

The Young People's Magazine

Vol 71

August 2006

No 8

“What to Do with My Future”?

A few months ago the main feature of *Time* magazine was “the lives and ideas of the world’s most influential people”. There were brief articles on 100 individuals – from the United States President, George W Bush, to several “artists and entertainers”. A few issues later Lydia, a college student “struggling to decide what to do with my future”, wrote to express her appreciation. She felt that all 100 had “at least one thing in common”: they were enthusiastic about what they were doing. She finished off by saying: “Your article reminded me that the most important thing is not what I do; I just need to love doing it”.

It is the time of year when many other young people are considering what they will do with their lives. What work should they take up? What course of study or training should they pursue? Or perhaps they are facing up to the question: Should I go on to university after school, or straight into the world of work?

Now, Lydia was right – up to a point, at least – it is important to get a job which you will enjoy doing, if that is possible. Yet there is something more basic to consider: will you be able to do the work, or follow the course of study, with a clear conscience? For instance, will you be expected to work on Sabbaths? – which would be a major difficulty unless yours is work of necessity and mercy. Otherwise, your work would involve you in serious sin, because you would be breaking the Fourth Commandment. There are many areas of activity today which you will want to avoid completely if you respect God’s law. To take one example: the whole world of gambling should be forbidden territory – including work in bingo halls, betting shops and casinos. Yes, it may be very difficult for young people (and older people too) to find suitable work in an ungodly age like this. But, remember, God has said, “Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Samuel 2:30). And He always keeps His word.

A fundamental principle for each area of our lives is to glorify God in everything we do. So Paul wrote: “Whether . . . ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). This obviously

includes our daily work, and in choosing employment we should ask ourselves: Is it possible to do this work to God's glory? Or is there something fundamentally sinful about it, so that I cannot possibly avoid dishonouring God if I am involved in it at all? This is the most important question in choosing a career.

When this basic matter has been settled, it is obviously important to ask yourself if you can expect to enjoy the work – although it is often difficult to know if you will enjoy a particular job until you have had experience in it. But it is important to remember that you cannot afford to be too choosy, especially if work is difficult to obtain where you live. The Bible makes plain that everyone should be involved in some useful work – certainly if they are of working age. Paul makes the pointed statement: “If any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) – in other words: those who are *not willing* to work should not expect to be able to eat. It is another matter when people are *not able* to work – through illness, for instance – or cannot find suitable work. That work need not in every case, of course, be paid employment; after all, what could be a more useful activity than for a mother to spend her time bringing up her children?

But how should you choose what employment or course of study you should follow? Obviously, you will want to find out as much as you can about the careers you have in mind. You will take into account your own abilities, and your likes and dislikes. Then you will want to rule out those jobs which the Bible puts out of bounds for everyone who takes God's will seriously. And you should want your work to be genuinely useful. Certainly, the entertainers in *Time's* list are not doing useful work; they are distracting people from what is fundamental to glorifying God in this life: to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

But this whole matter is one you ought to pray about earnestly. You should ask God to direct you so that you would go in the right direction. And you may look to Him to answer your prayer in two ways. First, He can direct your mind, so that you will think clearly and scripturally about the subject and choose what will be best for you. Remember, God can see the future perfectly clearly; we can not. It is God who knows what is best for us; if we are left to ourselves, we are sure to make mistakes. For one thing, we cannot really see into the future; and we are unlikely to assess properly even the factors that we are conscious of, and there are almost certainly many others that we have never even thought of.

The second point is that God, in His providence, can shut doors and open doors for us. He can order events so that we do not get the jobs and other opportunities that we might wish to have, but which He knows would not be

good for us. And He can order other events so that different possibilities open up to us, some of which might never have occurred to us but are much more suited to us than those we would have sought out ourselves.

Having found a job or begun a course of study, the employee or student is to work as honestly as if he believed that God was always standing beside him. Certainly God always sees us, and He is always present everywhere. This is a fact we should always be conscious of. A stonemason from Cromarty recalled the man who had taught him his trade years earlier. He said of the older man: “He put his conscience into every stone that he laid”. The man wanted to do his work well; it is very likely he was doing it as someone who was conscious that he was building walls in the sight of God. He wanted to keep a good conscience in his work; it would have disturbed him if he had done his work badly, even occasionally. It should be the same with us. We are to do everything to His glory.

