

# Insight Into



March / April 2025

*“The Lord has risen indeed.”* (Luke 24-34)

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# Insight Into

## General Information

**Insight Into** is the official youth periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada.

As a Reformed magazine, **Insight Into** seeks to promote the knowledge of the truth and to give biblical guidance to young people in their daily lives.

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# MEDITATION

## *“God is so Worthy”*

Rev. P. van Ruitenburg

**T**ime for God; time for the sinner to be with God. What an undeserved gift; what a blessing for God’s children to be close to God! Not only literally, but also in the experience. This time commitment is good; in fact, it is the best there is. Our God wants to use quiet time to comfort and strengthen, to teach His children more, to help them delve deeper into the treasures of God’s Word.

But first, something else. Quiet time is not only meant to bless the believers, but it is also a gift from the sinner to God. Being still before God is not only a gift *from* God, but it is also a gift *to* God. Did Jesus not say that He “*greatly desired*” to have the Lord’s Supper with His disciples (see Luke 22:15)? And isn’t He knocking at the door to celebrate the Lord’s Supper with His children?

Church services are not only held for people, but they are also held for God, to thank Him and to worship Him. The same goes for quiet time with God, who is infinitely worthy of being loved. Just like with church services, it is not primarily about getting something out of it. Quiet time is also a way of giving.

Giving to God? As if God could use something from us. No, that is not the meaning. The Lord is honoured when a sinner comes empty-handed. That is the gift that God wants. Quiet time is not doing something for God, fulfilling obligations, or anything like that. But it pleases God when His children deliberate, ponder, ruminate, meditate, and repeat in love who He is to them and what He means to them. Quiet time is first and foremost kneeling, giving honour, and confessing God’s

name. So it's not just a question of what we want to do for ourselves, but of how much God receives. It is the work of an angel to give glory with a great voice to the Lamb that was slain. Do you feel the need to join in as a poor sinner? Tell the Lord what you think of Him! God is so worthy!

*"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our Maker"* (Psalm 95:6).

*"Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing"* (Revelation 5:12).

~ Translated from his book *Stil tot God*

*"Come and see the victories of the cross. Christ's wounds are your healings, His agonies your repose, His conflicts your conquests, His groans your songs, His pains your ease, His shame your glory, His death your life, His sufferings your salvation."*

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

*"Never did God so manifest His hatred of sin as in the death and suffering of His only begotten Son. Hereby He showed Himself unappeasable to sin, and that it was impossible for Him to be at peace with it."*

~ Rev. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)



# Faith and Feeling

Rev. E. Hakvoort

The question about the relationship between faith and feeling is not new. Already in the time of the Further Reformation and Puritanism, men like W. à Brakel, Th. van der Groe, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Boston, and many others wrote about it. But what is the biblical relationship between faith and feeling? That, in short, is the question before us. It is rightly stated that faith cannot exist without feeling, but that feeling cannot exist alone either.

But the question goes deeper. What role does character play in this? After all, some people are emotional by nature and easily moved to tears. Others have a calm character and rarely show emotion. If the question is asked, “Do you ever lie awake at night, soaking your bed with tears?”, an emotional person might conclude that his or her emotion is evidence of grace, while a calm person might conclude that he or she has no mercy.

Let us also consider that temporary faith has emotion, because this type of faith is based on emotion and on what we feel. There is a great danger in this, because when we “feel” and “experience” something, we think we have true faith. If we don’t “feel” and “experience” anything, we think we lack true faith. But, in fact, the Remonstrant’s reasoning is exactly the same. God’s Word does not define true faith as a solid ground of things that one feels or experiences, but as a solid ground of things hoped for and a proof of things that one does not see.

For the Lord convicts His people by Word and Spirit of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The sinner sees that he or she has sinned against a benevolent and holy God, and his or her heart is broken as a result. And that doesn’t happen without feeling. David says: *“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest”* (Psalm 51:2-4). And later, David sings, *“Lord, I feel my strength give way and fail, hasten to my help and save”* (see Psalm 38:22).

That feeling doesn’t come without tears, for every broken heart knows the sorrow towards God, who works an unrepentant conversion to

salvation. However, it is not about the number of tears, but about whether those tears are kept in God's bottle. After all, there are tears that are wept with the eyes, but also tears that are wept in the heart. More important, however, is the question of where all this takes us. Does it bring us to the mercy seat with a broken heart to find grace and be helped in due time? Or do we dig into ourselves to conclude from the emotion that we are also children of God?

