

# The Young People's Magazine

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## An Enjoyable Day?

**W**hat is your idea of an enjoyable day? Any of you could probably make quite a number of suggestions; some would perhaps be sinful in various ways, but others might not be. Yet how many readers would think of the words of Psalm 84:10: "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." And how many would respond to the Psalmist by saying something like this: These words express my feelings too?

This Psalmist was, of course, an Old Testament believer. He used to go up to the tabernacle, or to the temple, to worship. As he was presumably not a priest, he would not be allowed to go into the holy place or the most holy place, the two rooms that made up the tabernacle, which was first put together in the wilderness, under Moses; there were the same two rooms in the temple, which replaced it in the time of Solomon. The Psalmist could only go into the outer court, the large rectangular area around the structure – only the priests could go inside the tabernacle or, later in Israel's history, the temple.

But why were the courts of God's house so attractive to the Psalmist? One reason was that God's house was the place where sacrifices were offered. He was a sinner; he was guilty before God; his sins deserved eternal punishment. But here he saw how he could be delivered from his guilt and escape the punishment his sins deserved. Every time someone offered an animal as a sacrifice, all who were watching could learn something about how sin may be forgiven. That person's sin was transferred to the animal – of course, the sin itself could not be; that was impossible. But his guilt – his liability to punishment – could be transferred to the animal, which became a substitute for him. The animal would die instead. The person bringing the sacrifice deserved to die, but the substitute sacrifice died in his place.

And as an Israelite stood in the courts of God's house, he could see the sacrifices which were being offered at the altar. He was being reminded how sinners like himself could have their sins forgiven and how God's anger – because of their sin – could be turned away. He was being reminded, in other words, how he could be reconciled to God. As he watched, he would again

and again trust God for the salvation of his soul and he would feel his heart drawn out in worship of God. And then he could say without hesitation that a day in God's courts was better than a thousand. Nothing could give him such delight as to see how the terrible evil of sin is put away, and then to feel himself drawn out in adoring praise of the God who provided such a wonderful and undeserved salvation.

What the Psalmist saw in God's house was all pointing to the coming of Christ a long time in the future, when He would come into this world to put away sin by His sufferings and death. The Psalmist knew perfectly well that he was a sinner and, as he stood in the courts of God's house, he would look to God to take away his own sins. And what a picture that is of the sinner believing on Christ as his substitute! It is the sinner who deserves to die, but Christ has died instead of sinners. God the Father laid on His Son the guilt of all who will ever believe on Him.

We hear about this in sermons in church, which is sometimes called God's house, because that is where we go to worship Him. People attending a service in church may even speak about it as the courts of God's house. There, perhaps more than anywhere else, they may see the wonderful salvation they could not possibly deserve set before them, as the preacher speaks of Christ and what He did for man's redemption. God has appointed preaching as the special means He uses to bring sinners to understand His Word and to believe in Jesus.

But do you welcome an opportunity to go to church and hear about Christ as the Saviour God has appointed for sinners like you? Could you possibly think of a day in God's courts as better than a thousand? Or would you prefer to be "in the tents of wickedness"? These were the places where wicked people lived and committed whatever sins they enjoyed. We should have the Psalmist's attitude to the sins which the ungodly are committing today; we should do all in our power to keep away from them. They include Sabbath-breaking, swearing, over-indulgence in alcohol, gambling and all the sins forbidden by the Seventh Commandment.

But our attitude to the tents of wickedness says something about what we are spiritually. Paul told the Romans: "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit". In other words, taking the second part of the verse first, those under the influence of the Spirit give themselves to what the Spirit produces, but those under the influence of their corrupt hearts give themselves to worldly things. Worldly people – those who are unconverted – much prefer to be in the tents of wickedness than in God's courts – although they may not be happy in every such tent; they may not want to engage in every form of sin.

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Adoniram Judson went as a missionary to Burma more than 180 years ago. After quite some time, a man was converted; he truly believed in Christ. After hearing the Sermon on the Mount read to him, he said, “These words take hold on my very heart; they make me tremble. Here God commands us to do in secret everything that is good, not to be seen of men. How unlike our religion this is! When Burmans make offerings at the pagodas, they make a great noise with drums and musical instruments, so that others might see how good they are. But this religion makes the mind fear God; it makes it, of its own accord, fear sin.” Here was a man who could see clearly that true religion affects the heart. It not only makes people avoid sin so that other people will think well of them; it makes them avoid sin because they do not *want* to sin.

In the same way, when people are influenced in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, they go to church, read the Bible and pray because they want to – not so that others will see them. Children and young people will do so, if they are converted, not only because their parents tell them to do so but because they want to. They want to learn what God has revealed in the Bible and they want to get good for their souls through these activities.

It is those who enjoy these things in this world that will be at home in heaven. But if you never enjoy listening to sermons, if you never want to read the Bible or to pray, you could not possibly enjoy heaven. There are no tents of wickedness there; there are no opportunities to sin, none of the worldly activities which attract the ungodly. Heaven is a place of continuous worship. If we are to enjoy heaven, we need a change of heart. And if we have a new heart, we will want to hear about God and His way of salvation through Jesus Christ. We will want to be in God’s house – in church.