But is this really a reasonable aim? Perhaps you feel it is possible some of the time, but certainly not always. Yet, although we live in an imperfect world, it is our duty to have God’s glory in view all the time. But we cannot truly desire God’s glory unless we have a new heart. How important then to have the new heart and the right spirit which only He can give!

Certainly it is a tremendously important question: “What to do with my future”? If we choose unwisely, if we choose sinfully, we will live to regret it. If we choose wisely, with the grace of God in our hearts, we may live truly useful lives – and to the glory of God.

It is perhaps unlikely that anyone reading this Magazine will ever be among the 100 most influential people of their time. But, whatever our place in life, we will have some influence – for good or for evil – on those around us. How important then to live for God’s glory! If we do so, we can hope to have some influence for good on those with whom we come in contact.

Linda was right when she said that the most important matter is not what you *do*. Far more important is something she did not mention: what you *are*. If at the centre of your being there is a new heart, influencing all you think and say and do, you will no longer go on in hard-hearted opposition to God. Instead you will follow Christ as your “leader and commander”.

If you have a new heart, all will be well in the end, whatever difficulties you experience in life. If you are not a new creature, seek Christ earnestly and urgently. Look to Him and trust in Him; He died for sinners, so that they might have blessings of every kind, especially spiritual blessings, and these include a new heart. If you have a new heart, thank God and seek His blessing on the rest of your life. In particular, choose your course of study and your career wisely. And seek God’s glory in everything.

Marriage: What the Bible Teaches

5. Its Blessings

Rev G G Hutton

The last article dealt with these principles of marriage: Christlike meekness and forgiveness. This article completes the series.

The Westminster Confession reminds us that “marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with an holy seed; and for the preventing of uncleanness”.

In the light of this we may mention *companionship* as one of the blessings of marriage. When God created Adam, He gave him everything desirable for his well-being and comfort. Yet the divine Creator declared, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”. Even in a state of innocence, man needed human company. God did not intend him to be alone. Remember, Adam enjoyed daily communion with God, and we cannot imagine that there could have been any imperfection in the company of Adam’s Creator and Sustainer. Yet God, who knows all things, understood that the man was not complete without a suitable companion who could meet his needs as a human creature and share in them.

From the very beginning, the male of the human species required the company of the female. God had designed both the male and the female in His own image, perfectly suited to each other, so that they would both be fulfilled in each other as long as they lived in communion with their Maker. Our Creator has established the general rule that the man is to be socially, physically and emotionally fulfilled in the woman and, likewise, the woman in the man, while both are spiritually fulfilled in God Himself.

A possible benefit of marriage is *mutual spiritual help*. As Bible-believing Protestants, we reject Rome’s claim that marriage is a sacrament. Yet we have scriptural reasons to expect that marriage will contribute to the spiritual advancement of the husband and wife. “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22). “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

If we apply these principles, it should not be difficult to recognise the potential benefits for husbands and wives. This is one of the reasons why

young people who profess salvation should prayerfully seek like-minded marriage partners. History testifies to the fact that many who have done most to advance Christ's cause in the world have been assisted, encouraged and inspired by their marriage partner. And, sadly, others with great potential are remembered because of their compromise, backsliding, or forsaking of duty, because of the bad influence of an unsuitable marriage partner.

Through marriage, two become one. God's Word says that "they are no more twain but one flesh". It is therefore impossible for them to live together as husband and wife without influencing each other in many ways, particularly in their spiritual lives. As they pray with and for each other, so they appreciate each other. As they follow the precepts of the Lord together, they are able to encourage one another. As they show their care for one another's souls, they grow ever closer. As they share their spiritual experiences, they learn to support each other and sympathise with each other in their struggle against the sin they discover in themselves and in each other. The Christian family is in reality the Church in miniature. It has Christ as its head; it has God-ordained rule and order within it; and it witnesses in the world to the power of the gospel and grace.