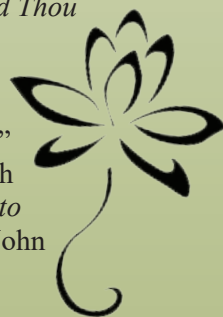
Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between faith, feeling, and emotion. Being emotional during preaching or being "sensitive" is not automatically evidence of spiritual life. When we see it that way, we reverse the order of grace. Then feeling and emotion become the ground of faith, instead of the fruit of faith. Then we value feeling and emotion more than we value the authority of God's Word. Many have already deceived themselves in this way for eternity, for our feelings have also been corrupted by the fall in Paradise.

We read of Esau, who sought a place of repentance with tears, but did not find it, no matter how many tears he wept. These tears did not spring from a sorrow for God, but from the sorrow of the world. Esau's tears did not come from repentance for sin, but from regret because of the consequences of sin. He wanted to get rid of the consequences of sin, but he was not sad because he had sinned against a benevolent and holy God.

Many who were so sensitively affected by the preaching and miracles of the Lord Jesus cried out in emotion: "*Never man spake like this Man*" (John 7:46). Yes, they wanted to make Him king, and even cried out: "*Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord*" (Mark 11:9). But a few days later, these same people cried out in unholy emotion: "*Away with Him... crucify Him*" (John 19:15). Do you see how deceptive emotion without faith is?

What then is the right order in the life of grace? Grace allows itself to be found, and experience does not come without feeling. The ground of faith is not feeling; feeling is the fruit! Our feelings, emotions, and tears do not play a role in attaining salvation. "*Not the labours of my hands can fulfill Thy law's demands; could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone*" (Rock of Ages, stanza 2, Augustus Toplady).

Our feelings are completely removed from the act of salvation. The Church does not rest in "I feel, and therefore it is true," but in "I myself have heard it from His mouth." When the Lord points broken-hearted ones to Christ through the gospel, they may experience the faith of refuge: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*" (John 6:68).



A clear example of the relationship between faith, feeling, and emotion can be seen in the life of the Canaanite woman. She could no longer help herself or her daughter. When, as an exhausted sinner, she hears of the Saviour, she receives faith and hope in her heart and flees to Him for help. At His feet, however, she is also cut off from her hopes and her pleasant feelings. There she had to learn: "Lord, help me." In unworthiness, she clings to the Lord on His own Word and desires to eat like a dog from the crumbs that fall from the table. So her ground was Christ and His Word, not her feeling and emotion.

We see the same thing in the Supper at Emmaus. It was not Christ's Word that He would rise that prevailed, but the emotion surrounding His departure. They had to be turned away from this, in order to learn to believe the words of salvation as fools and fools of heart. In that way, Jesus revealed Himself first in His Word, so that their hearts were burning, and then in His person under the breaking of bread. Thus, they received a sacred emotion and were allowed to return to Jerusalem with fullness of their minds, and, remembering that bounty of His favour, they conversed with the disciples concerning the wonderful ways of the Lord. The revelation of the risen Christ gave them a calm rest and a sweet peace in their hearts.

But what role does our character play in these things? Can a more businesslike nature be accompanied by grace? Certainly, for the Lord does not work apart from character. All the disciples, with the exception of Judas, knew a sacred emotion as the fruit of grace. They were all moved when Jesus told them that one of them was going to betray Him. John, however, was more of an emotional man, so he fell on the breast of Jesus and asked, "Lord, who is it?" Peter's character was also more emotional, which led to his eventual denial of his Master later as well.

No, God's people never lose their character, even after receiving grace. Their character is not taken away in conversion, but the sharp edges are taken off somewhat. When grace is in practise, God's children also learn to wrestle with character, weaknesses, or sins. An emotional character then learns to ask, "Lord, grant that I may not float on my emotion." A calmer character will ask: "Lord, break my heart more and more and drive me out to Thee alone."

There would be much more to mention. The most important question, however, is: Where does the speaking of God take us? Does it bring us to dig and search within ourselves? Then the word applies: Dig deeper, son of man, and you will find more abominations! Or does it bring you to your knees in humility and wonder? That is the fruit that is found out of Him and that will be allowed to shout forever to God's glory. Because soon the tears will be wiped from the eyes. Then the Church will also be freed from its character, and God will be all and in all.

