

# REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

## FLOWERS OF THE FIELD

*By Pastor Brian De Jong*

On this day the daffodils in my front flower bed are in their full glory. The bright sunshine of their faces reflects God’s goodness, even as their trumpets sound forth His praise. But very soon these beautiful flowers will wither and fade. Their glory will diminish until they disappear altogether. In a few months not trace of their brilliance will remain – passersby won’t even know that daffodils grew in that flower-bed.

Such is life, as our beloved sister Antoinette reminded us in her recent death. The Psalmist says it well: *“As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer. But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children’s children”* (Psalm 103:15-17)

Life on this earth is brief and difficult. Even Antoinette’s 98 years passed by far faster than she could have imagined. Not that long ago she was just a little girl. Not that long ago she was newly married and starting a family of her own. Her sons grew up far too quickly, and then left the nest empty. The farm was sold, then life in Oostburg, then the death of her husband, and finally to Pine Haven for the past 14

years. Like a flower of the field, Antoinette flourished in life. But now the wind has blown, and Antoinette has flown away to her eternal home. Life is short – far too short!

In stark contrast to the brevity of this life, we must remember that the lovingkindness of the Lord is unending. From everlasting to everlasting, He is gracious and compassionate toward all those who fear Him. He shows His righteousness to their children, and grandchildren – even to a thousand generations of those who fear Him and call on His name. That is the great constant of life – the unchanging and unchangeable love of God toward His people.

For Antoinette, that reality has not changed one iota. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. However, her actual enjoyment of Him has taken a giant step upward as she has come home to her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now she sees clearly, not as in a mirror dimly – but she sees face to face! Set free from all of the shackles of life in a fallen world, she is enjoying God far more than she ever has before! Her faith has finally become sight and her fidelity to Christ is enjoying its right reward! She is finally at home – in the land where righteousness dwells! Praise God for this fair flower of the field! May we not forget her, or her faith, or the God who upheld and sustained her through life!



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### Mnemonics...

- *Men & Boy’s Fellowship, 8th*
- *Sunday Evening Potluck, 16th*
- *Women’s Spring Dinner, 22nd*

# The Cost

by J.C. Ryle

*“Which of you, intending to build a tower, does not down first sit down and count the cost?”  
(Luke 14:28)*

The text which heads this page is one of great importance. Few are the people who are not often obliged to ask themselves, “What does it cost?”

In buying property, in building houses, in furnishing rooms, in forming plans, in changing dwellings, in educating children, it is wise and prudent to look forward and consider. Many would save themselves much sorrow and trouble if they would only remember the question: “What does it cost?”

But there is one subject on which it is specially important to count the cost. That subject is the salvation of our souls. What does it cost to be a true Christian? What does it cost to be a really holy man? This, after all, is the grand question. For want of thought about this, thousands, after seeming to begin well, turn away from the road to heaven, and are lost forever in hell.

We are living in strange times. Events are hurrying on with singular rapidity. We never know “what a day may bring forth” how much less do we know what may happen in a year! We live in a day of great religious profession. Scores of professing Christians in every part of the land are expressing a desire for more holiness and a higher degree of spiritual life. Yet nothing is more common than to see people receiving the Word with joy, and then after two or three years falling away and going back to their sins. They had not considered what it costs to be a really consistent believer and holy Christian. Surely these are times when we ought often to sit down and count the cost and to consider the state of our souls. We must mind what we are about. If we desire to be truly holy, it is a good sign. We may thank God for putting the desire into our hearts. But still the cost ought to be counted. No doubt Christ’s way to eternal life is a way of pleasantness. But it is

folly to shut our eyes to the fact that His way is narrow, and the cross comes before the crown.