One of the most desirable blessings upon a marriage is *children*. They are God's gift to parents and ought therefore to be cherished as such. The Bible is clear on the matter: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward". It is normal for any married couple to desire children. God is sovereign in these matters; so – for one reason or another – not all married couples can have their own children. Yet Christian parents recognise that to be given children is a great privilege from the Lord, but one which carries tremendous responsibilities with it. Children bring much pleasure into a marriage but also make demands on time and money and maybe even on a parent's health. For these reasons some married couples choose not to have children. But such a decision demonstrates a sinful selfishness, which very often leads to problems within the marriage relationship.

We are told that young women today are much better equipped for life outside the mundane drudgery of motherhood and home-making. Either the recognised, established roles within the family for husbands and wives are ignored, dismissed as old-fashioned, or reversed; or the wife and mother feels pressurised to add to these roles that of money-earner. The full-time wife and mother of today may, even in some Christian circles, be made to feel worthless and she may well be ridiculed as slothful, irresponsible, without ambition – someone who lives comfortably and lazily at the expense of others.

The Church has a duty to promote and defend the Bible's teaching on such

matters. It is sad when she appears to be either too embarrassed or too weak to withstand ridicule from a degenerate society. Yet it remains a fact that, if there were better mothers, the Government would not have to contend with nearly so much crime. The bill for the taxpayer would be much smaller. Teachers in our schools would not have to contend with anything like the problems they now face with unruly pupils. I would suggest it is impossible to calculate the real cost – in spiritual, social and economic terms – of wives and mothers deserting their God-ordained role within marriage. In many ways the role of wives and mothers is the key to a well-ordered and prosperous society. What time and effort is considered necessary to produce competent doctors, nurses, teachers and engineers, for example! Yet it is assumed that no time or effort is necessary, or even desirable, for the task of homemaking and child-rearing – either in preparing for it or in supporting it.

It seems to me that the true meaning of marriage has to a large extent been lost in our society. I am certain that, if the present generation of young people were better instructed in biblical principles and morals, they would be better prepared for entering into marriage for the proper reasons. This would result in fewer domestic problems in our society, and so in fewer divorces.

Sadly, divorce has become so common that some of the rising generation see no reason to marry at all. They ask themselves: Since marriages do not normally last, why bother to marry? They reckon that it is easier to get out of an informal relationship than have to go through all the legal proceedings necessary to obtain a divorce, if their marriage fails to live up to their expectations. As it becomes increasingly easier to obtain a divorce, we ought to remind ourselves of what the Westminster Confession of Faith states on this matter: “Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments, unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage; yet nothing but adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: wherein a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed, and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills and discretion in their own case”. It is the duty of both the Church and the state to protect and preserve the institution of marriage, and especially its character as ordained by God.

No one should enter into marriage lightly, and no marriage should be allowed to fall apart without every possible effort being made to save it. If marriage is honourable, then surely it is logical to conclude that the breakup of a marriage is a dishonour to at least one party. Every avenue should be explored, and every resource exhausted, to save what God instituted to be a lifelong union. This is God's requirement for marriage.

Missionary to India

3. Shipwreck

As a student in St Andrews around 1820, Alexander Duff came to the conclusion that he must become a missionary and bring the gospel to some distant part of the world. In 1829 he and his new wife Anne set sail from Leith to London on the first leg of their voyage to India.

The Duffs left London for India on the *Lady Holland*, whose cargo was valued at £48 000 – but it would be valued at millions of pounds today. The ship was delayed by gales in the English Channel but conditions in the Bay of Biscay, notorious for its storms, were much better.

When the *Lady Holland* dropped anchor in Madeira, the captain intended to spend just a week there to take on board barrels of wine for Calcutta. On what was to be their last evening on the island, the captain and most of the passengers went ashore for a dance – everyone except the Duffs and an army lieutenant. After midnight the wind rose unexpectedly and drove three of the ships in the bay ashore; these were all destroyed in the storm and there were no survivors. The *Lady Holland* and three Royal Navy frigates were blown out to sea. More than three weeks passed before the crews were able to bring them back into port, by which time the passengers ashore had given up hope of ever seeing them again; some of them were making other arrangements to get to India.