# God's Judgments Upon the Land

*"For a nation is come up upon My land."* (Joel 1:6)

Rev. H. de Leeuw

Joel has warned: *"Awake, ye drunkards"* (verse 5). The people of Israel were submersing themselves in sin. Their tender life of dependence on God was a thing of the past, something found in old story books. They had wealth and prosperity and they could take care of themselves; truly, they did not need God. But the Lord came to them. He maintained His covenant, even when there was such disobedience!

Joel is God's mouthpiece. In verse four, he explained what destroyed the crops, and now in verse six, he gives the context. Those insects referred to in verse four are a nation which God sent.

When we depart from the Lord, then we also lose perspective in terms of His judgments. Then, rather than seeing events as judgments from God, man's opinion is that Mother Nature has to run its course. Then, man thinks, you have good years and you have bad years, and in both cases, man seeks to honour himself and assert his own control. In the bad years, man makes adjustments to remove the causes of crop failure, and in the good years, man takes credit for doing things correctly.

But now Joel has to prophesy. God sent this nation to destroy the crops upon the land. It is a strong nation whose power is from God and whose fierceness is like a lion's. This nation devours field after field, crop after crop. So, the message is clear: This is not Mother Nature taking its course; rather, the Lord is speaking.

So, today, when we see so many natural disasters, is that Mother Nature? No, that is the Lord speaking, hoping that we may acknowledge Him. Those are callings to repentance. He is revealing His might and power in nature. Israel was called to awaken. The drunkards, disillusioned because of the influence they were under, were receiving a message: "I have sent those judgments on My land. Why do you not obey Me? Why do you not serve Me?"

Joel is sent because there is a message that people must hear. Sinners are called to repentance. The Lord is going to build His church. Sinners, who do not know nor see God, will have their eyes opened to see who God is in His judging hand, but also in His longsuffering, that He has judged them but not cut them off yet!

*"Never let go out of your minds the thoughts of a crucified Christ." Let these be food and drink unto you; let them be your sweetness and consolation, your honey and your desire, your reading and your meditation, your life, death, and resurrection."*

~ Rev. Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)





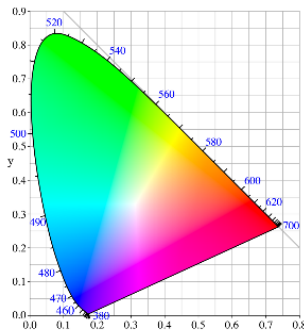
# The Wonders of Colour

Mr. S. Timmer

What a wonderful thing colour is! Who can imagine a world of darkness without colour? Picture, for a moment, the beautiful blue sky on a sunlit day or a red-orange sunset minutes before the sun disappears below the horizon. How beautiful is the green forest in the summer and the reds and yellows that appear in the fall! The colours of flowers with all their variety and design are a sight to marvel at. How is it possible that all this beauty and variety is stored in the DNA of roses and orchids? Genesis 1, verse 12, states, “*And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.*”

## How do we see colours?

Humans have been created with an eye to witness God’s creative hand in colour. He has created our eyes with three different cells which respond to primary wavelengths of light. Some cells respond to red light, some to green light, and some to blue light. Each of these cell types can detect about 100 shades of these colours; therefore, together they can detect 100 to the third power or one million different hues of colour! More than one million colours that are visible to the human eye are pictured in the graph to the left. Are we not fearfully and wonderfully made?



<https://pixelcraft.photo.blog/2019/06/25/how-many-colours-can-humans-see/>

## Do certain colours have significance in Scripture?

We will focus on just two colours. The first colour mentioned in Scripture is green, which is found in Genesis 1, verse 30: “*And to every*

*beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air; and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every **green** herb for meat: and it was so.”* Green is the colour of life! When viewed from space, the earth is a beautiful tapestry of green, brown, and blue. How critical is the process going on in green plants and algae! The oxygen we breathe and the food we consume are directly or indirectly manufactured in a finely-tuned process called photosynthesis. In this process, the energy from sunlight is used to split water to make oxygen and hydrogen. Carbon from the air and hydrogen and oxygen from the split water are used to make the carbohydrate called glucose, which is the energy source for nearly every living thing on earth! Plants were the source of food for Adam and Eve, as well as for the animals. Meat was first allowed to be eaten about 1600 years after Creation and after Noah’s flood: *“Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the **green** herb have I given you all things”* (Genesis 9:3).