What we need is to have real religion – true Christianity. We need a religion that has its root in our *hearts* and is not just a matter of outward observance. This is the kind of religion the Holy Spirit works in human hearts. If we have it, we will never lose it; it will even survive death. This is the kind of religion we need if we are going to reach heaven, the religion which involves a genuine trust in Jesus Christ.

Thomas Halyburton became a minister in Fife in 1700 and died a professor in St Andrews when he was just 37. It was obvious to everyone that he was a very godly man. When he was dying he said, “Here is a demonstration of the reality of religion: that I, a poor, weak, timorous man – as much afraid of death as any – am now enabled by the power of grace, composedly and with joy, to look death in the face”. After many enjoyable days spent worshipping God in this world, he passed into heaven, where he will worship God for ever, and he will be perfectly happy doing so.

## The Angel of the Covenant

### 3. Appearances to Isaac and Jacob

*Rev Angus Smith*

A theophany is an appearance of God in human nature – in Old Testament times. The last article looked at the accounts in Genesis of various appearances of the Son of God to Abraham as the Angel of the Lord.

**I**n Genesis 26 it is Isaac who is now prominent. We see him going as far as the border of the neighbouring Philistines because of famine. But the Angel, who is called the Lord, appeared to him. He forbade Isaac to go into Egypt, for Canaan was the promised land, and He repeated the covenant promises given to Abraham. He did so again, at night, when Isaac found himself striving over wells in Gerar. Like his father before him, Isaac built altars to the Lord and called upon His name.

In chapter 28 we now see Jacob fleeing from his brother Esau to go to Padanaram. The Lord appeared to him in a dream at the top of a ladder and spoke to him in the same covenant terms, so that Jacob called the place Bethel (the house of God), and the gate of heaven. Psalm 105 speaks of this covenant: “He hath remembered His covenant for ever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations. Which covenant He made with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant”. He vowed to give God a tenth of his substance if he came back safe and sound to his father’s house.

It was on Jacob’s return to Canaan 20 years afterwards that he next saw the Angel of the Lord in human form. Jacob was terrified of his brother, when he heard that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. In Genesis 32 and Hosea 12:4 we have the essential facts. Created angels met Jacob on his way – we presume in the form of men, just as he had seen angels years before at Bethel – probably to encourage him. Later at the River Jabbok, as he prayed to God, a man met him and wrestled with him all night. The wrestling was physical and spiritual. No man can wrestle all night, so the Angel of Jehovah, who was Jehovah the Second Person, was strengthening him physically as well as spiritually as they wrestled. When the Angel touched the joint of his thigh to displace it, one of the strongest wrestling muscles in his body was made useless. But Jacob would not desist, for faith held on to the promise and, like Paul, when he was weak then was he strong.

When daybreak came, the Lord asked Jacob to let Him go; He knew that Jacob had important business to transact on that day with Esau. At the same time He refused to reveal His name to Jacob, but in his soul Jacob already knew it. The Lord blessed Jacob, and Jacob called the spot Peniel, which

means *The face of God*. Jacob's name on that occasion was changed to *Israel*, which can be translated *Prince* or *Warrior* or *Prevailer*, with *God*. His previous name, Jacob, also had to do with wrestling, and was equally from God, as Jacob had prevailed over his brother in the womb and was born holding his heel. In a sense, Jacob had overcome the Lord who strengthened him and had also prevailed with man. The covenant promises are too strong to be broken and he pled them. As a result, the heart of a vengeful Esau was turned to affection for his brother when they met, and Jacob could say, "I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God". The favour and blessing of the One he had seen the previous night were there before him, and so he received a welcome from Esau.

This brings us to the end of the lives of the three Patriarchs who witnessed these theophanies. But God's normal way of communicating with them was by speaking to their souls, not by theophanies. The covenant blessings upon this family, the land of Canaan, and the building of altars of worship to the covenant God, all go together with theophanies. Yet the history of Joseph has no theophanies. Before Jacob died in Egypt, he blessed Joseph's sons and virtually adopted them as his own. He gave them the same privileges as his other sons; each would have his own tribe. Before he died, Jacob prayed, "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil bless the lads" (Genesis 48:16).

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## Four Little Words

This is the first story in a 96-page casebound book which will hopefully be published this month, DV. The book is to be called *Four Little Words*. Edited by Rev Alexander McPherson, it originally had the title, *Pages From the Past*, as it was made up of articles which in the past had appeared in this Magazine, of which Mr McPherson was at one time the editor. The book now has some extra material, taken from issues of *The Young People's Magazine* which Mr McPherson edited.

“Four little words did me more good when I was a boy, than almost anything else,” said a man the other day. “I cannot reckon up all the good they have done me; they were the first words which my mother taught me.”

“Indeed, what were the four little words?” I asked.