On her way to Cape Town, the *Lady Holland* was several times driven far off course during further storms. As the captain was approaching port during another gale, he had to avoid a long sandbank. But, in the darkness, the ship was swept onto a rock. Such was the violence of the waves that her back soon broke and the front part of the vessel was swept away. The ship's crew began preparing to launch a longboat in the hope that they might get both the passengers and themselves safely ashore.

When the ship had grounded, all the passengers rushed, half-dressed, on deck. Duff could see, as he looked around him, that it was very possible that they might all soon perish in the sea and be rushed into eternity. He heard the captain exclaim, "O she's gone; she's gone!" Another man cried out bitterly: "What shall become of me? I have been such a hypocrite." For the rest of his life, the whole scene reminded Duff of the day of judgement and how all the secret sins that ever took place in this world will be revealed. After about half an hour he suggested that they should gather together and pray. He asked the Lord that they would either be delivered from disaster or be prepared to meet Him; they might all before long be called before Him, for "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

To keep themselves from being swept away, the passengers hung on to whatever they could grasp as Duff poured out his heart in earnest prayer.

After the smaller boat was launched, the waves were so strong that they carried it away, breaking the rope which tied it to the ship. But one of the sailors had hidden in the longboat – determined to be saved, if possible, whoever else might be lost – and he rowed it back to the ship. The longboat was able to make three trips to the shore and take all the passengers and crew to safety. Daylight soon came and they discovered that they were on an island. They were no doubt very glad to find two Dutchmen who had been gathering penguins' eggs. The eggs were to be their only food, cooked on a fire of dry grass.

A seaman found a leather bag which contained a Bible and a Psalm book belonging to Duff; they were wet but usable. He read Psalm 107, and would probably have placed special emphasis on these verses:

“Who go to sea in ships, and in great waters trading be,
Within the deep these men God's works and His great wonders see.
For He commands, and forth in haste the stormy tempest flies,
Which makes the sea with rolling waves aloft to swell and rise. . . .
They reel and stagger like one drunk, at their wit's end they be:
Then they to God in trouble cry, who them from straits doth free.
The storm is changed into a calm at His command and will;
So that the waves, which raged before, now quiet are and still. . . .
O that men to the Lord would give praise for His goodness then,
And for His works of wonder done unto the sons of men!”

Then Duff offered up earnest prayer and thanksgiving on behalf of all those who gathered around him.

He was going out to India to set up a college. Through that college, the Church in Scotland hoped, the young men who attended would be influenced by Christianity – and, through them, many other Indians. Duff had taken with him over 800 books, covering all branches of useful knowledge; they were to form the basis of a library in the college. Of these, only 40 survived the shipwreck. And of these 40, only the Bible and Psalm book were worth rescuing; the others were so sodden that they could never be usable. Everyone saw some significance in the fact that only the Word of God had been spared from the sea.

But Duff himself saw something more: the *supreme* importance of the Bible. All other human learning, while it may well be important, is of only limited use. It is the Bible alone, and the truths it teaches, that can show us the way to heaven. If we do not believe in Christ, we will be lost for ever, no matter how much we may know about other things. Duff wrote back to

Scotland about his books, and all the other papers he had lost: “They are gone and, blessed be God, I can say: Gone without a murmur. So perish all earthly things; the treasure that is laid up in heaven alone cannot be lost. God has been to me a God full of mercy, and not the least of His mercies is cheerful submission.” He saw too that he must be more prayerful than before in seeking God’s blessing on the work that he was going to do.

The Duffs had to spend several weeks in Cape Town, and they got away to India on the last ship of the season, the *Moir*. But they had to pay a huge amount for their fares – so great was the demand for places on board. This final leg of their voyage was also difficult, as gales blew the vessel far off course and they were almost shipwrecked in a hurricane off Mauritius. Finally, having reached India in a cyclone, the *Moir* became stranded on an island in the delta of the Ganges. The ship was in danger of overturning; so the passengers and crew had to come off the ship and found themselves up to their waists in the water.

They were eventually rescued and brought to Calcutta. At last, after all the difficulties and dangers of their voyage, they had reached India. Duff was ready to do all in his power to use the gospel to influence India and its people.

How Did It all Begin?

