



Andrew M. "Dru" Johnson (MDiv '03) on the publication of *Biblical Knowing: A Scriptural Epistemology of Error* (Cascade Books, 2013).

Thomas "Tom" F. Jones (BDiv '65) celebrated 50 years of gospel ministry at a Ministry Jubilee on Sept. 8, 2013, at Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church in Ballwin, MO. Tom and his wife, Reidun, live in Columbia, IL. They have 9 children, 14 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren.

Carrie Jussely (MATS '07) spoke on human trafficking at the 2013 PCA Global Mission Conference. Carrie serves as an MTW missionary in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Kari Reeves (MDiv '07) on the publication of *Canyon Road: A Book of Prayer* (ATLAS Spiritual Design, 2013), which recently won first place at the New York Book Show in the General Trade-Poetry category.

Jennifer Lang (MAC '98) and her work with Wings On Wheels, an expressive therapy ministry for children, as featured in the

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (see it at <http://bit.ly/14n1tix>).

Bob Perkins (MDiv '94) on the publication of *Building a Vision For Your Life: Developing Your Core Motivator—and Why it Matters* (Brighton Publishing, 2013). Bob works as an executive coach and consultant.

Dan Quakkelaar (MDiv '13), licensed to preach the gospel with the Wisconsin Presbytery, in preparation for church planting in Milwaukee, WI.

Prayers and Condolences

To the family of David Cheung (MRE '77) on his passing into glory Sept. 16, 2013. He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Marjorie, his three children—Kevin, Karen, and Kerry—and six grandchildren.

To the family of Richard B. Fite (MDiv '91) on his passing from this life and his promotion into the presence of his savior, June 22, 2013. Richard served 38 years in ordained pastoral ministry.

To the family of Courtney Furman (DMin '88) on his promotion to glory Aug. 17, 2013. Courtney was professor emeritus of philosophy and religion, College of the Ozarks, and is survived by his wife, JoAnne, and his 6 children, 10 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren.


To the Kyle family on the passing of Mrs. Dorothy Kyle, wife of the late Dr. Robert H. Kyle (MDiv '88), Sept. 8, 2013. Dorothy was a member of

Covenant Presbyterian, St. Louis, MO, and a longtime volunteer at Missouri Baptist Medical Center.


To the family of Robert David Ludwick (MDiv '93), who was promoted to glory, Sept. 5, 2013. David is survived by his wife Rebecca (MA '93), sons Robb (MA, MDiv '96) and Caleb (MA '99), daughter Eliza, and eight grandchildren. David was president of ITEM, served on the board of the Abila Archaeological Project, and worked at Twin Oaks Presbyterian, St. Louis, MO, and with Mission Utah.

To the family of Dr. Robert L. Reymond, who was promoted to glory Sept. 20, 2013. Dr. Reymond served as a professor of systematic theology at Covenant Seminary from 1968 to 1990.


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FEATURED UPDATE

Covenant Grads Part of MTW's Flourishing Japan Mission

More than 35 years ago, five people sat at a table to pray for God to increase the size of the mission in Japan. Since 1975, the Mission to the World (MTW) Japan team has grown from 5 to more than 50 people. It is now the largest mission field team with MTW. The last member of that original Japan Presbyterian Mission, Phil Foxwell, went to be with our Lord in 2013 at the age of 98.

Meanwhile, **Bruce Young** (MDiv '74, ThM '91) and his wife, Susan, have been on the team since 1975 and currently serve in the home office to train and mentor missionaries and provide pastoral care. The Youngs have three adult children (Nancy, Brian, and John) and eight grandchildren. They most enjoy working with all the new missionaries before they go overseas, especially during a week of Living in Grace training and one month of cross-culture training in either New York City or Brussels, Belgium.

Many other Covenant Seminary graduates also serve with the Japan team today: Marcia and Koji Esaki (MDiv '93); Sean (MDiv '07) and Lisa Radke (MAC '06); Brooks (MDiv '11) and Riva Cain (MAC '11); Frank Harrel (MDiv '13); Naoko and Seima Aoyagi (MDiv '08); Karen and Tom Mirabella (MDiv '05); and current students Joe and Felicity Congdon.