## **I. The Cost of Begin a True Christian**

Let there be no mistake about my meaning. I am not examining what it costs to save a Christian’s soul. I know well that it costs nothing less than the blood of the Son of God to provide an atonement and to redeem man from hell. The price paid for our redemption was nothing less than the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary. We “are bought with a price.” “Christ gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Tim. 2:6). But all this is wide of the question. The point I want to consider is another one altogether. It is what a man must be ready to give up if he wishes to be saved. It is the amount of sacrifice a man must submit to if he intends to serve Christ. It is in this sense that I raise the question: “What does it cost?” And I believe firmly that it is a most important one.

I grant freely that it costs little to be a mere outward Christian. A man has only got to attend a place of worship twice on Sunday and to be tolerably moral during the week, and he has gone as far as thousands around him ever go in religion. All this is cheap and easy work: it entails no self-denial or self-sacrifice. If this is saving Christianity and will take us to heaven when we die, we must alter the description of the way of life, and write, “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to heaven!”

But it does cost something to be a real Christian, according to the standard of the Bible. There are enemies to be overcome, battles to be fought, sacrifices to be made, an Egypt to be forsaken, a wilderness to be passed through, a cross to be carried, a race to be run. Conversion is not putting a man in an armchair and taking him easily to heaven. It is the beginning of a mighty conflict, in which it costs much to win the victory. Hence arises the unspeakable importance of “counting the cost.” Let me try to show precisely and particularly what it costs to be a true Christian. Let us suppose that a

## *The Cost Continued...*

man is disposed to take service with Christ and feels drawn and inclined to follow Him. Let us suppose that some affliction or some sudden death or an awakening sermon has stirred his conscience and made him feel the value of his soul and desire to be a true Christian. No doubt there is everything to encourage him. His sins may be freely forgiven, however many and great. His heart may be completely changed, however cold and hard. Christ and the Holy Spirit, mercy and grace, are all ready for him. But still he should count the cost. Let us see particularly, one by one, the things that his religion will cost him.

1. True Christianity will cost one his self-righteousness. He must cast away all pride and high thoughts and conceit of his own goodness. He must be content to go to heaven as a poor sinner saved only by free grace and owing all to the merit and righteousness of another. He must really feel as well as say the Prayer Book words, that he has “erred and gone astray like a lost sheep,” that he has “left undone the things he ought to have done, and that there is no health in him.” He must be willing to give up all trust in his own morality, respectability, praying, Bible reading, church-going, and sacrament receiving, and to trust in nothing but Jesus Christ.

2. True Christianity will cost a man his sins. He must be willing to give up every habit and practice which is wrong in God’s sight. He must set his face against it, quarrel with it, break off from it, fight with it, crucify it and labor to keep it under, whatever the world around him may say or think. He must do this honestly and fairly. There must be no separate truce with any special sin which he loves. He must count all sins as his deadly enemies and hate every false way. Whether little or great, whether open or secret, all his sins must be thoroughly renounced. They may struggle hard with him every day and sometimes almost get the mastery over him. But he must never give way to them. He must keep up a perpetual war with his sins. It is written, “Cast away from you all your transgressions.” “Break off your sins . . . and

iniquities.” “Cease to do evil” (Ezek. 18:31; Dan. 4:27; Isa. 1:16).

This sounds hard. I do not wonder. Our sins are often as dear to us as our children: we love them, hug them, cleave to them and delight in them. To part with them is as hard as cutting off a right hand or plucking out a right eye. But it must be done. The parting must come. “Though wickedness be sweet in the sinner’s mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not,” yet it must be given up, if he wishes to be saved (Job 20:12, 13). He and sin must quarrel if he and God are to be friends. Christ is willing to receive any sinners. But He will not receive them if they will stick to their sins.