<https://www.gettyimages.com/search/2image?phrase=autumn+season>

**Red** is the colour of the blood and the “life” of one who has died. Sin brought bloodshed and death to the earth. Abel’s blood was said to “*cry unto God*” from the ground in Genesis 4, verse 10. Red was also the colour of the blood of Him who would come and deliver from death. At Passover, blood from an unblemished one-year-old lamb was collected and

put on the door posts 14 days after the new moon in the first month of their year, Abib (March or April). Red represents the deep dye of sin, according to Isaiah 1, verse 18: *“Though your sins be as scarlet (red), ... though they be red like crimson.”* Red is the colour that becomes very apparent in the deciduous forests in the fall. When the green pigment dies, the other pigments become visible, like the red pigments in the sumac, dogwoods, maples, and oak trees. The colours seen throughout the year are a distinctive feature of planet Earth. In Psalter 286, stanza 3, we sing: “The seasons are fixed by wisdom divine.”

### **Creatures revealing the artistry of a great Designer**

Who cannot be awed by the beauty and design of living creatures around us? Let us look at a few examples of stunning beauty among the birds.

The American flamingo has been designed with beautiful pink feathers. It has been discovered that the pigment comes from the food they eat. They stand about five feet tall and were given webbed feet for wading in shallow water. They stir up the water with their feet and then bury their bills or entire head in the mud and water to find food! These birds are typically non-migratory and can be found in southern states like Florida. The largest population of American flamingos is found in the Bahama Islands, numbering around 80,000.



*Photo courtesy of the author*



*Photo courtesy of the author*

The Green Jay, with its vibrant black face and neck, blue head, and green back, is just one of many birds designed with stunning artistry. The Green Jays are primarily found along the Gulf of Mexico from Texas to the Yucatan Peninsula. These birds travel in family groups looking for insects, small animals, and fruit to eat. They can even use sticks to pry bark away

from a tree to get insects to feed upon! They can mimic a variety of bird calls, such as hawks, to scare away other birds, who might compete with them for food.

## **Colours and the Covenant**

Who can imagine the scene on earth that Noah witnessed after coming off the ark? Everywhere he looked, devastation and judgment met his eyes. The people he knew and had preached to were swept away. Millions of animals were buried in catastrophic events we cannot even imagine. Animals, humans, and plants were now all part of a worldwide graveyard. Winds had swept the waters off the earth, leaving huge canyons in soils laid down by this event designed to destroy earth: *“I will destroy them with the earth”* (Genesis 6:13). The lifting up of mountains is a cataclysmic event, as described in Psalm 104/Psalter 285, stanza 3:

*O'er mountain and plain the dark waters raged;  
His voice they obeyed, the floods were assuaged;  
Uplifting the mountains He ordered a bound,  
Forbidding the waters to cover the ground.*

However, in the midst of all this death, God spoke, as we find in Genesis 9. Noah was directed to a sign of God's covenant – a rainbow: *"This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth... and I will remember My covenant"* (verses 12-13, 15). Even today, this remarkable event can be witnessed by each one of us. As sunlight passes through moisture, it is split into brilliant colours of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. How stunning is the sight after an intense thunderstorm passes and the sun's rays shine again! Surely the faithfulness of God is seen in all of creation and in Scripture, from His care towards the most lowly creatures, towards individual human beings, towards the universe itself, and to the gathering in of all His elect to the end of time!

*"We often find that our greatest cross occurs in the place where we expected the greatest comfort."*

~ Rev. Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*

(1 Peter 1:3)



# SPORTS BETTING: A HARMLESS THRILL OR A DANGEROUS ROAD?

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” (1 Timothy 6:6-9)*

Bill, a 21-year-old young man who graduated from a Christian school, grew up in a stable, loving home. He worked hard throughout his teenage years and with a visible work ethic, landed a good job in a construction company not far from his home. He was making a decent income, bought a nice truck, and besides paying the bills that were due, had some “extra” income that led to a dangerous temptation.