He answered me by telling me the following story:

“My father grafted a pear tree; it was a very choice graft, and he watched it with great care. The second year it blossomed, but it bore only one pear. They were said to be a very nice kind of pear, and my father was quite anxious to see if they came up to his expectations. This single pear, then, was an object of some concern to my father. He wanted it to become fully ripe, and he gave express directions to all the children on no account to touch it. The

graft was low, and easily reached by us. It grew nicely; 'I think the graft will meet my expectations,' said my father many times to my mother. 'I hope now there is some prospect of our having good pears.'

"Everybody who came to the garden he took to the graft, and everybody said, 'It will prove to be an excellent pear'.

"It began to look very beautiful; it was full and round; a rich, red glow was gradually dyeing its cheeks, and its grain was clear and healthy.

"Is it not almost ripe? I long for a bite,' I cried as I followed father one day down the alley to the pear tree.

"Wait patiently, my child; it will not be fully ripe for a week,' said my father.

"I thought I loved pears better than anything else! Often I used to stop and look longingly up to this one. 'Oh, how good it looks,' I used to think, smacking my lips; 'I wish it was all mine.'

"The early apples did not taste as good as usual; the currants were not as nice, and I thought nothing of the damsons in comparison with this pear. The longer I stopped alone under the pear tree, the greater my longing for it, until I was seized with the idea of getting it. 'Oh, I wish I had it!' was the selfish thought that gradually got uppermost in my mind.

"One night after we were in bed, my brothers fell asleep long before I did. I tossed about and could not get to sleep. I crept up and went to the window. It was a warm, still, summer night; there was no moon; no noise except the hum of numberless insects. My father and mother had gone away. I put my head out of the window and peeped into the garden. I traced the dark outlines of the trees. I glanced in the direction of the pear tree. The pear tree – then the pear! My mouth was parched; I was tempted.

"A few moments found me creeping down the back stairs, with neither shoes nor stockings nor trousers on. The slightest creaking frightened me. I stopped on every stair to listen. At last I felt my way to the garden door. It was fastened. It seemed to take me ages to unlock it, so fearful was I of making a noise, and the bolt grated. I got it open, went out, and latched it after me.

"It was good to get out into the cool night air. I ran down the walk. The patting of my feet made no noise on the moist earth. I stopped a moment and looked all round, then turned in the direction of the pear tree. Soon I was beneath its branches.

"Father will think the wind has knocked it off; but there was not a breath of air stirring. Father will think somebody has stolen it – some boys came in the night and robbed the garden – he'll never know. I trembled at the thought of what I was about to do.

“I leaned against the trunk of the tree and raised my hand to find it, and to snatch it. On tiptoe, with my hand uplifted, and my head turned upward, I saw a star looking down upon me through the leaves. ‘Thou God seest me!’ escaped from my lips.

“The star seemed like the eye of God spying me out under the pear tree. I was so frightened I did not know what to do.

“‘Thou God seest me!’ I could not help saying it over and over again. God seemed on every side. He was looking me through and through. I was afraid to look and hid my face. It seemed as if father and mother and all the boys and everybody in town would take me for a thief. It appeared as though all my conduct had been seen as by the light of day. It was some time before I dared to move, so vivid was the impression made upon my mind by the awful truth in these four words, ‘Thou God seest me’. I felt that He saw me. I knew He saw me.

“I hurried away from the pear tree; nothing on earth would at that moment have tempted me to touch the pear. With very different feelings I crept back to my bed again. I lay down beside my brother, feeling more like a condemned criminal than anything else. No one in the house had seen me; but it seemed as if everybody knew it and I should never dare meet my father’s face again. It was a long time before I went to sleep. I heard my parents come home, and I involuntarily hid my face under the sheet. But I could not hide myself from a sense of God’s presence. His eyes seemed everywhere, diving into the depths of my heart. That was the beginning of a train of influences which, God be praised, I never got over. If ever I was tempted to any secret sin, the words, ‘Thou God seest me’, stared me in the face, and I stood back restrained and awed.”

The man finished; his story interested me greatly. I think it will interest many children. I hope it will do more than interest them; I hope it may do them much good.

“Thou God seest me.” These four little words are from the Bible. Hagar uttered them. She fled in anger from her mistress Sarah, and went into the wilderness. An angel met her by a fountain of water. The angel directed her to return to her mistress and told her some things in her life which she thought nobody knew but herself. “Thou God seest me!” Hagar exclaimed. Then she knew it was the angel of God, for nobody but He could look into the most secret things.

Children, learn these four small words. Impress them upon your heart. Think of them when you lie down, when you get up, and when you go by the way. When you are alone or with your companions, both at home and abroad, remember, “Thou God seest me”.

## The Book of Ruth

### 85. Bethlehem Ephratah

*Rev K M Watkins*

Ruth 4:11b. "And do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem."

When Boaz and Ruth got married, the elders and people of Bethlehem prayed. They prayed for Ruth the bride, that she would be as fruitful as Rachel and Leah, the two wives of Jacob from whom came the tribes of Israel. Then they prayed for Boaz the bridegroom: "Do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem".