3. Also, Christianity will cost a man his love of ease. He must take pains and trouble if he means to run a successful race toward heaven. He must daily watch and stand on his guard, like a soldier on enemy’s ground. He must take heed to his behavior every hour of the day, in every company and in every place, in public as well as in private, among strangers as well as at home. He must be careful over his time, his tongue, his temper, his thoughts, his imagination, his motives, his conduct in every relation of life. He must be diligent about his prayers, his Bible reading, and his use of Sundays, with all their means of grace. In attending to these things, he may come far short of perfection; but there is none of those who he can safely neglect. “The soul of the sluggard desires, and has nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat” (Prov. 13:4).

This also sounds hard. There is nothing we naturally dislike so much as “trouble” about our religion. We hate trouble. We secretly wish we could have a vicarious Christianity, and could be good by proxy, and have everything done for us. Anything that requires exertion and labor is entirely against the grain of our hearts. But the soul can have “no gains without pains.”

4. Lastly, true Christianity will cost a man the favor of the world. He must be content to be thought ill of by man if he pleases God. He must

## *The Cost Concluded...*

count it no strange thing to be mocked, ridiculed, slandered, persecuted and even hated. He must not be surprised to find his opinions and practices in religion despised and held up to scorn. He must submit to be thought by many a fool, an enthusiast and a fanatic, to have his words perverted and his actions misrepresented. In fact, he must not marvel if some call him mad. The Master says, "Remember the word that I said unto you, 'The servant is not greater than his Lord.' If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).

I dare say this also sounds hard. We naturally dislike unjust dealing and false charges and think it very hard to be accused without cause. We should not be flesh and blood if we did not wish to have the good opinion of our neighbors. It is always unpleasant to be spoken against and forsaken and lied about and to stand alone. But there is no help for it. The cup which our Master drank must be drunk by His disciples. They must be "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3). Let us set down that item last in our account. To be a Christian, it will cost a man the favor of the world.

Considering the weight of this great cost, bold indeed must that man be who would dare to say that we may keep our self-righteousness, our sins, our laziness and our love of the world, and yet be saved!

Moreover, I grant it costs much to be a true Christian. But what sane man or woman can doubt that it is worth any cost to have the soul saved? When the ship is in danger of sinking, the crew think nothing of casting overboard the precious cargo. When a limb is mortified, a man will submit to any severe operation, and even to amputation, to save life. Surely a Christian should be willing to give up anything which stands between him and heaven. A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing! A cheap Christianity, without a cross, will prove in the end a useless Christianity, without a crown....

1. Now, let us make the serious inquiry: "What does your Christianity cost you?" ...A

religion which costs nothing is worth nothing. ... Rest not until you can give a satisfactory answer to my question: "What does it cost?"...

2. Think, if you want stirring motives for serving God, what it cost to provide a salvation for your soul. Think how the Son of God left heaven and became Man, suffered on the cross and lay in the grave, to pay your debt to God, and work out for you a complete redemption. Think of all this and learn that it is no light matter to possess an immortal soul. It is worthwhile to take some trouble about one's soul...

Arise and play the man. Say to yourself, "Whatever it may cost, I will, at any rate, strive to enter in at the strait gate." Look at the cross of Christ and take fresh courage. Look forward to death, judgment and eternity, and be in earnest. It may cost much to be a Christian, but you may be sure it pays.

3. If any reader of this message really feels that he has counted the cost and taken up the cross, I bid him persevere and press on. I dare say you often feel your heart faint and are sorely tempted to give up in despair. Your enemies seem so many, your besetting sins so strong, your friends so few, the way so steep and narrow, you hardly know what to do. But still I say, persevere and press on.

The time is very short. A few more years of watching and praying, a few more tossings on the sea of this world, a few more deaths and changes, a few more winters and summers, and all will be over. We shall have fought our last battle and shall need to fight no more.