His fellow workers were talking about betting on sports. A person wagers a certain amount of money on whether a certain team wins, and if they do win, he makes financial gain. Though Bill enjoyed hockey throughout his teenage years, he had never been a member of an “official” team. However, the idea of using his extra money for betting on sports events seemed to be innocent and enticing. Billboards on the highways, ads that came up on his phone, and the involvement that his work peer group talked about at break time all seemed to draw him towards this exciting and new adventure that he could pursue alone or with his work group buddies. In fact, he was feeling a lot of pressure to join a sports betting raffle that his fellow workers had committed to. They had agreed to put in \$10 each per person every week and split the winnings if they materialized. He could justify losing \$10 a week, couldn’t he? Would he let his work buddies down? He could download an app and from that point on, he would be going down a slippery slope that leads to disappointment and possibly an addiction!

## Deceptive advertisements

Who or what is driving the sports betting craze? Part of the answer to this question is found by looking at the money spent by the gambling



industry on advertising. Gambling is presented as fun and something everybody is doing, so then it must be acceptable, right? Furthermore, sports betting is presented as an easy and exciting way to make money. But who is making the money? In 2024, it was estimated that sports betting generated about 17 billion dollars for this industry from its participants! The gambling industry is taking an average of about \$1100 per participant per year. Having this revenue stream, it is no wonder that millions are spent on advertising to make yet more money for the industry. Over the next five years, it is projected that this industry will grow by about 10% per year and involve about 85 million users in North America. It is estimated that one-quarter of adults in the United States bet on the Super Bowl of 2024.

### **Gambling or working by the “sweat of thy face”**

Researchers have discovered that those who engage in sports betting inversely have less and less money for stable long-term investments. Falling into the temptation of getting money quickly without earning it leads to less money. We are warned of this very fact in Proverbs 13, verse 11: *“Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.”* The diligence and industry shown by Nehemiah in building the walls of Jerusalem, by Joseph in gathering food for the upcoming famine, by the shepherds in taking care of their sheep by night, and the blessings upon hard work by the *“sweat of thy face”* (Genesis 3:19) are a constant theme in Scripture. *“The hand of the diligent maketh rich”* (Proverbs 10:4) can be exemplified with both spiritual and physical results. Even before sin came into the world, Adam was given work in the Garden of Eden. Paul was also very diligent to avoid being a financial burden to others. Even though Paul could have lived off the donations of the churches, he worked diligently with his hands making tents (Acts 18:1-4; 2 Corinthians 11:9).

### **Is gambling sin?**

One clear commandment broken by sports betting and gambling of other forms is the commandment against coveting, which is desiring for myself what someone else has. Ahab comes to mind in this context. He looked at the vineyard of Naboth and wanted it so keenly that he used treachery to get it at the expense of Naboth’s life. A clear teaching of Scripture is that our wages must be earned, not taken from others. Ecclesiastes 9, verse 10, states: *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”* Proverbs 14, verse 23, states: *“In all labour there is profit.”* This is also a New Testament theme: *“Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men”* (Colossians 3:23).

### **Contentment**

Does the thought come to your mind that what you are given is **best for you**? All the talents, time, and money one receives have been given by God; therefore, always hankering after more “stuff” is anxiety producing and opposed to the contentedness described in Scripture. “In

all things I have learned to be content” was the confession of a man who spent years travelling on foot through one peril after the next. He was in storms without seeing the sun for weeks, imprisoned for years, and, from a **material vantage point**, had nothing! What a blessed place this man was brought to, for he belonged to One who owned the universe, but who deemed it best to give His servant grace, while at the same time giving hardships and a thorn in the flesh.

We tend to idolize riches as our coveting eyes look at others whose bank account is bigger, whose house is larger, and whose garage possibly shows evidence of extravagant living. The Lord has never commanded us to count other people’s money, or to remember other people’s sins.

Who had more in life: Abraham, who did have outward prosperity, but of whom God said, *“I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward”* (Genesis 15:1), or Herod, whose pools are visible today in Caesarea? Was Herod truly happy? With all his riches, he never was fulfilled and died at the age of 69 with gangrene. What a great contrast Herod was to Abraham, of whom God said: *“Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age”* (Genesis 15:15). How quickly we make a god of things and how striking are the words in Psalm 81: *“There shall no strange god be in thee”* (verse 9). Making an idol of things is part of our very nature.