What did they want for Boaz? Two things: they wanted him to do worthily in Ephratah, and to be famous in Bethlehem. Ephratah and Bethlehem are just two names for the same town, as Genesis 35:19 makes clear: "And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem". However, to do worthily and to be famous are not the same, although they are closely connected in the sense that the one leads to the other.

"Do thou worthily in Ephratah". It was a large prayer, full of meaning, as the margin of the Authorised Version shows us. There the translators tell us that they could have rendered the prayer: "Get thee riches, or, power". Boaz was already "a mighty man of wealth" (2:1), but they wanted him to become yet more rich and powerful. That is unusual. Ordinarily people do not want wealthy men to be wealthier nor strong men to be stronger. But Boaz had been a good man as well as rich. He had been a righteous man as well as powerful.

The people of Bethlehem were confident that the richer Boaz became, the more prosperous the whole town would become. They were sure that if Boaz became more powerful, his increased influence would only be for the good of them all. Boaz would use his riches and power in a virtuous, or worthy way. He would continue to be morally upright, and therefore they wanted Boaz to prosper. It was like that centurion in the gospel; the Jews asked Jesus to heal his servant, saying that "he was worthy for whom He should do this" (Luke 7:4).

"And be famous in Bethlehem". The translators of the Bible help us to understand this part of the prayer also. "Proclaim thy name" is a more literal translation of the Hebrew. The inhabitants of Bethlehem wanted the name of Boaz to become greater and greater among them. They wanted his good reputation to grow. Unlike the name of the nearer kinsman whose name disappeared in Bethlehem, they wanted the name of Boaz to increase in fame and to last always.



There is a lesson here for us. The way to a good name is through a good life. Do worthily – that is the way for one’s name to be proclaimed. “The righteous man’s memorial doth everlasting prove” (Psalm 112:6, metrical version). It is the memory of the good man’s name that will last. “The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot” (Proverbs 10:7).

The prayer for Boaz has been answered, for his name and character are recorded in the pages of Scripture, in both Old and New Testaments. Wherever the Word of God comes, the name of Boaz is proclaimed. He is like the woman who poured the precious ointment on the Saviour’s head. Wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what that woman did “shall be spoken of for a memorial of her” (Mark 14:9).

In the context, Boaz was to do worthily and be famous through his marriage to Ruth, and through the family that he would have by her. This has come to pass in a most remarkable way. Firstly, there was born his son and heir, Obed (see verse 13). But that son was to be the grandfather of a king – and no less a king than David, the sweet psalmist of Israel and the man after God’s own heart (see verse 17). How the name of Boaz was going to prosper with a great-grandson like that! David, the great king of Israel, would come from Bethlehem.

Still greater fame and prosperity were in store for Boaz and Bethlehem through his children. A day was coming when it would be said, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). The city of David was Bethlehem, and the Saviour was the Lord Jesus. His birth fulfilled the prophecy: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). The greatest name of all would be proclaimed in Bethlehem, even the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus. This has made Bethlehem famous all over the world.

In the time of Boaz and Ruth, it was known that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah (see Genesis 49:10), but not that He would be born in the town of Bethlehem, nor that He would come from the family of Boaz. So the prayers of the people of Bethlehem for Boaz were going to be answered “exceeding abundantly above all” that they asked or thought (see Ephesians 3:20). In the line of generations that led to the Saviour of the world, we find that Boaz “begat Obed of Ruth” (Matthew 1:5). Boaz did worthily indeed and became very famous.

But what of the gospel Boaz Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ? How worthily He did in Ephratah! How famous He is in Bethlehem! That town had no room for Him, but He humbled Himself to be born among the

animals of a Bethlehem stable. The Son of Man, who had no place to lay His head, was laid in the animals' manger. How worthy He is! He who humbled Himself so greatly at Bethlehem Ephratah, how greatly He is to be exalted! His people see how worthily He did in humbling Himself to be born in so low a condition. And His name Immanuel – meaning, God with us – fills their souls with love and wonder. Yes, the Lord Jesus has done worthily in Ephratah. Yes, the Lord Jesus has proclaimed His name in Bethlehem. May He be praised for ever!

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## How Did it all Begin?

### 4. The Peppered Moth and Natural Selection

**H**ave you ever heard of the peppered moth? God has created many living things, some amazingly powerful, others wonderfully complex and intricate. The peppered moth is not particularly remarkable in any of these ways; it does not stand out among God's creatures; so possibly you have not heard of it. Yet many people who believe in evolution love the peppered moth because they think that it shows evolution in action. In many Biology text books you can see photos of peppered moths and a brief outline of an experiment carried out by Bernard Kettlewell in the 1950s. The peppered moth story can be summarised as follows.

There are two varieties of the moth: light and dark. In areas with a lot of industrial pollution, the lichen growing on the trees died, leaving soot-darkened tree trunks. This meant that the dark-coloured moths were better camouflaged and the light-coloured moths made easy prey for hungry birds. So, over time, the number of dark moths increased and the light moths decreased. However, when the environment was cleaned up and the lichen started growing again on the trees, the number of light-coloured moths began to rise again and the number of dark coloured moths became smaller.

