



seek wisdom
The Free Reformed Study Centre



 **MEN OF
COMPASSION**
► *The Courage to Care*

Seek and you will find.

As a church community, we value knowledge and understanding of biblical truth. We believe that it is vitally important to continue learning and growing in wisdom throughout our life, to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us.

Seek Wisdom has been established with the goal of providing high quality events and seminars for all members of the Free Reformed Church and the broader community. Using the variety of gifts within our community, these events are created to act as a stimulus for members to dive deeper into the Word and help prompt meaningful conversations with fellow believers. We are thankful that we can join together to grow in faith and understanding of God's Word.

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.**

Proverbs 9:10

- For feedback, suggestions or queries related to Seek Wisdom events, please email us at events@seekwisdom.com.au.

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► Conference Schedule

Welcome to the 2026 Seek Wisdom Men's Conference, **Men of Compassion – The Courage to Care**. Through a series of brief, thoughtful messages, we will ask a simple but searching question: Do you have the courage to care? Together, we will reflect on how biblical compassion influences our lives as men in our homes, workplaces, and church.

At our last conference, we examined what it means for men to stand firm with conviction and strength.

This year, we take the next step:

- Do we have the courage to be kind?
- Are we brave enough to care for the weak and struggling?
- Are we guided by love or by legalism?

Amid life's challenges, it is easy for men to withdraw, harden, or respond with frustration. It takes true bravery to be kind, to listen, to empathise, and to use our strength to build up rather than break down.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience... And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:12-14

7.30am	REGISTRATIONS OPEN Sign in, grab a coffee and enjoy some fellowship
8.30am	Opening Devotions and Singing
8.45am	SPEECHES Shaped by Compassion Redeeming Power
9.25am	CASE STUDY The Hidden Storm
10.00am	Singing
10.10am	Food and Fellowship Break
11.05am	Singing
11:10am	SPEECHES Moved By Compassion Practising Compassion
11.45am	Singing
11.50am	CASE STUDY Undermined Effort
12.20pm	CLOSING SPEECH A House of Compassion
12.40pm	Closing Devotions

► Our Speakers



Rev. Hendrik Alkema

Pastor Hendrik Alkema is grateful for the privilege of being married to Kristen, from whom he has received much grace and encouragement over the years. Together, they have been blessed with four wonderful children, with their eldest daughter recently moving to Ontario for university. With nearly 20 years of pastoral ministry, Hendrik has served congregations in northern British Columbia and, for ten enriching years, in the beautiful town of Albany, Australia. During that time, he enjoyed a brief respite from cheering for his perpetually struggling ice hockey team—a pastime he has since resumed. He delights in seeing his wife flourish in her counselling work, his children grow in faith and maturity, and in sharing the gospel through preaching and teaching.



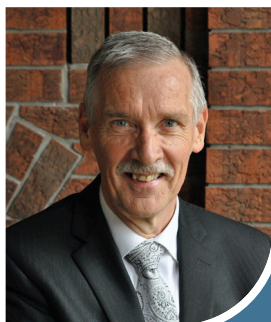
Rev. Dirk Poppe

Pastor Dirk Poppe is married to his delightful wife, Amanda. In the past 28 years, God has given them six children, three in-laws, two more about to be in-laws (he hopes) and one grandson. Very rich. His kids are some of his best friends. They were all recently together to celebrate Ben and Mel's wedding. Very delightful. Over 25 years of ministry, he served in several churches in Canada and Australia. He is currently enjoying being the minister of the gospel in the FRC Cardup Brook. Beautiful congregation. Great consistory.



Kristen Alkema

Kristen Kottelenberg Alkema has been married to her husband, Hendrik, for nearly 24 years and has served alongside him in ministry across land and sea, currently in Smithers, British Columbia. Together, they delight in their four growing children. With the support of Hendrik's sacrificial love, Kristen recently completed a Master of Arts in Biblical Counselling at Westminster Theological Seminary and now has the privilege of practising biblical counselling. She is continually amazed by God's compassion—how He tends our wounds, addresses our sin, and gently yet faithfully pursues us with His love in Jesus Christ. Kristen loves (and misses) the ocean, enjoys hiking mountains with her family and friends, floating on lakes, and believes shared laughter is one of God's beautiful gifts.