Bruce (MDiv '74; ThM '91) and **Susan Young** (front row, sixth from right, in the purple shirt; Bruce behind her) have been serving in Japan with Mission to the World for nearly 40 years. They are grateful to see how the Lord has grown the team so faithfully over the last few decades.

MENTORing for Ministry Success

Facing the challenges of ministry without the support, encouragement, and friendship of another trusted pastor can be very difficult. That's why Covenant's MENTOR (Ministry Enrichment Through Ongoing Relationships) program is a vital part of our continuing care for our alumni. MENTOR partners graduates in their first five years of ministry with pastors who have eight or more years of experience so that iron may sharpen iron in the ministry fire. To volunteer as a mentor or request to be matched with a mentor, contact Joel Hathaway, director of alumni and career services at joel.hathaway@covenantseminary.edu.



Resources for Alumni

CAREER SERVICES

We are committed to walking with you both as you discern an initial call and as you consider ministry transitions throughout your career. We provide:

- + Valuable connections to our network of alumni in every state and 40 nations.
- + A database of ministry openings.
- + Help in understanding and finding the best fit for your ministry gifts.
- + Assistance in communicating your skills to potential ministries.

Contact Alumni and Career Services at 1.800.264.8064 for more information on this FREE service.

NEW! AUDIT COURSES AT REDUCED FEES

Want to audit a course to brush up on your biblical languages or dig deeper into some aspect of the Bible or church history? Now, Covenant Seminary alumni and their spouses—and anyone else—may audit any approved seminary course at the **new low audit rate of \$48 per credit hour**. This is an amazing savings over the previous rate of \$240 per credit hour and gives you access to a broader array of classes than before. Contact admissions@covenantseminary.edu to find out more.

SOWING AND GROWING

Seeds of Gospel Faith

How can the church have a meaningful impact for Christ in areas that are historically indifferent or hostile to the gospel? Covenant Seminary alumni in the **Pacific Northwest** are planting churches that make a difference—one congregation and one neighborhood at a time.

Proclaiming the gospel to those who need it but may not want to hear it can be difficult under the best of circumstances. The Pacific Northwest, historically one of the least church-ed and most secularized areas of the United States, has always been particularly challenging in this regard. But the Lord is never at a loss in such situations. As with any other mission field, he has been there before us, preparing the soil for seeds of faith that his servants will later plant. Over the last decade and a half, a growing network of churches led largely by PCA pastors, many of whom are Covenant Seminary graduates, has resulted in a surge of church planting in Washington state and, more recently, Oregon. Three of these church planters recently shared with us some of what God has been doing through their ministries.





Networking for Christ

After planting New Life Presbyterian Church in Yorktown, Indiana, **Mike Kelly** (MDiv '91) came to the Northwest in 1995 to serve as pastor of Green Lake Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Washington. That eventually evolved into CrossPoint Churches, a multi-site church with a second congregation located at Ascension Presbyterian Church in Edmonds, Washington. Both sites now have their own pastors—David Richmon (MDiv '09) at Green Lake and Nate Hitchcock (a 2003 graduate of Westminster Seminary California) at Ascension—while Mike devotes full time to his role as executive director of the Northwest Church Planting Network (NWCPN). How that came about is part of the amazing story of God's care for lost sheep everywhere.

"The Northwest has a reputation for being beautiful, edgy, technologically savvy, and completely uninterested in the gospel," Mike notes. "Many locals are refreshingly open to discussing 'spiritual things,' but very few of them actually attend a church of any kind. People generally are satisfied with the opportunities, relationships, and natural beauty they have around them here, but there's also a deep sense of insecurity. They have the same needs all of us have, but they usually don't think of meeting those needs in Christ. Yet the gospel can interest them if you can find a way to communicate it effectively."