Kettlewell felt that his observations of the moths were evidence of the idea that organisms can adapt to suit the environment they are in. He and his evolution-believing colleagues concluded that, if this process of adaptation continued for long enough, a new species could possibly evolve.

Although the methods used in the experiment have been severely criticised, we can agree with the first part of Kettlewell's conclusions. Living creatures can adapt to their environment. The type of organism most suited to the environment will live longer and have more offspring, passing their genes on to the next generation. This is the "survival of the fittest". The scientific term for it is *natural selection*.

Think of animals in the cold climate near the North Pole. Animals with thick hair will be more likely to survive than animals with short hair. Animals with white fur will also survive quite well as they will be camouflaged against the white landscape; they will be able to avoid attack by hiding, and will themselves be better able to catch other creatures. So the animals which will be the “fittest” in this environment will have thick, white hair. They are likely to have more offspring which will also have thick, white hair because the genes from the parents, coding for thick hair and white colouring, will be passed on to the offspring.

Natural selection was first outlined as a theory by Edward Blythe, a Christian scientist, a quarter of a century before Darwin put forward his ideas about the origin of species in 1859. But why should people who believe in evolution take such a deep interest in natural selection?

Evolutionists use the scientific fact of natural selection as a way of trying to explain how evolution might occur. As one Biology textbook puts it: “Natural selection, among other processes, contributes to the evolution of new species and . . . the great variety of living organisms on the Earth is the product of millions of years of evolution, involving natural selection”. They argue that, if these changes within populations of organisms are allowed to go on long enough, they will result in permanent changes. Therefore, they claim, evolution will have taken place as new species of organisms form. Some evolutionists go so far as to say that natural selection is actually evolution in action.

For simple organisms to evolve into more complex ones you would need new genetic information. The changing proportions of dark and light moths do not involve new genetic information, only changes in the prominence of one gene over another. Indeed, if natural selection goes on for a long time the result could be loss of genetic information. This will happen if the characteristics certain genes code for are eventually lost. For example, if the pollution continued, light coloured moths might have become extinct and so the genetic information for coding for light colour would be lost. In some cases this can lead to a new species being formed, but this species would be a sub-species of the original one as it would have less genetic information.

Some of the details of Kettlewell’s peppered moth research have been challenged. However, if we consider it in the best possible light, we can on this occasion agree with a biologist who believes in evolution, who conceded that it merely shows natural selection, but not “evolution in action”. In spite of this, the peppered moth is presented repeatedly in textbooks as evidence of evolution in action.

God created plants, animals, birds and all sea creatures “after their kind”

(Genesis 1). In His infinite wisdom He created them with enough genetic information to diversify and adapt to the different conditions they would find themselves in. He alone deserves the praise for creating and sustaining all things. Psalm 104 helps put everything in perspective for us:

“How manifold, Lord, are Thy works!  
In wisdom wonderful  
Thou every one of them hast made;  
earth's of Thy riches full.”

*S M Campbell*

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*For Junior Readers*

## What is Your Duty?

I am sure you have read about the Battle of Trafalgar. This famous sea battle took place 200 years ago last October and it received quite a lot of publicity in the newspapers. You may remember that it was fought between the British navy, under the famous Admiral Nelson, and a much larger fleet of French and Spanish warships.

On the eve of the battle, Nelson ordered his signal officer to hoist the well-known signal which bore his message to his men: “England expects that every man will do his duty”. They certainly fought bravely and the French fleet suffered many losses. Although Nelson was killed, not one of his ships was sunk or captured. It was a victory which established Britain's control of the seas for nearly 150 years.

“England expects that every man will do his duty.” But at the beginning of this New Year, you should ask yourself, what does *God* expect of you? He expects you to do your duty.

But what is your duty? Solomon sums it up in these words: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). First, fear God – have a holy respect for Him and for what He has to say. Truly “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”. This is worthwhile, spiritual wisdom. If you seek to fear God first, then keeping His commandments will follow – “the man that feareth the Lord . . . delighteth greatly in His commandments” (Psalm 112:1).

What has God commanded? God has given us many commands. But note these words: “This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another” (1 John 3:23). So the gospel is here set before you – you are to believe on Jesus as you are commanded. If by the help of God's Spirit you will first believe the gospel, then loving others

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is something that will follow, as that is set out in the Ten Commandments.

Will you not then seek at the beginning of 2006 to do the duty which God has commanded you? Then you will be blessed, like the godly man who said, “Quitting therefore the world with all its vanities, we betake ourselves to that which alone is free from vanity – the fear and service of God”.

*J van Kralingen*

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## Wisdom

**I**t was a hot summer afternoon. We were playing in the river when one of my cousins pointed and shouted: “There’s a snake in the water!” We all looked and saw it swimming swiftly on the surface of the water and it was soon out of sight. We were all very frightened and ran back to the farm house as fast as we could. My father then told us that snakes are frightened of noise and commotion, and they dash away because they feel they are in danger. We never returned to that part of the river where we had seen the snake, in case it would be there again.