Rev. Douwe Agema

Rev. Douwe Agema is minister emeritus of the Living Word Canadian Reformed Church in Guelph, Ontario. Born in the Netherlands, he began his theological studies at the Seminary in Kampen and completed them at the CRTS in Hamilton in 1984. He has served several congregations across Ontario and, for more than 30 years, taught a variety of Bible-related courses at Covenant Teachers College in Hamilton. Today, he and his wife enjoy life in the picturesque town of Elora, grateful for the blessing of living close to their children and grandchildren.

Shaped by Compassion

What does it mean to be shaped by compassion? In this address, we behold the Father's glory revealed not in distance or display, but in mercy, tenderness, and steadfast love. As His heart is made known in Christ, we are invited to be reshaped into men who reflect that same compassion in our homes, churches, and communities — listening deeply, leading gently, and embodying the glory of a gracious Father.

Redeeming Power

How do we use the power entrusted to us? Drawing from Ezekiel 34 and the example of Christ, this session contrasts “Power Over” with “Power Under” — strength used not to control, but to create safety and flourishing. Men are invited to redeem authority through compassionate leadership in the home, church, and workplace, reflecting the Shepherd who rules with gentleness and strength.

[illegible]

CASE STUDY ONE

The Hidden Storm

AUTHOR Dr Reuben Bredenhof

If only people knew the truth. From the outside, Dan and Dana's family have it all together. Dan is well-respected in the congregation, Dana is the happy wife, and their children seem almost perfect. But behind closed doors, Dan isn't the same person. Everyone walks on eggshells at home, careful not to provoke him. His moods shift unpredictably—one moment generous, articulate, and spiritual; the next, explosive and angry. He has started calling Dana ugly names, even at the dinner table in front of everyone. She also worries that one of these times, his harsh style of discipline is going to hurt the children.

The elders have arranged a home visit for next week. Ironically, the theme this year is "Harmony in the Home." Dana knows that Dan will act all gracious and insightful. But she also knows that if she speaks honestly to the elders about how things are going at home, there will be consequences over the next few days. Dan will be pounding the table again, ranting about how wives should submit to their husbands as to the Lord, and that the rod of discipline removes folly from the heart of a child. He will probably blame her for triggering his rage and impeding his headship. She frets long into the night. How will the elders see past the surface to what's really going on? Will they notice her? Will they hear the silence that she's too afraid to break? If only people knew the truth.

Discussion Questions

1. What subtle signs might indicate that a home like Dan and Dana's is not as harmonious as it appears on the surface?
2. How are texts like Ephesians 5:22 or Proverbs 13:24 sometimes misunderstood? How can we better understand them?
3. How can the elders create an atmosphere in which Dana will dare to speak up? What should they do if Dana does?
4. What is the elders' responsibility when there are signs of emotional or spiritual abuse in the home?
5. For a long time, Dan and Dana have been good friends with another couple in the church. What role could this couple have in helping them?



◀ *Scan here to submit a question*

The Sli.do code for Case Study 1 is #hiddenstorm

Moved by Compassion

Revealing Christ's Heart

SPEAKER Rev. Hendrik Alkema

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Practising Compassion

Why do the people we love most sometimes feel unheard — even when we are listening? Too often, we listen to fix, defend, or correct, and in doing so, miss the deeper questions of the heart. Through practical wisdom and gospel hope, this session calls men to grow in humble, courageous listening that reflects the compassion of Christ — creating space where truth can heal, trust can deepen, and relationships can flourish.

CASE STUDY TWO

Undermined Efforts

AUTHOR Dr Reuben Bredenhof

Andrew has always been a gentle man—steady in faith, careful with his words, and committed to his family. In recent years, he has felt the call to take a more active role in leading at home. With a teenage son, he wants to model godly responsibility: teaching him to help around the house, encouraging service, and leading the family in prayer.

But it often feels like his efforts fall flat. His wife, Annette, is capable and outspoken, and she has a way of questioning Andrew in front of the children. When Andrew asks their son to do something, Annette points out what he did wrong or quietly redoes the task herself. When Andrew suggests an idea for family devotions, she corrects him or offers a “better” way. Her comments are rarely harsh, but they leave Andrew discouraged—and he worries that his son is learning to dismiss him too.