That, of course, is always the challenge. Beginning in the late 1990s, Mike and the elders at Green Lake began developing a vision for a church planting network that would, by God's grace, do just that. Mike remembers, "After our church planting experience in Indiana, my wife and I realized that the more support we could have—the more people around us who could not only provide funding, but also be partners and mentors with us in other ways—the more effective our ministry could be. Around this time, groups like the Southwest Church Planting Network and Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York had started building strong planting networks. In 1998, the elders and I came up with a plan. We asked ten couples—about half of whom were twenty-somethings who were part of the dot-com boom that was going on back then—to pay \$1,000 a plate to eat at a fine restaurant and listen to a church planting leader from the denomination speak about planting churches in urban centers. We raised \$20,000, and with that, we approached some of the churches in the Seattle

area about starting a network with the goal of planting culturally relevant, theologically articulate neighborhood congregations. Our desire was to bring the gospel to the city of Seattle and then the Northwest, one neighborhood church at a time."

The network launched officially in 2000. Four churches joined initially. By 2004, the first two church planters were in place; by 2006, a third. Then in 2007, Mike was contacted by a pastor who wanted to start a church plant in Oregon. "That was outside our territory," he says, "but it challenged us to expand our vision." Soon the Oregon churches in the presbytery joined, followed by more Seattle churches, and suddenly, as Mike puts it, "what had been a few churches and a sleepy network had a large territory and a lot of momentum. In the ensuing years, we have more than doubled the number of church plants we've started. In fact, we're now working on our thirteenth project. That initial \$20,000 has now become an investment of almost a million dollars in church planting. God has blessed us more than we could have hoped or imagined. Our desire is to change the reputation of the Northwest by making it home to some of the most vital, compelling congregations in the nation. We want people to invest themselves in their communities, impact their neighborhoods, and reflect the glory of God in their immediate contexts."

Mike, along with his wife, Sandy, who works closely with church planting wives, are excited not only by the growth of the gospel in their region, but also by the opportunities they have to walk alongside other church planters. "We get into their lives," Mike says. "We get to shepherd and mentor them, watch them grow. And we get to see their impact on the lives of others in their congregations. We see people whose stories began long before this network existed—but God in his providence is weaving all their stories together in Christ. It's a tremendous blessing to be allowed to be part of that."

Christianity in Context

John Haralson (MDiv '99), pastor of Grace Church, Seattle, since 2004, is an adult convert to Christianity for whom pastoral ministry is a second career. He graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy and served on active duty as an environmental engineer for five years. Prior to coming to Grace, he served at Redeemer Church in New York and with City Church in San Francisco. Though he is not the original planting pastor for Grace, he has been a strong supporter of the NWCPN and was blessed to oversee the 2010 launch of Grace's daughter congregation, All Souls Church, in West Seattle. Of his work in ministry he says, "I



love being part of bringing the gospel to a skeptical and doubting city.”

One of the best ways of doing that, in John’s opinion, is by growing the church through hospitality. “As we think about church growth, there are a couple of things that we need to keep in tension,” John notes. “One of them is the question of hospitality. Is the church an inviting community? Are we a community that is always seeking to welcome outsiders and make room for them? When that is lost, that in many ways is inconsistent with the gospel. God is always reaching out to the world, and the church should be doing that as well.”

On the other hand, John adds, “You also need to look at the quality of your relationships within the body of Christ. Are these flourishing? Or has the church become some sort of impersonal machine? When that happens I think you betray the gospel as well. Both sides of that equation are important.”

Fostering outward-reaching hospitality as well as strong internal relationships, John says, should be part of the very structures of any church. “We’ve done a couple of things to help promote this, and our congregation has responded really well. We teach about it, for one thing. And we try to model it as leaders, from the pastoral staff on to everyone else. It’s part of the values and vision for our church. We try to convey the idea that we’re not just a church for ourselves. We are here to make disciples, of course, but we’re also here to serve the city—even when that is uncomfortable. The congregation has really embraced this challenge and owned it in a way that is beautiful.”