9. Dinosaurs

S M Campbell

Dinosaurs were an interesting group of animals. We cannot tell exactly what they looked like because all that remains of them today is their skeletons, many of which are incomplete. There is much guess work in the attempt to form a picture of what a dinosaur looked like. The scientists have to piece together the skeleton, filling in the gaps for the missing bones, and then try to work out what the fleshy parts of the animal looked like. Often scientists disagree about some of the details. For instance: what kind of skin had they, and what colour was it?

Evolutionists would have us believe that dinosaurs evolved from a type of reptile about 235 million years ago. They say that these creatures dominated the earth for long ages and then mysteriously became extinct about 60 million years before our first ancestors supposedly began evolving. On the other hand, creationists believe that dinosaurs, like all the other animals and man, were created during the six days of creation about 6000 years ago.

Both evolutionists and creationists do agree that at some stage in history, the environment became unsuitable for dinosaurs, causing them to become

extinct. While the circumstances surrounding the extinction of dinosaurs is a mystery to evolutionists, creationists understand that following the Genesis flood there would have been huge environmental changes. This would have affected the habitat of the dinosaurs. Combined with changes in lifestyle, as man began to populate the world again, this resulted in many types of plants and animals becoming extinct. Dinosaurs could not adapt to all the changes they were experiencing and so gradually died out. We see similar threats to other species today. Often at zoos or wildlife parks you can see campaigns to save some of these creatures. Does the possibility of endangered animals such as tigers becoming extinct indicate that they are evolving? No, of course not! Extinction is not proof of evolution.

It is generally accepted that the majority of dinosaurs were not large animals but that their average size was about the same as a sheep. Some were even smaller – about the size of a mouse. There were also very large ones like the tyrannosaurus rex and the brachiosaurus. The word *dinosaur* is quite a modern term. It was first used in 1841 by a British scientist, Sir Richard Owen, and is Greek for “terrible lizard”. Before 1841 the larger dinosaur-like creatures would have had local names or possibly they would have been called monsters or dragons.

Does the Bible have anything to say about dinosaurs? Obviously the word *dinosaur* does not appear in the Authorised Version as it was translated before the word became part of our vocabulary. Yet, in the Bible, creatures are described which may fall into the dinosaur category. There are several references to dragons; what exactly these were we cannot say, but obviously they were some sort of animal. For example, we read: “The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet” (Psalm 91:13), and, “The dragons of the wilderness” (Malachi 1:3).

There are also references to dragons that lived in water. You can look up the references yourself: Psalm 74:13, Isaiah 27:1 and Ezekiel 29:3. Job also refers to a great sea-creature called leviathan, which he describes as breathing fire (Job 41). Also, in chapter 40, God describes a great animal He created, which was unbelievably large and strong; it is called behemoth. Some commentators think this behemoth could be an elephant or a hippopotamus, but it could possibly have been a large dinosaur like brachiosaurus. In Isaiah there is a reference to a “fiery flying serpent”; this could possibly have been a type of flying dinosaur like a pterodactyl (Isaiah 30:6).

There is evidence to support the view that dinosaurs and man lived on earth together. There are accounts of mankind and dinosaurs clashing. In many cultures there are legends of heroic battles between man and monsters or dragons. No doubt many of these accounts have become distorted and

exaggerated with the passage of time but they do point to the existence of various types of fierce reptiles. The most recent medieval account of such a battle is from Bologna in Italy in 1572. A peasant called Baptista killed a creature which, from its description, could have been a small dinosaur called tanytropheus. Even today there are giant lizards which are a threat to other sizeable animals, including man. The Komodo lizard, living on the Indonesian island of Komodo, is considered by many to be a type of prehistoric lizard. Yes, it is a lizard, but it is no more prehistoric than you or me! They can grow up to three metres in length and have powerful jaws and sharp teeth. They are strong and fast, in spite of their short legs. Some people have described them as land-crocodiles.

There is further evidence which might give weight to the legends passed down through our history. A sixteenth-century European scientific book contains descriptions of several living animals from that period which would now probably be classified as dinosaurs. Ancient paintings of various dinosaur-like creatures have been found in caves in Utah and Arizona and also in France. Pottery paintings, mosaics and sculptures from many ancient cultures – such as Greek, Egyptian, Sumatran and Roman – are proof that these amazing creatures were seen by mankind.