In the Word of God we often find advice on avoiding the pleasures of this world. Worldly entertainments are painted in very attractive colours, but what do we gain by them? Can your soul benefit from the cinema, the theatre, discos or worldly company? Worldly pleasures look attractive and desirable on the surface, but they are like poisonous snakes, ready to bite those that are foolish enough to come near them.

I remember reading something that made a deep impression on me when I first became a Christian. It said that we are in this world to prepare our souls for eternity. What care we should take about the way we spend our short lives on this earth! We often read in the Bible about the shortness of our lives on earth. David says to God: “Behold, Thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth: and mine age is as nothing before Thee” (Psalm 39:5). Just look at your hand and measure its breadth; however large your hand may be, its breadth is still very small. So is the length of our lives. When we are young we may imagine that we have lots of time stretching out before us, but as we get older, we start to believe what the Bible tells us about the time we will spend on earth. So it is our wisdom to spend our time as those who will soon leave this world.

We learn from the Bible that snakes are wise animals: “Be ye therefore wise as serpents”, Jesus advised His disciples. When the snake sensed the presence of us children, it swam away as fast as it could. That was wise; it saw itself in danger when it heard the noisy children. The children too were

sensible and ran away to safety – in fact they never went back to that part of the river. Who would be so foolish as to risk the danger of being bitten by a snake? How wise you are if you avoid places that are full of poisonous snakes, ready to bite those who go there.

The Word of God also tells us about the importance of wisdom: “Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom . . .” (Proverbs 4:5-7). It is wisdom to get to know the Scriptures when you are young. To believe what they say about salvation is wisdom. To run to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation is the wisest thing one can do in life. He has paid the price for the sins of many, so that they may be forgiven. He delights to receive sinners.

You may be thinking that you do not enjoy worldly places and worldly company, and you may be thinking you shall be safe in life. But you need more. If you go to the Scriptures, you find that those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall perish just as other sinners. Unbelief is a subtle snake; it is a cause of thousands and thousands of souls going to hell. It bites people and it makes them think that tomorrow they will believe. But before they know it, their Creator calls them into eternity.

Have you considered what your situation would be if your Creator called you into eternity today? It is a fearful thing not to believe the Word of God. Do not be deceived by the snake Unbelief. It is a blessed thing to be in Christ and to enjoy the forgiveness of sins, His love, His guiding hand and His strength. Think seriously about these things and do not let another day dawn upon you before you turn to Christ. If you read Jeremiah 29:12,13, you will find these encouraging words: “Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.” *C Johnson*

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*For Younger Readers*

## “Love One Another”

**D**o you learn verses from the Bible? One girl was only 4; so she did not learn a long verse. The part of the verse she learned had just three words in it: “Love one another” (John 13:34).

She did not really know what it meant. So she did something sensible. She asked someone else about it, her older sister.

Her sister told her: “I must love you, and you must love me. I’m one, and you’re another.”

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Have you and brother, or a sister? If not, I am sure that you have a few friends you play with. When you are with them, you should remember these words. “Love one another”. They are Jesus’ words.

If you love one another, you will be kind to each other. You will try not to hurt each other. You should not hit or kick each other. If you love each other, you will not want your brother or sister or friend to be sore and cry.

But there is something else. If you love each other, you will not want to say horrible things to each other, because that makes people cry too.

Here is another verse you can try to learn, although it has several more words in it: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37).

To love God is even more important than to love each other.

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## To Avoid Regret

*J C Ryle*

Another article from this noted nineteenth-century English minister, slightly edited.

Young people need to begin serving God now, because of the sorrow it will save them. Sin is the mother of all sorrow, and no sort of sin appears to give anyone so much misery and pain as the sins of his youth. The foolish acts he did, the time he wasted, the mistakes he made, the bad company he kept, the harm he did himself in both body and soul, the chances of happiness he threw away, the possibilities of usefulness he neglected – all these are things that often disturb the conscience of an old man. They throw a gloom over him and fill the later days of his life with self-reproach and shame.

Some men could tell you of the untimely *loss of health* brought on by youthful sins. Disease racks their limbs with pain, and life is almost a weariness. Their muscular strength is so wasted that a grasshopper seems a burden. Their eye has become prematurely dim and their natural force abated. The sun of their health has gone down while it is yet day, and they mourn to see their flesh and body consumed. Believe me, this is a bitter cup to drink.

Others could give you sad accounts of the *results of idleness*. They threw away the golden opportunity for learning. They refused to get wisdom at the time when their minds were most able to receive it and their memories most ready to retain it. And now it is too late. They have no leisure to sit down

and learn. They no longer have the same power, even if they had the time. Lost time can never be redeemed. This too is a bitter cup to drink.

Others could tell you of serious *mistakes in judgement*, from which they suffer all their lives long. They wanted to have their own way. They would not take advice. They formed some relationship which has altogether ruined their happiness. They chose a profession for which they were entirely unsuited. And they see it all now. But their eyes are only open when the mistake cannot be reversed. This is also a bitter cup to drink!