The goal, as John sees it, is “to live out our Christian identity as a congregation. Seattle is a very postmodern city with all kinds of cultures and identities. We’re trying to contextualize what it means to be a faithful church of Jesus Christ in twenty-first-century Seattle. We’re not really trying to do anything new or reinvent what it means to be a church. We just want to be what God has called us to be by living out the Christian narrative in the midst of all the competing narratives people find here.”

The rewards have been many. John is especially moved by the number of family baptisms that have taken place during his decade at Grace. He says, “It’s always wonderful when the gospel comes into an entire family for the first time and you see the parents and children baptized together. It’s a huge privilege to be part of that.” At the same time, John loves seeing the long-term growth in grace of people who have been in the congregation for years. “It’s a joy to see people make slow, steady progress in breaking old patterns of sin and watch them begin to live a different story than the one they were living before. It’s a beautiful thing to see.”

(From top to bottom) Church planters working in Washington state include Covenant alumni Mike Kelly (MDiv '91), executive director of the Northwest Church Planting Network; John Haralson (MDiv '99), pastor of Grace Church Seattle; and Nate Walker (MDiv '09), senior pastor of Christ Church Bellingham.



PHOTO BY SHANNON WALKER

Pastor Nate Walker (right) baptizes one of many new believers in Bellingham, Washington.

Multiplying Mustard Seeds

In some ways **Nate Walker** (MDiv '09) is still a newbie on the block. He's only been a church planter since 2009, when he returned to his native Northwest to plant and serve as senior pastor for Christ Church Bellingham, in Bellingham, Washington, a university and recreational community approximately 85 miles north of Seattle. Yet in the brief time that Nate has been there, the Lord has blessed his ministry by growing Christ Church (an NWCPN plant) from a group of 8 to 10 people meeting in Nate's living room to more than 200 now gathering in their own church building.

Nate remembers, "When I first came here, I was inexperienced as a pastor; we had a young and growing family (then two and later five children under the age of five); and we faced the task of ministering in one of the most challenging areas of the country. But the Lord has been doing a lot of work here. We've seen a lot of people coming to the Lord. Last year we had seven adult baptisms and saw many covenant children baptized."

Bellingham is situated on Bellingham Bay, with a spectacular view of the San Juan Islands, and is only an hour and a half away from the Mount Baker ski resort, which boasts the largest average snowfall of any such resort in the world and is the birth-

place of snowboarding. The city is also home to the culturally liberal Western Washington University, the third largest public university in the state with 15,000 students. So what is the attraction of a church like Christ Church Bellingham for people in the area?

"I think one of the things that has helped is that Bellingham has a very communal culture," Nate notes. "People live here because they love the community, the culture, the life here and want to be part of it. Even though there's a real suspicion of organized religion, many people are also attracted to something like a church plant. When we first started, our services consisted basically of me opening the Scriptures and preaching through Colossians, trying to give people the joy of the gospel—give them Christ. We found that they were hungry for that."

The growing church soon moved from Nate's home to a downtown arts auditorium. People began to open their homes to one another in hospitality. The church continued to grow, eventually moving into its own building in 2013. The Lord has continued to bless Christ Church Bellingham in many ways. The church now has four ruling elders and last fall hired its first assistant pastor—Covenant alumnus Daniel Robbins (MDiv '13). Nate gives the glory for all this to the Lord, without whom none of it

would have been possible.

"We faced a lot of challenges when we started out," he says. "I wasn't a good fundraiser; I didn't have many connections in the PCA; I wasn't very experienced in ministry; and my wife, who was pregnant with twins, had to be on bed rest for three months while we had all these people meeting in our home. We came here trusting that God was calling us to this work and that he would provide for us. Luke 12 tells us that it's the Father's good pleasure to give us his Kingdom as a gift if we ask for it. That's a Scripture we kept coming back to again and again. The Lord has blessed us despite my own weaknesses as a pastor. The last few years have really been an experience of the Lord's provision and faithfulness toward his people."

+ For more on church planting in the Northwest, visit NWCPN's website at www.nwcpnetwork.com.