Dinosaurs are a part of our natural history. We should not be put off trying to explore the facts about them just because they have been hijacked by the evolutionists as supposed proof of an evolutionary timeline. They are part of God's creation just as we are. Man was created on the same day as the dinosaurs that lived on land. But man was created in the image of God with an immortal soul, to be a creature that would glorify his Creator in a special way. "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17).

For Junior Readers

The Celery Stalk

Some of you will probably be moving to high school soon. After being with the same familiar group of people for several years, you may be splitting up. You may move to different schools and meet lots of new people. How important to choose your new friends carefully! Make sure that the people you spend time with do not use bad language, are respectful to their teachers and are well behaved in class.

Have you ever done an experiment in science with a celery stalk and coloured water? You add some red or blue food colouring to a glass of water.

Then you choose a stalk of celery with a few leaves left on it, cut a piece off the bottom, place the stalk in the glass of water and leave it for a couple of hours. When you go back to it, you will discover that the coloured water has travelled right up the length of the stalk and even the leaves are tinted with red or blue!

That is a bit like you at school. Even though you may not be aware of it, you can absorb things from the company you keep. It may be their attitudes, their way of speaking, even their behaviour. The Bible warns us: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners". The danger is that you will be corrupted by the people around you and begin to behave as they do. As a good man (Matthew Henry) wrote, "Those who would keep their innocence must keep good company". How important then to be careful about those you go around with!

It is also important to stand up for what you believe. If you do so at the beginning, others will just accept that you are different and it will make things easier for you later on. Of course it is never easy to be different from the crowd, but Jesus tells you not to be afraid of what the world will do to you. Even if they despise you or mock you, they can only hurt you outwardly. These are Jesus' words: "Fear not them which kill the body [that is the worst they can do], but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell". It is God you should fear. Someone has said, "It is better to fall under the frowns of all the world than under God's frowns"; it is better to offend everyone around you than to offend God. What really matters is to please God.

As you begin this new stage of your life, should you not pray, as David did, that God would keep you from sin? He asked, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slide not . . . keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings" (Psalm 17:5,8). *J van Kralingen*

For Younger Readers

Joseph and His Brothers

Joseph loved his father. And Jacob his father loved Joseph more than any of his other sons. Joseph had ten older brothers, but they hated him.

When Joseph was 17 years old, he was helping his brothers look after their father's sheep. After he came back home, he told his father about the bad things his brothers were doing.

One day Jacob gave Joseph a very special coat; it was a coat of many colours. All the brothers could see that Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved any of them. They did not like that. They hated Joseph more than ever.

Some time later, Joseph's brothers went to feed the sheep in a place called Shechem. Then one day Jacob asked Joseph to go to see how his brothers were getting on. He also told Joseph to find out if the sheep were all right. Joseph was to come back and tell his father what he saw.

Joseph got ready and set out for Shechem. When he got there, he could not find his brothers or the sheep anywhere. But a man found him wandering in the field. The man asked him what he was looking for. Joseph told him. And he asked the man, "Tell me where they feed their flocks".

The man told him that the brothers had gone somewhere else. He had heard them say, "Let us go to Dothan". So Joseph went away to Dothan and he found his brothers there.

The brothers saw Joseph when he was still far away. They decided to kill him. And they were going to tell their father that a wild animal had eaten Joseph.

See how wicked the brothers were! They did not really love their father. They were going to kill the son that Jacob loved best and they were going to tell him lies. What was worse, they did not love God. But God saw all their sins.

The oldest of the brothers was called Reuben. He did not want to kill Joseph. He wanted to put Joseph in the pit so that he could save him from the others. He was going to come back to the pit later and take Joseph out of it. Then Joseph could go back to his father.

When Joseph came to his brothers, they took his nice coat of many colours off him. Then they put him in a pit. They did not even give him any water in the pit. He must have been very thirsty.

Then they sat down for their meal. As they were eating their food, they looked up. They saw some merchants riding along on their camels. The merchants were going down to Egypt with spices and other goods to sell there.

Joseph's wicked brothers saw a chance to make some money. They would sell Joseph to the merchants. That was what they did, for 20 pieces of silver.

Poor Joseph! It looked like he would never see his father again.