Young people, I wish you may only know the comfort of a conscience which is *not* burdened with a long list of youthful sins. These are the wounds that pierce the deepest. These are the arrows that drink up the spirit. This is the iron that enters into the soul. Be merciful to yourselves. Seek the Lord early and you will be spared many a bitter tear.

This is the truth that Job seems to have felt. He says, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth" (Job 13:26). So also his friend Zophar says of the wicked: "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust" (Job 20:11). David also seems to have felt it. He says to the Lord, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions" (Psalm 25:7). Beza, the great Swiss Reformer, felt it so strongly that he mentioned it in his will as a special mercy that he had been called out from the world, by the grace of God, at the age of 16.

Go and ask believers now, and I think many of them will tell you much the same. They will most probably say, "O that I could live my young days over again!" "O that I had spent the beginning of my life better! O that I had not then laid the foundation of evil habits so strongly!"

I want to save you all this sorrow if I can. Hell itself is truth known too late. Be wise in time. What youth sows, old age must reap. Do not give the most precious season of your life to what will not comfort you in your latter end. Rather "sow to yourselves in righteousness"; "break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns" (Hosea 10:12, Jeremiah 4:3). Sin may go lightly from your hand now, or run smoothly off your tongue. But, depend on it, sin and you will meet again, however little you may like it. Old wounds will often give pain long after they are healed and only a scar remains; so you may find it with your sins. The footprints of animals have been found on the surface of rocks that were once wet sand, thousands of years after the animal that made them has perished; so it may be also with your sins.

Experience, says the proverb, keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other. I want you all to escape the misery of learning in that school. I want you to avoid the wretchedness that is sure to follow youthful sins.



## Scripture and Catechism Exercises

### John Tallach School Prize-Winners 2004-05

These are the 10 pupils in each year group who did best.

**Form 1:** Yurinov Mambau, Musawenkosi Ncube, Daisy Chikwanna, Prince Mathe, Noxolo Zulu, Amanda Sibanda, Juliah Gamana, Tendai Muronzi, Amanda Marumahoko, Nontobeko Moyo, Samukeliso Thambo, Netsai Chimedza, Preonelle Msebele, Nokuthaba Vuma, Richard Jekopo.

**Form 2:** Heather Moyo, Petronella Dube, Khanyile Malinga, Amanda Mavula, Daphne Machangara, Bukhosi Mathiya, Fiona Moyo, Michelle Ngwenya, Nomagugu Pilime, Nokuthula Mudamiri, Nomawethu Moyo, Mongiwethu Dungeni, Walter Nare, Witney Ndlovu, Theophilus Dube.

**Form 3:** Jacqueline Ndlovu, Buhlebenkosi Nyathi, Nyasha Kamudyariwa, Thandekile Pepa, Courage Mhlanga, Khanyisile Nxumalo, Sanelisiwe Ntini, Langelihle Thodlana, Arthur Ndebele, Wendy Sibanda, Lerato Motaung, Adelaide Mhlanga, Nyasha Chidangwara, Donald Mhlanga, Umpokuhle Ncube.

**Form 4:** Charlene Mhlanga, Thandekile Moyo, Anna Mpitipiti, Awakiwe Moyo, Fadzai Mashungu, Ntombikayise Nleya, Buhlebenkosi Mkwanzani, Francisca Chidzimba, Cynthia Mathe, Yemurai Chinyande, Tholakele Khumalo, Mbongeni Tshuma, Thobeka Mkwanzani, Chiedza Mlinga, Free Ncube.

### Names for Exercise 1 2005-06

**Senior Section:** *Bonar Bridge:* Rebecca Campbell. *Bracadale:* Neil Campbell. *Dingwall:* Kathryn Mackenzie, Neil MacLean. *Dunoon:* Esther Maley. *Farr:* Caitlin and Ruth MacQueen. *Glasgow:* Neil Freeke, Kenneth Gillies. *Inverness:* Mark Campbell, Lois H Fiddes, Jonathan Schouten. *Kyle:* Paul Whear. *London:* Rebecca Munns, Josie van Kralingen. *North Uist:* John MacDonald, Kerri Macinnes. *South Harris:* Stewart MacLean, Sarah Smith. *Stornoway:* Anne R Dickie. *Tomatin:* Lois V Cameron-Mackintosh.

**Intermediate Section:** *Aberdeen:* Rebecca Buchanan. *Barnoldswick:* Siphon Ncube. *Bonar Bridge:* Sandy Campbell. *Crowborough:* Heidi Woodhams. *Dingwall:* Beverly MacKenzie, Susannah MacKenzie, Sarah MacLean. *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm, Hugh Gillies, Donald MacLeod. *Inverness:* James E M Fraser, Natalie MacAskill, Catherine Schouten. *Kyle:* Daniel Whear. *London:* Elizabeth Munns, David Rowland, Alexander and Constance Turnbull, Jeremy and Justin van Kralingen. *North Tolsta:* Mark Mackenzie. *North Uist:* John Cameron, Christina Macdonald. *Oxon:* Lucy Cooper, Emily Sayers. *Scaynes Hill:* Abigail and Martha Main. *Stornoway:* Alasdair G Gillies. *Stratherrick:* David Fraser, John A Fraser. *Swordale:* Murdo S Macleod.