Andrew doesn’t want to lash out in anger. He loves Annette deeply and values her gifts. Yet he longs for her to support his leadership rather than undermine it. He wonders how he can show compassion to his wife, while helping her see the effect her words have on him and their children.

Discussion Questions

1. How might Andrew’s gentleness be both a strength and a struggle in this situation?
2. In what ways could Annette’s comments undermine Andrew’s leadership, even unintentionally?
3. How can Andrew show compassion to his wife while also encouraging her to grow in patience and respect?
4. What practical steps could Andrew take to support his son’s growth without letting these patterns undo his efforts?
5. What Scriptural wisdom would help Andrew lead with humility and courage?



◀ *Scan here to submit a question*

The Sli.do code for Case Study 2 is #underminedeftorts

CLOSING SPEECH

A House of Compassion

Shepherding God's Flock

Why does the church exist? Because of God's compassion toward sinners. The church is both the evidence of that mercy and the instrument through which Christ continues to extend it. For that reason, compassion must shape not only what the church proclaims, but how it functions. This presentation explores how the offices of the church are called to cultivate a culture of compassion — especially in the sensitive and often misunderstood work of church discipline — so that Christ's shepherding heart is reflected among His people.

SPEAKER Rev. Douwe Agema

► Book Recommendations



Gentle and Lowly

The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers

DANE ORTLUND ► \$22.99

This delightful book by Dane Ortlund deals with a question that many Christians quietly wrestle with: How does Christ truly feel about sinners and sufferers? Is He repelled by them but obliged to help them? Is He unmoved by their plight, but begrudgingly saves? What is the emotional heart of Christ Jesus towards sinners? Drawing from twenty select passages from the Old and New Testament, Ortlund leads his readers into the Scriptures to see the compassionate and tender heart of Christ. Engaging deeply with the rich theological insights of the Puritans, Ortlund resists attempts to commend Christ's love by minimizing sin. Instead, he shows how Christ's gentleness and kindness radiate precisely in the way His heart responds to us in our sin. *Gentle and Lowly* is an invitation to weary believers to rest in the gracious and gentle heart of God, revealed most fully in his incarnate Son.

REVIEWED BY Pastor Dathan Pleiter

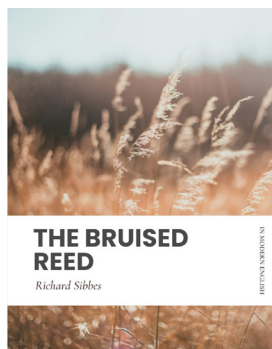
MEN OF COMPASSION

- ◀ **The cumulative testimony of the four Gospels is that when Jesus Christ sees the fallenness of the world all about Him, His deepest impulse, His most natural instinct, is to move toward that sin and suffering, not away from it.**

Dane Ortlund

The Bruised Reed

RICHARD SIBBES ▶ \$19.99

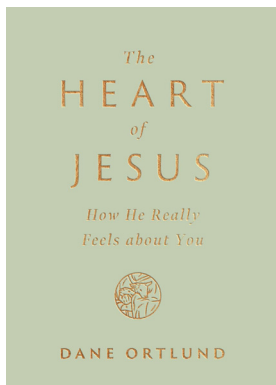


Though modest in length, *The Bruised Reed* by Richard Sibbes is profoundly rich both theologically and pastorally. In it, Sibbes explores Christ's ministry toward weak and weary sinners through Isaiah 42.3 "a bruised reed he will not break and a faintly burning wick he will not quench, he will faithfully bring forth justice." Its pages offer a tender exposition of Christ's mercy, practical help for pastors and elders caring for wounded souls, and extends gracious comfort for all Christians, who are but reeds and wicks. This is a book to be read slowly, pen in hand – marked by depth, wisdom, and consolation.

The Bruised Reed is available in editions from Banner of Truth and Modern Puritans. For ease of reading, the Modern Puritans edition is recommended; for those who appreciate a classic presentation, Banner of Truth. Either way, the reader will be both encouraged and equipped by this gracious glimpse into the heart of Christ.