The presence and company of Christ will make amends for all we suffer here below. When we see as we have been seen and look back on the journey of life, we shall wonder at our own faintness of heart. We shall marvel that we made so much of our cross, and thought so little of our crown. We shall marvel that in "counting the cost" we could ever doubt on which side the balance of profit lay. Let us take courage. We are not far from home. **It may cost much to be a true Christian and a consistent holy man; but it pays.**

# Bloom Where You Are Planted!!

All the ladies & girls of the church are invited to a get-together on Saturday, May 22nd starting at 9:30 a.m. The theme is “Bloom Where Your Are Planted.” A gardening expert will be coming to give a gardening demonstration and brunch will be served. Mark your calendars!!

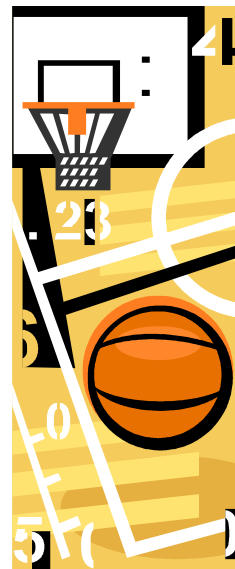


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## Men & Boy's Fellowship

### Calling all Men and Boys!!!

Be sure to come to the Men & Boy's Fellowship on Saturday, May 8th at the Hingham Hall from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Men and boys of ALL ages are welcome to attend. There will be a devotional given by Pastor Brian around lunchtime, and lunch will be provided (the cost for the meal will be split among all those present). Mark your calendars for this exciting time of fellowship & fun!!!



# May Birthdays



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## Camp Westminster

The OPC Presbytery of the Midwest invites you to Camp Westminster this summer! August 2nd - 6th, 2010 Green Lake, Wisconsin. Come meet with fellow believers, enjoy the beautiful Green Lake area, and deepen your understanding of Biblical Truth. The speaker, Rev. Dr. Craig Troxel, is pastor of Bethel OP Church in Wheaton, Illinois. This year's topic is: The Lord's Prayer: Praying the Way He Taught Us.

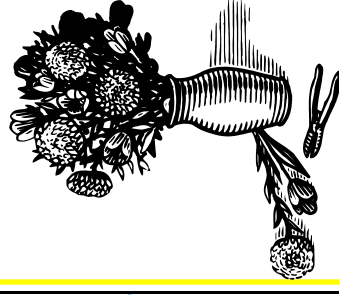




Grace OPC

# May 2010

*Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ*



Church Office:  
4930 Green Valley Ln  
Sheboygan, WI 53083

Phone: 920-565-2160  
Website:  
graceopcsheboygan.com  
Email:

graceopc@tds.net  
briandejong@earthlink.net

| Sun                                | Mon   | Tue                              | Wed                             | Thu | Fri  | Sat  |
|------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----|--|--|
|                                    |   |                                  |                                 |     |  | 1<br>Church Work Day, 7:30 a.m.            |
| 2                                  | 3<br>Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.   | 4                                | 5                               | 6   | 7<br>Pine Haven Bake & Craft Sale at Oostburg Bank | 8<br>Men & Boy's Fellowship 10 a.m.-2 p.m. |
| 9<br>Missions Sunday               | 10<br>Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.<br><i>Theology, 3:30 p.m.</i><br>Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m. | 11<br>Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m. | 12<br>Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m. | 13  | 14   | 15   |
| 16<br>Sunday Evening Family Dinner | 17<br>Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.  | 18                               | 19<br>Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m. | 20  | 21   | 22   |
| 23                                 | 24<br>Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.<br><i>Theology, 3:30 p.m.</i><br>Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m. | 25                               | 26<br>Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m. | 27  | 28   | 29   |
| 30<br>Lord's Supper, (a.m.)        | 31  |                                  |                                 |     |  |  |

# A Night for the Visual Arts

by DeLou De Jong

Many of God's good gifts were on display Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup> at Grace Church. On that evening, the fellowship hall was transformed into an art gallery. Pastor Brian welcomed us with a meditation encouraging the artists to glorify God for the talents He's given them.

