

The Young People's Magazine

***Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice***

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” Ecclesiastes 12:1



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Number 5

Can We Find out God?

“Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” These questions were put to Job by Zophar, one of his friends who came to comfort him in his great trouble. It was when all his children died and he lost all his property, and then he was struck with some terrible skin disease.

Clearly the answer must be, No; we cannot search out God completely. That is totally impossible because God is infinite. He is too great for any creature to search Him out fully. We are limited in every way; God is not limited in any way.

Even by just looking around us, looking at this wonderful world and even at ourselves, we should realise that there is a God (see Romans 1:19,20). The whole creation, especially with all that is known about it today, is telling us that the Being who made it is altogether wise and powerful. We should come to the same conclusion by thinking about our bodies, for we are “wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). Nothing came into existence by chance, by evolution. It was the living God who created all things, including human beings.

But what we can find out about God by looking at creation is very limited indeed. We cannot find God out completely; we cannot possibly know everything about Him. Yet we are to search for Him and we can learn something about Him – but only because He has revealed Himself. Especially He has revealed Himself in the Bible. And the Bible is reliable; what it tells us is true; there are no mistakes in it. In particular, there are no mistakes about God.

The Bible is true in what it says about itself: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). This verse tells us that God the Holy Spirit breathed out all that is in the Bible and that it is profitable in many ways. It gives us religious teaching. It tells us about God, “the high and lofty One”. It tells us about ourselves, that we are sinners and need to be saved from eternal punishment. It tells us about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became man to make it possible for sinners to be saved. And it tells us about the Holy Spirit, who applies that salvation.

The Bible reproves us; it tells us where we go wrong. It corrects us; it shows what we should have done. It gives us instruction in righteousness; it teaches us how we can live a righteous, godly life.

If we are to know anything about God, it is only because God Himself has told us about it in the Bible. He has told us all we need to know; in particular, He has told us what we need to know so that we may get safely through this world and reach heaven at last. We may have further questions about Him, but we need to ask ourselves: Is there an answer *in the Bible*? And if not, it is not something we need to know; God has not chosen to reveal the answer. We cannot search Him out completely.

We might ask, for instance, Why did God love some sinners and pass by others? But God has not chosen to tell us. Perhaps any answer would be altogether beyond what we could understand. But the fact is that we do not need to know. So we should be content without an answer to that question; we should remember that we cannot search out God. Our duty is to make use of what God *has* told us: for instance that we are sinners, that God has provided salvation through Christ, and that we must believe on Him so that we may be saved.

We should make the best possible use of what God *has* revealed. For instance, He has told us that He is altogether holy. There is no imperfection in Him, no stain of any sin. He tells us, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). We cannot search out that holiness, but this much should be obvious: our holiness cannot reach the standard God has set. So we must go to Him, asking Him to make us holy by giving us a new nature in the new birth. And we will then have to go on asking Him to make us more and more holy until we are ready for heaven.

John Duncan, later a remarkable preacher and thinker, was an atheist when he was studying for the ministry at university in Aberdeen. Under the influence of one of the professors, he realised that there is a God and he was thoroughly delighted to believe it, even although he was afraid that this God would condemn him to a lost eternity. But the fact that God exists satisfied his mind in an important way. Yet something vital was still missing. While he now knew something about God, Duncan did not know God personally. That came later.

It was John Duncan who said, "God meant man to know His mind". God revealed Himself in such a way, through Scripture, so that sinners might be able to "think God's thoughts after Him" – to quote Augustine, one of the earlier Christian writers. It is not that we can know all that is in God's mind; that would be impossible. Human beings, even the cleverest of them, have only very tiny minds, in comparison with God. But God has made known

enough about Himself and His purposes that we may learn what we really need to know, especially about the way of salvation. How wonderful that He has revealed: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

Although we cannot hope to search out God completely, He can search us out. He knows everything about us. Notice what David says: “O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off” (Psalm 139:1,2). How much we need to ask God to work according to His mercy and make us new creatures in Christ Jesus!

John Duncan did come to know God truly, through Jesus Christ. Many years later, in his last illness, he said, “Christ is God’s good gift to cursed sinners”. He saw the mercy of God; he could not search it out completely, but he had begun to search it and he found salvation in it for himself. A few days before he died, He spoke of the greatness of the salvation that God has provided, while conscious that his mind was too feeble to understand that greatness. We too will never fully grasp the greatness of God’s salvation, but we may grasp the fact that God does save cursed sinners. Let us seek earnestly to believe in Christ, through whom that salvation flows to sinners.