REVIEWED BY *Pastor Dathan Pleiter*

► Additional Resources



General Reading

The Heart of Jesus:

How He Really Feels About You - A Concise Edition of Gentle and Lowly

Dane Ortlund ► \$22.99

Lessons from the Upper Room:

The Heart of the Saviour

Sinclair Ferguson ► \$24.99

COMPASSION
SEEING WITH JESUS' EYES



Compassion:

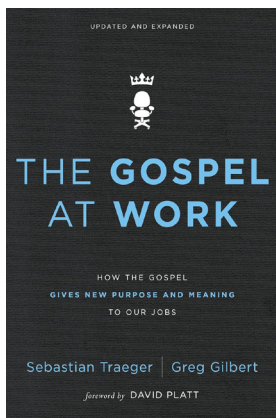
Seeing with Jesus' Eyes

Joshua Mack ► \$12.99

Relationships:

A Mess Worth Making

Paul David Tripp & Timothy Lane ► \$33.99



True Community

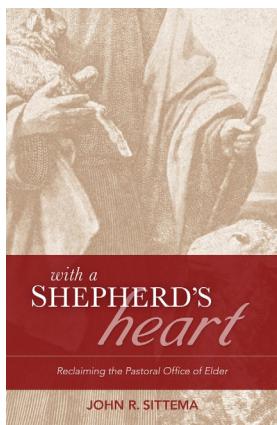
Jerry Bridges ► \$22.99

Workplace and Career

The Gospel at Work:

How the Gospel Gives New Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs

Sebastian Traeger & Greg Gilbert ► \$34.99



Office Bearers

With a Shepherd's Heart:

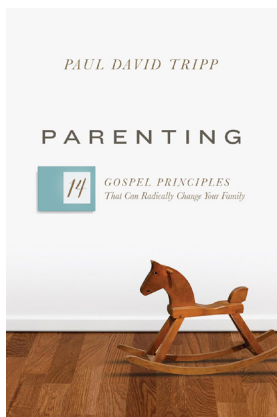
Reclaiming the Pastoral Office of Elder

John R Sittema ➤ \$34.99

The Shepherd Leader:

Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church

Timothy Witmer ➤ \$29.99



Parenting

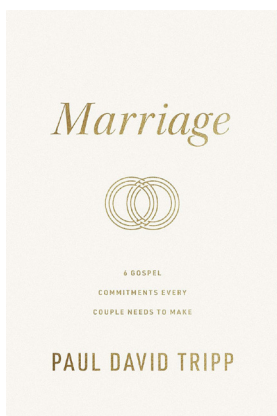
Shepherding a Child's Heart

Tedd Tripp ➤ \$25.99

Parenting:

Fourteen Gospel Principles that can Radically Change Your Family

Paul Tripp ➤ \$37.99



The Shepherd Leader at Home:

Knowing, Leading, Protecting and Providing for Your Family

Timothy Witmer ➤ \$25.99

Marriage

Marriage:

Six Gospel Commitments Every Couple Needs to Make

Paul Tripp ➤ \$44.99

Thank you for joining us!

Don't let the conversation stop here. To see real growth and change, we need to continually pray for God's guidance as we seek to have compassionate hearts. Have the courage to care, living out the call to have redemptive, serving, sacrificial, grace-based influence on the people in our lives.

To thank you for joining us at this year's conference we are offering you a coupon for use at the Pro Ecclesia Bookshop Stall for **TODAY ONLY!**

\$10 OFF purchases over \$100

We value your feedback



Your thoughts and suggestions are incredibly important to us as we plan future Seek Wisdom events. Please take a moment to scan the QR code and share your experience with us. Your input will help us to continue serving you in meaningful ways. Don't wait—your feedback makes a difference!

***Thank
You!*** ►

We would like to acknowledge **Port Printing** for their help in bringing this year's conference to life. Their contribution through a wide range of high quality printing services has been greatly appreciated!



Check out our Online Courses



Take the opportunity to refresh what you learned last year at the Men of Courage Conference by using our online study guide.

◀ [Scan here to access our resources.](#)



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