### **Choosing good friends**

How impactful are the people we tend to befriend, hang out with, and choose for their acceptance and approval. The crowd is on the broad way that leads to destruction. Multitudes of people in our environments have no desire to follow Scripture and do not seek things that are eternal. Dinah set aside the godly example of her father Jacob and went to hang out with the godless people of Shechem -- to her harm and that of her whole family. We are warned in Proverbs 13:20: *“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”* Seek to find good friends among your church community and to find those who will not tempt you to destroy your soul. This world is filled with dangers, of which Jesus even warned His disciples to pray: *“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”* (Matthew 6:13). Our best friends are those who caution us against bad choices, seek our well-being, and hold us accountable in the use of our time and electronic devices.

### **Addictions**

Every day we are faced with myriads of choices. We choose when to get up and what to have for breakfast. We choose to begin and end the day engaged in media and its content, or to be focussed on God’s Word and the good instructions given from week to week in His house. Our choices have consequences. Those who decide to take the first drink or the first drug or to engage in the first illicit behaviour are very likely to get on the road of addiction, from which few return. Addictions negatively affect the spiritual, physical, and mental well-being of human beings. They cause the heart to be

oblivious to what is good and insensitive to what is evil. Certain chemicals are released in the brain during certain events in life. Our brain has been wired with a “reward center” that gives us a certain sense of “pleasure.” The more we engage in an activity that produces this euphoria, the more addicted we become to the activity. This could begin with the euphoria caused by certain events during a gaming session on our personal laptop or by illicit images on our phone. Should we not be acutely aware that this part of our being has been severely damaged by sin? Solomon warns us to flee addictive sin: “*Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away*” (Proverbs 4:14-15).

### **Long-term consequences**

How harmful it would be to go into marriage and to raise a family dominated by an addiction or sinful compulsion. Not only is a person’s spiritual being damaged, but he or she wastes time and money, which are granted as gifts for which we will need to give an account one day. How did we use our “extra” money and our “free” time? We see David in some instances making good use of time and in other instances making poor use of time. While upon his throne, King David began to think about God’s visible presence and how important this was: “*Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building*” (1 Chronicles 28:2). What long-term consequences came from this good thought (by God’s inditing) of David during his “free” time? God promised him that he would have a Son whose kingdom would be eternal, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ (Psalm 89:19-37). We also have David misusing his “free” time when kings went to war. At such a time, David remained slothfully at home, took another man’s wife, and then committed adultery and murder. The consequences of this sin were that the sword did not depart from David’s house. His last years were marked by pain in his heart and murder and bloodshed among his own children. He had to say of them: “*Although my house be not so with God*” (2 Samuel 23:5). What a difficult pill to swallow, all because of sin!

### **Conclusion**

Please take the above warning to heart. Satan is very powerful in our days and has so many tools at his disposal to destroy human beings. Betting is not harmless, but it is clearly sin. Media and some apps can be helpful, but other apps can so easily be used as a tool of harm for people at all stages of life. If you are feeling tempted in this area, acknowledge this fact, seek godly counsel, turn from vanity with a prayerful heart, and seek professional help as needed. It is true that God alone can give us a new heart, but we are 100% responsible for the decisions we make!

~ Submitted by the *Insight Into* editors

# Fishing for Attention



Synodical Modern Media Committee

“I can’t go on like this...” Anna, a sixteen-year-old girl, is affected by peer pressure. After school one day, she finds herself quite upset due to some comments that were made by her best friends about her clothes. She gets her phone out and starts a social media post with, “I can’t go on like this.” She then quickly describes a series of real, fake, or imagined personal struggles. After taking a picture of herself in her bedroom staring at the camera with a glum look, she completes the post and taps “Send.”

A short time later, a friend responds with, “Oh no! Sorry to hear about this! Keep a stiff upper lip! You got this, girl!” Others offer help, with suggestions like, “Let’s talk – give me a call.” Additional commenters respond, complimenting Anna about how she looks, flattering her into thinking she’s quite popular, and inflating her self-esteem.

“Feeling sorry for yourself” is how we used to describe what Anna was doing with her phone. Nowadays, these actions are termed “sadfishing.” Sadfishing is being used by teenagers (as well as some adults!) as a method of attracting attention and sympathy to themselves. This type of behaviour has existed since ancient times. Typically, a social media user posts details about his or her feelings using their phone (often emphasizing exaggerated feelings of depression, complaints, fear, anxiety, or despair) and their online “friends” then respond with comments indicating support, love, and offers of help. Girls, especially teenagers, resort to sadfishing more than boys; teenage boys seem less willing to express personal feelings (honestly or otherwise) on social media.