Our artists used various media to express their thanks and praise for the Lord's gifts. Among the treasures were oil and watercolor paintings, photographs, pen and ink drawings, and pencil sketches. Several of our ladies displayed lovely textile arts, such as quilts, counted cross stitch and knitted afghans. Beautiful wood-working projects were contributed by several of our men. These included wood carvings, enamel and brass engraving, and a miniature farmstead.

We also enjoyed delicious refreshments provided by one of our hospitality groups. Thanks to each who shared your God-given gifts with us, and for everyone who worked to make the evening so very delightful!





## De Jong's Spinach Crock



“The eyes  
of all look  
to You,  
And You  
give them  
their food in  
due time.  
You open  
Your hand  
And satisfy  
the desire of  
every living  
thing.”

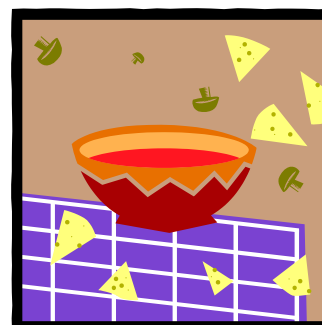
- ★ 32 oz. frozen spinach (thawed & well drained)
  - ★ 2 cups cheddar cheese
  - ★ 24 oz. cottage cheese
  - ★ 1/2 cup melted butter
  - ★ 3 eggs
  - ★ 1/4 cup flour
  - ★ 1 tsp. salt
1. Mix cheeses and eggs.
  2. In a separate bowl mix flour and butter.
  3. Squeeze spinach once more.
  4. Combine cheese/egg mixture, flour/butter mixture and spinach. Transfer to crock-pot and cook on low for 4-6 hours.

*Serves 6.*

*The De Jong Family*

## Appetizer Potluck

Everyone is invited to stay after the evening worship service on Sunday, May 16th for a Sunday Evening Family Fellowship Meal. Everyone is invited to bring along an appetizer or hors d'oeuver to share. Ham buns and dessert will be provided. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the hallway. Questions? Contact Deborah Arndt or Megan Boss.





Showing forth the  
excellencies of Jesus  
Christ

Grace OPC

Church Office:  
4930 Green Valley Ln

Phone: 920-565-2160  
Website: [graceopcsheboygan.com](http://graceopcsheboygan.com)  
Email:  
[graceopc@tds.net](mailto:graceopc@tds.net)  
[briandejong@earthlink.net](mailto:briandejong@earthlink.net)

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★ Did you know that J. C. Ryle was born on May 10th in 1816?  
★ Did you know that his father was a successful banker?  
★ That he was a “fine athlete who rowed & played cricket for Ox-

ford?”

★ Did you know that Oxford offered him a job to teach there but he did not accept?

★ Did you know that he intended to enter politics?

★ That he came to Christ at the age of 22?

★ That he then decided to enter the ministry and was ordained when he was 26?

★ That he finally retired when he was 83 and, “died later the same year?”

★ Did you know that J. C. Ryle is the author of such books as Practical Religion and Old Paths?

*Quote and information taken from [ccl.org/r/ryle/](http://ccl.org/r/ryle/)*

## Menominee Venture Missions

**Who:** Any patient and energetic OPC members from teenage on up. Exceptions might be made for families serving together.

**What:** An outreach to the children of the Menominee Indian Tribe. We will work alongside the Menominee Orthodox Presbyterian Church doing neighborhood vacation Bible school (including crafts, games, Bible lessons and music) and other youth outreach events.

**When:** July 17th-24th, 2010

**Where:** Zoar, Wisconsin

**Why:** Because the Love of God compels us to reach out with the hope of the Gospel.

**How:** Contact for more information:

Gordon Oliver  
Phone (920) 980-4180  
[youthpastorbopc@verizon.net](mailto:youthpastorbopc@verizon.net)

Karl Thompson  
Phone (715) 853-4672  
[Thompson.1@opc.org](mailto:Thompson.1@opc.org)