Reuben was away from the brothers when they sold Joseph to the merchants. Later he came back to the pit and saw that Joseph was no longer there. He was very upset.

But the other brothers did not care. They killed a young goat, and took some of its blood. Then they took Joseph's coat and dipped it in the blood. When they went back to their father, they showed him the coat and told him that a wild animal had killed Joseph. Jacob was very upset.

But what about Joseph? God took care of him in Egypt. God always takes care of those who love Him.

The Book of Ruth

90. Young and Old

Rev K M Watkins

Ruth 4:15. "And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him."

“**R**ejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Romans 12:15). When Naomi first returned to Bethlehem, there was every reason to weep with her. She had left the town full, with her husband and two sons, but she returned empty. They all died in the land of Moab. But that was then. Now Naomi was rejoicing, for her daughter-in-law had given birth to a son. The women of Bethlehem rejoiced with her, telling her what her grandson was going to be to her. He would restore her life, and make her feel young and joyful again. He would support her in her old age. Naomi could have every hope that these promises would be fulfilled, because the boy was Ruth's son. And Ruth loved Naomi; so she would teach her son to love his grandmother too. Naomi had lost two sons, but it was better to have Ruth than to have seven sons.

“A restorer of thy life.” The newborn child was going to turn back the clock of Naomi's life. He would bring her back to the happy days of her youth, when she married Elimelech and gave birth to two sons. She had devoted her life to the care and nurture of those boys, and she successfully raised them to adult life. She was then full of hope for the prosperous future of her family. But her hopes were shattered into many broken pieces. One by one, her family died and passed into eternity. Although Ruth remained

wonderfully faithful to her, Naomi lost all hope for her family's future. She could not see how it could survive into future generations, for all the men had been cut off. But with Ruth's marriage to Boaz, and now the birth of their son, all her brightest hopes were restored. Through this boy her family would be preserved.

Of course, Naomi's grandson could not have realised at that time what great thoughts his grandmother had concerning him. It would take years before he could begin to appreciate the extent to which Naomi welcomed his arrival. This often happens even today. Children and young people do not realise the joy that they can bring to older people. The elderly look to the younger ones to brighten their days. Even a brief visit, or a short conversation, or a small act of kindness, can mean so much to them. It helps to turn back the clock of their lives. It brings a refreshing joy to them to share in the blossoming lives of the young.

Young reader, do you realise how much joy you could bring to the older members of your family? Can you not spare a few moments for the old in your family or congregation, out of your schedule, even if it is very busy? There is more you can do for them than perhaps you realise – just by giving them some of your time, and being bright and cheerful when you are with them. Share your lives with them. Naomi's grandson was going to restore her life in a special sense, but all children should have a similar effect on their old relatives.

For old people who have grace, it is especially joyful to see the young being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the gospel. Just as her grandson gave Naomi hope for the future of her family, so it gives godly people hope for the future of the Church when they see young people following in the ways of the Lord. The old know that they must soon depart this world, and it encourages them to see the young coming forward to take their place. As they grow in grace over the years, the saints grow in their concern for their Saviour's cause in the world, and these concerns are much relieved by seeing the young, not merely born within the Church's borders, but born again by the Holy Spirit and so brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Young people, do you know what would most please your ageing but godly relatives? It is to repent and believe in the gospel! If you care for them and for your own souls, you should realise that there is one thing needful to bring true joy to both, and that is finding Christ as your Saviour from sin and hell.

"A nourisher of thine old age." Naomi's grandson would also be this to her. He was going to support her during the time of her "grey hairs". The Fifth Commandment's requirement to "honour thy father and thy mother" extends to grandparents as well as parents. In a generation when older people

are so often neglected, the young must remember them. When this boy grew up, he would have been responsible for his grandmother.

The young are not to forget their older relatives. They must not neglect them. Just as parents care for their children when they are young, so children are to care for their parents when they are old. When a child is utterly helpless, he needs his parents do everything for him. Think of yourself! You could not feed yourself, you could not clothe yourself, you could not protect yourself, you could not move. You could not do anything for yourself! Your parents took care of all that for you. As the years go by, the situation can turn around completely. Those parents might become weak and even helpless. After all they did for you, will you be able to turn your back on them in their time of need? Surely not!