**Junior Section:** *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin, Robert Ross. *Bonar Bridge:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Crowborough:* Kelvin Woodhams. *Dingwall:* Alistair Mackenzie. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan, Isla and Jonathon Macdonald. *Farr:* Alasdair MacQueen. *Glasgow:* Fiona Beaton, Donna Chisholm, Catherine Freeke, Kate and Neil Gillies, Rachel Macleod, Peter Macpherson. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell, Anna Fraser, Thomas D Maton. *London:* Richard Hawke, Edward and William Munns, Rupert J Turnbull. *Ness:* Deborah Acton. *North Harris:* Donald R Macleod. *North Tolsta:* Sean Macleod. *North Uist:* John A Macdonald, Laura Macinnes. *Peasmarsch:* Alasdair Bailey. *Portree:* Rachel Mackinnon. *Salisbury:* Jill Buchanan. *Scaynes Hill:* Philip Main. *South Harris:* Catherine Macleod, Joshua Smith. *Stornoway:* Sarah K Gillies, Lauren Macdonald, Andrew MacQuarrie. *Uig:* Murdo G Mackay. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming.

**Upper Primary Section:** *Barnoldswick:* David Martin. *Dingwall:* Alasdair Maclean, Andrew MacLeod, Ruth MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan, Daniel MacDonald. *Farr:* Finlay and Muriel Cramp. *Gairloch:* Rachel Mackenzie, Mairi Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Ewen Beaton, Ian Gillies, Iona Gillies, Ruairidh Macleod, Callum MacPherson. *Haywards Heath:* Edwin Woodhams. *Inverness:* Peter Schouten. *London:* Andrew Hickman, Jeremy and Lucy Turnbull, Amy van Kralingen. *Luton:* Stephen Kingham. *North Harris:* Tormod Mackinnon. *North Tolsta:* Shona Harrison, Lucy MacLeod. *North Uist:* Iain Boyd, Margaret Cameron, Fraser Macdonald. *Longcot:* Ruth Cooper. *Stornoway:*

Leah Beaton, Finlay Murray. **Stratherrick:** Ewen Fraser. **Trowbridge:** Joanna Broome. **Ullapool:** Lewis Mackenzie. **Vatten:** Sabrina Annand.

**Lower Primary Section:** **Aberdeen:** Sarah Somerset. **Barnoldswick:** James and Rebecca Ross. **Croydon:** Marcus and Susanna Hickman. **Dingwall:** Jane Mackenzie, Laura and Sheena MacLean, Graham MacLeod. **Edinburgh:** Annabelle Macdonald. **Gairloch:** Andrew and Donald Mackenzie, Catherine Wyatt. **Glasgow:** Grant Beaton, Cameron Gillies, Rebecca and Sarah Macleod, Kenneth Macpherson, Rachel Smith. **Haywards Heath:** Joseph, Kate and Lucy Woodhams. **Inverness:** Jonathan Fiddes, John and Rebekah Maton. **Kyle:** Nathan and Sarah Whear. **Laide:** Nikki Maclellan. **London:** Sarah Hawke, Claudia, Edward, Miles and Oliver Martin, Andrew and Samuel Munns, Angus Pontin, Annabelle, Henry, Jemima, and Joseph Turnbull. **Longcot:** Samuel Cooper. **Ness:** Johan MacInnes. **North Tolsta:** Mairi Campbell, Murran Harrison, Isla Macdonald, Scott Macleod. **North Uist:** Eilidh Cameron, Angus Macinnes. **Perth:** Emma and Jonathan Norris, Calum Patterson. **South Harris:** Anna and Gerrit Smith. **Staffin:** Neil Angus Matheson, Carey Ross. **Stornoway:** Cirsty Gillies, Aimee and Cara Macleod, Eilidh Macleod, Ryan MacSween, Alasdair and Uilleam Murray. **Vatten:** Jayne-Anne and John Fleming.

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## Looking Around Us

### More Sabbath Shopping

Large shops in England and Wales have been agitating for longer opening times on Sabbaths; at present the law restricts them to six hours. A spokesman for the largest chain of stores has claimed that people do not have enough time to shop during the week. So, it seems, it must be made easier for them to do so on Sabbaths. And the Government minister in charge of such matters thinks it would be a sensible change. So it is, sadly, likely that the law will be changed before long.

No one seems to ask what God has to say on the matter. And He has not changed his mind. Indeed His law will never change; it directs us: "Remember Sabbath Day to keep it holy". Which means that no unnecessary work should be done, and that includes the area of buying and selling. The Sabbath is a day specially for our souls – as far as possible. And if people would take God's law to heart, they would find enough time during the week to do their shopping.

### 2006 Youth Conference

This year's conference will be held, God willing, in Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perthshire, from Tuesday, April 4, to Thursday, April 6. Further details are to appear in next month's magazine.