The Covenanters: What They Teach Us

5. Their Achievements

Rev Caleb Hembd

Another section of a paper given at a New Zealand Youth Conference. Last month’s section retold some of the stories about the Covenanters under persecution.

By 1688, it seemed that the cause of the Covenanters was lost. Thousands had been killed, banished, or were in broken health. Their last leader, James Renwick, had been executed that year. King James II, who became king after the death of his brother Charles in 1685, seemed on the brink of turning the kingdom back to Popery. But he underestimated the quiet dissatisfaction that had spread throughout his realm. Many people were repulsed by the brutal tyranny against the Covenanters, as well as the unjust treatment of many Christians in England and Ireland.

Across the sea in the Netherlands, Prince William observed these developments closely. He at last concluded that the kingdom was ready for a revolution and landed with his troops in 1688. King James II found, to his dismay, that his supporters were dwindling rapidly, and he fled to France.

After James II left the throne, King William III and his wife Mary became

the new rulers of Britain. The Church of Scotland became Presbyterian again. The government recognised that the Church had liberty to govern herself in spiritual matters – though this principle was challenged in later years. By God's grace, the Covenanters' determination to defend Christ's rights triumphed over the king's determination to be supreme.

The Covenanters did not simply help secure the spiritual liberty of the Church. They also helped secure civil liberties for people throughout Britain. By asserting the Church's right to govern itself in spiritual matters, they placed limits on civil power. On the other hand, when the Church becomes corrupt or weak, an authoritarian government rises up, and the people under it watch helplessly as their civil liberties are taken away.

Further, the Covenanters popularised the idea that no one is above the law. Before, the King was considered above the law. In fact, his will was the law. He claimed to rule by divine right; that is, not because the people had chosen him to be their ruler, but because God had set him over them. Therefore, the king argued, any attempt to remove him was an act of rebellion against God. But the Covenanters said that the king ruled by a contract (or covenant) between him and the people, and when he violated this contract, the people were free to remove and replace him. This principle was widely accepted when William was made king.

Finally, the Covenanters helped bring about a revolution that was largely peaceful. This is one reason why the events of 1688 have been termed, "The Glorious Revolution". It was "glorious" – not only because a Protestant king replaced a Roman Catholic king – but also because no wars were fought and no blood was shed. Political revolutions – such as the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution and the Chinese Revolution – usually involve much bloodshed. And revolutions often do not solve problems. One historian observes, "Revolution shatters the structures; but [often] the men who build the next set of structures haven't conquered the evil that lives in their own hearts". Only an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who destroys the dominion of sin in the heart, will produce principled Christians who will be a blessing to their nation.

"Let It Alone This Year Also"

She was just 17. But she was ill, very seriously ill. It looked as if she would die, and the doctors could do nothing to help her. Her mother had hoped against hope that her daughter would recover, but now it seemed impossible to hope for this any longer. She tried to submit to God's will, but

it was all very painful for her, as her daughter was not converted. She spent the day in prayer, asking God earnestly that He would work wonderfully for her daughter. And because she was committing everything to God’s gracious care, she was able to do all she had to do without becoming upset.

Darkness came and a fierce storm raged outside. At last everyone else went to bed. The mother made her daughter as comfortable as she could and sat down to watch by her bedside. Then the daughter broke the silence and asked her mother how she could die in her present, unconverted condition. She asked her mother to pray for her. She wanted, not only to be converted, but that she would live long enough to show clearly that she had been born again and adopted into the family of Christ. The mother went down on her knees at the bedside and prayed.

Afterwards the daughter fell into a heavy sleep, while her mother picked up the Bible and opened it. The first words she saw were: “Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” (Luke 13:7). These are the words of the owner of a vineyard, in Jesus’ parable, speaking to the man who was looking after it. The owner was speaking about a tree that had produced no fruit for three years. It was just a waste of space. The mother stopped reading so that she could think, and she cried.

“My child has lived 17 years”, she thought, “and received much religious instruction; her mind is well stored with religious truth. Few young people have committed such large portions of Scripture to memory. Well may the Lord demand fruit from such a tree. It is His due.”