Yet many people do. Old people's homes contain many old folks who hardly ever receive a visitor. They have younger relatives, but they rarely see them. A few years ago thousands of old people died in Paris during an exceptional heatwave. Where were their families? Away from the city, enjoying themselves in the country and at the beach. Nourishing their own pleasures, they forgot to nourish their elderly and needy relatives. How heartless they must be who turn a blind eye to their ageing parents' needs! The Scripture condemns it in no uncertain terms: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8).

Joseph did not fail in this duty. He knew the famine was not going to end soon and could not bear to think of his aged father suffering so far away, and out of the reach of his assistance. So what did he do? He called Jacob to Egypt, where he could care for him: "There will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty" (Genesis 45:11).

The Saviour Himself has set us this example. When He was about to leave the world, He could not forget His ageing mother, and made sure that she would be provided for by committing her to the care of John. The beloved disciple took on the duty willingly. No doubt John nourished Mary, not only by providing the practical necessities of daily life, but also by telling her the wonderful words and works he had heard and seen. How wonderful if younger people can comfort aged saints by speaking to them of what the Lord has done in their own experience. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul" (Psalm 66:16). Young reader, can you nourish your older relatives spiritually? If they are godly, they will value that more than anything. To see the first fruits of faith, the first love to Christ, and so on, will restore their souls and nourish them in their old age.

Looking Around Us

Does Money Bring Happiness?

Money cannot really buy happiness, according to a new study from an American university. A team of psychologists tried to measure how people rated their actual experience. They asked people to record in a diary what they had done the previous day and to describe their feelings.

The team found richer people were no more happy than those who were poorer. Nor were the richer people in the study able to spend their time in more enjoyable activities. The researchers wrote in the journal *Science*: “The belief that high income is associated with good mood is widespread but mostly illusory”.

This should not surprise us. For one thing, those who earn more money tend to have greater responsibilities and so, as the researchers point out, they tend to worry more.

But, more importantly, we all have sinful hearts. And one way in which the sin of our hearts shows itself is a lack of contentment. People are rarely satisfied with what they have; they almost always want more. They want more money and they want more of the things that money can buy. However much more money people earn, and however many more things they buy with that money, they are rarely satisfied. They can always see others with more, and they are jealous.

As Augustine, a famous minister in North Africa long ago, once said, as if speaking to God: “Man is restless until he finds rest in Thee”. No one can be really satisfied until he listens to the Saviour’s call: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”. Yes, those who come to Christ – in other words, those who truly believe in Him – may experience great sadness, but they will always go to Christ again. They will trust in Him and, once more, they will find rest.

They believe God’s word. And through Paul He warns them not to be covetous, but: “Be content with such things as ye have”. And the reason is: “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”. However little they may have of the good things of this life, they ought to be contented because God has promised always to be near them.

If you have found Christ already, you have great reason to be thankful. You have found something far more precious than money can buy. But if you have not yet found Christ, seek Him now, and seek Him earnestly. We must all die, but only those who trust in Christ will have a happy eternity. Surely it is time to heed Christ’s call: “Come unto Me”. Soon it will be too late.

Thornless Roses

Honey though the bee prepares,
An envenomed sting he bears;
Piercing thorns a guard compose
Round the fragrant, blooming rose.

Where we think to find a sweet,
Oft a painful sting we meet:
When the rose invites our eye,
We forget the thorn is nigh.

Why are thus our hopes beguiled?
Why are all our pleasures spoiled?
Why do agony and woe
From our choicest comforts grow?

Sin has been the cause of all!
'Twas not thus before the fall:
What but pain and thorn and sting
From the root of sin can spring?

Now with every good we find
Vanity and grief entwined;
What we feel, or what we fear,
All our joys embitter here.

Yet, through the Redeemer's love,
These afflictions blessings prove;
He the wounding stings and thorns
Into healing medicines turns.

From the earth our hearts they wean;
Teach us on His arm to lean;
Urge us to a throne of grace,
Make us seek a resting place.

In the mansions of our King,
Pleasures are without a sting;
Thornless there the roses blow,
And the joys unmingled flow.

John Newton