+ See our video interview with church planter Nate Walker at bit.ly/nate-walker.

Rick Matt is senior writer and editor for *Covenant Seminary* and a ruling elder in the PCA. He lives in Crestwood, Missouri, with his wife, Rebekah, and their four children.



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY SYBIL KNOX

Luckey and Sybil Knox in the 1980s

Leaving a Legacy That Matters—for Time and Eternity

When Sybil Knox thinks of St. Louis, she recalls fondly the many 11-hour drives she made from her home in Montgomery, Alabama, with her late husband, Allen “Luckey” Knox in the 1980s and 1990s. After their pastor, Cortez Cooper, requested Luckey’s help on the board of trustees of Covenant Seminary, Luckey and Sybil traveled to St. Louis several times a year so Luckey could attend board meetings on the Seminary campus. Sybil loved the trips. They would stay in one of the apartments on the top floor of Edwards Hall, attend special events hosted by the president’s wife, and explore the city of St. Louis, which they came to love. Sometimes, they even brought their grandchildren with them.

In addition to the beautiful campus and warm hospitality they experienced while at Covenant, the Knoxes were also especially drawn to and inspired by the national and worldwide reach of the Seminary’s mission and ministry. But that mission and ministry also had a deeply personal aspect for them as well. Through the blessing of several Covenant alumni who over the years served as pastors at their home congregation of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Montgomery, the Knoxes and their children grew in their understanding and awareness of how to live for Christ in a fallen world.

Through Luckey’s eight years of service as a trustee, he and Sybil became increasingly aware of the direct correlation between the effectiveness of the ministry leaders they knew and the specifically biblical and personal training those leaders had received at Covenant Seminary. Having been a professional educator with the Alabama Department of Education, Luckey found this connection especially meaningful. “The preparation of the Lord’s servants was very close to his heart,” Sybil notes. “Covenant is a

wonderful place to train ministers. It really impressed him more and more as the years went by.”

After Luckey passed away in 2009, Sybil had a strong desire to ensure that the mission and ministry Luckey valued so much would continue to grow and flourish. She has continued to support the Seminary through regular financial gifts and faithful prayer. But she also recognizes that the Seminary’s needs—and the church’s need for the grace-centered gospel ministers trained here—will go on far beyond the time when the Lord finally calls her home to heaven.

Sybil realized that one of the most effective ways to ensure the future stability of the Seminary was to provide the funds for an endowment. An endowed gift to the Seminary provides both a lasting memorial to the Knoxes’ work and memory and ongoing support and encouragement to new generations of pastors and other ministry leaders who go forth from Covenant to serve the church around the world.

Sybil believes that leaving an eternal legacy in addition to a material one would please Luckey very much. She says, “Our family has been so greatly blessed by pastors trained at Covenant. Luckey would want others to experience that same kind of blessing. **Until the Lord returns, there will always be a need for those who minister in his name.** It’s a privilege to be part of helping to train his servants.”

Deena Stuart is director of gift and estate planning at Covenant Seminary. She loves helping donors match their giving passions with the needs of the Seminary. She and her husband, Bob, have been following God’s call as he serves as an interim pastor at churches around the country. To find out how you too can leave a legacy that helps future church leaders, contact Deena at 314.392.4057.

Everyone leaves a legacy, whether they want to or not. The question is, “What kind of legacy will you leave?”

Dillon Burroughs, Thirst No More: A One-Year Devotional

A photograph of a man with short brown hair, wearing a dark brown cardigan over a white t-shirt, sitting on a couch. He is holding an open book and looking down at it with a slight smile. To his left, a young girl with long brown hair, wearing a black dress with white butterfly patterns, is looking towards the book. In front of him, a baby with light brown hair and large blue eyes, wearing a blue and white plaid shirt, is looking directly at the camera. The background is a warm, slightly blurred indoor setting.

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will inherit *tomorrow* what we leave
them *today*.**

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To learn more, contact Deena Stuart,
director of gift planning, at 314.392.4057
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