If the feelings expressed online were genuine, the “sadfischer” can feel a sense of support and encouragement. However, quite often, these “depressed” and “anxious” people are simply overstating their problems and looking for attention. The responses they receive often end up giving them an ego boost or a surge of pride. Taking this one step further, sadfishing can be used deceptively

to sell products and collect money or to enter into harmful relationships.

Zach is a young man in his late teens. He posts a complaint saying that his church only ever offers “doom and gloom” and, with some exaggerations, he describes how he is unable to participate in many activities considered “not so bad” or “innocent fun.” Within minutes, a number of his online acquaintances jump in, offering empathy and urging him to use his “Christian liberty” to participate in worldly activities and other sins. Former members of Zach’s church, who still associate with him online, are quick to encourage him to leave his church for one that “preaches the full gospel.” Zach’s parents are quite busy; they both work full time and when they are home, they are active with additions and improvements to their house. Ideas begin to swirl in his head. “What if there are other churches that have ‘the truth,’ but that do not address what one does outside of church during the week? How can so many of his friends and co-workers be wrong? Is it possible that his church is ‘legalistic’ and overly concerned with the outward details of its members’ lives?”

Zach’s parents tell him, “Just stick with the church”; they really do not seriously consider Zach’s questions. “Those would be great questions for your teacher at school or for the elder in your catechism class” is another one of their responses. And so, instead of taking time to listen to their son’s questions and explaining why true conversion and a biblical lifestyle are so important, “life goes on” as busy as ever. Zach occasionally begins to visit local “conservative” churches, where he is warmly welcomed. His future, from here, is not hard to imagine.

Zach’s experience shows that sadfishing can sometimes be a way for people to ask for help without directly saying it. In today’s fast-moving world, teenagers often prefer sharing their feelings online instead of talking to their parents. Before social media, it was more common for people to talk face-to-face. If teens couldn’t talk to their parents, they might have turned to other family members like grandparents, uncles, or aunts for support.

Parents can create opportunities for honest talks with their children to see how they’re doing in today’s busy world. Since every child is different, they might not always share their feelings openly. Parents might need to be creative in finding the right time for these talks. Instead of talking right after school, try chatting later in a calm place. Your teen might not be ready to talk right away, but showing love can strengthen your bond and prevent them from seeking attention in negative ways. Also, especially point your children to the need for prayer. The Lord is able to give guidance and help with the difficult and anxious situations young people find themselves in these days. Even the wicked King



Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:1-9), with a devastated country and a defeated army, *“besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel... and the LORD gave Israel a Saviour”* (verses 4-5). Can you, with humility, tell your son or daughter how the Lord answered prayer and gave help in your own life? Do they see childlike dependence on God in you, or are you able to make your way through the difficult and troubled times of life on your own?

Anna was looking for attention and a quick ego boost. The ancient theologian, Augustine, is quoted in his book *The City of God*, *“Pride is the beginning of sin. And what is pride but the craving for undue exaltation?”* Social media apps make it simple to share our feelings with a wide group of “friends.” It’s worth talking as a family about how pride can show up both in our face-to-face interactions and in the things we do online. Jonathan Edwards wrote, *“It [pride] is a secret and subtle sin, and it appears in a great many shapes which are undetected and unsuspected.”*

To check if sadfishing is happening, parents can begin by keeping an eye on their child’s online actions. It’s a good idea for parents to delay their child’s use of social media for as long as they can. These social networks aren’t just places for showing off and boasting; they can also expose teens to harmful peer pressure and bad influences. Recently, Florida passed a law that says children under 14 cannot have social media accounts. This law also requires teens who are 14 or 15 to get their parents’ permission to use social media. If a non-religious government thinks it’s a good idea to wait before letting children use social media, then surely we can also see the benefit of doing so with our own children.

Finally, and more importantly, what does the Lord think of sadfishing? *“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate”* (Proverbs 8:13). The meaning of the word *“arrogancy”* here includes exaggeration. God sees through all of our “inventions,” including sadfishing and what the real motives are behind what we post online. Our prayer should be, *“Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue”* (Psalm 120:2).

*“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”* (1 Corinthians 15:21)

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