She accepted that the Lord had come again and again to speak to her daughter by sickness and faithful warnings. He was seeking spiritual fruit and, so far, He had found none. She could see that God’s justice was saying, “Cut it down”. And she knew that this was a righteous demand.

But she knew too that she could still pray, as the man in the parable asked to be allowed to leave the tree where it was for one more year in the hope that it would bear fruit. He said, “Let it alone this year also”.

“O spare it this year”, she prayed, referring to her daughter and promising to try to do all she could to cultivate the ground of her daughter’s soul better. Then she realised, “I can do nothing; Christ must be the great Intercessor, for Him the Father heareth”. She knew that, if Christ would intercede, the work of salvation would indeed be done.

When daylight came, the mother was still praying. After breakfast, their minister called and asked how the daughter was. She just answered, “Spare it this year”.

But he understood what she meant and, on his knees before God, he went over the truths of the parable in prayer. He acknowledged the justice of

God's claims – His right to cut down the tree. But he also pleaded, "Spare it this year".

God heard his prayer, and the mother's. That very day, the daughter began to get better and, as the weeks went by, her recovery continued. Then, a few months afterwards, a revival of religion began in the place where she lived, and the daughter was one of those to whom God's Word was blessed, so that she believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. She lived for another 11 years and showed "by a holy, useful life" that she had been born again and had been adopted into the family of Christ.

God still hears prayer. But do not leave it to your mother and father to pray for you. Pray earnestly for your own soul. Seek the Lord *now*; you do not know how soon the Lord may say, "Cut it down".

Assurance of Being Saved

3. How Can the Believer Be Assured? (1)

Rev George Macdonald

Last month's section of this paper, given at an Australian Youth Conference, answered the question, Is assurance of personal salvation possible in this life?

4. **How can the believer be assured of personal salvation?** It is, after all, very important to the personal comfort of the believer to be assured. Such assurance not only contributes to their comfort, but encourages them in holy duties and in their public witness on the side of Christ. Surely, if believers wish to be assured today in their faith, they must accept the weight of Scripture truth. Precious promises are extended to believers in Christ, and if we have like precious faith they are made over to us.

Question 80 in *The Larger Catechism* asks: "Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the estate [that is, state] of grace, and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation?" The answer is: "Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavour to walk in all good conscience before Him, may . . . be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation". This takes place "without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God's promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made, and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God".

Assurance of salvation is grounded in a saving relationship to Christ. In the important book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan pictures the Christian losing his burden at a sight of the cross. He then receives an assurance of God's love. Bunyan writes: "Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and

said with a merry heart, ‘He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death’. Then he stood still a while, to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked, therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks.

“Now as he stood looking and weeping, behold, three Shining Ones came to him, and saluted him with, ‘Peace be to thee’. So the first said to him, ‘Thy sins be forgiven thee’, the second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment, the third also set a mark on his forehead, and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the celestial gate: so they went their way. Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing,

“Thus far did I come laden with my sin,
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,
Till I came hither. What a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack?
Blest cross! Blest sepulchre! Blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me!”

Beware then of the very great danger today of seeking assurance apart from Christ and His atonement on the cross! We cannot have true assurance of salvation any more than we can have true repentance unto life, apart from faith in Jesus Christ. There is a grave danger of presuming – of assuming that, because we *feel* assured, we have assurance of salvation. Our assurance of salvation must be grounded in a saving union to Jesus Christ, who is freely offered to us in the gospel. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Further, we must exercise faith in the divine Saviour presented to us in Scripture and not in a saviour called Jesus who is not the Jesus of the Bible. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ says most solemnly: “Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.”

Assurance of salvation is the work of God’s Spirit. Assurance is not self-confidence, though we hear much of that in our day! It is not something kindled by our own efforts or maintained by our own good works. Rather it

is the work of God's Spirit. God is the author of salvation and He is the One who assures of it. As we have noted, the promises of His Word form a strong foundation for assurance of personal salvation. It is the Holy Spirit who blesses that Word to the soul. We read, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). He alone can give a well-grounded assurance of personal salvation, for it is He who reveals Christ and the benefits of His redemption to the soul.

Those who were filled with the Holy Spirit in the time of the Apostles exhibited strong assurance of faith and salvation. They rejoiced in Christ their Saviour. The Apostle Paul had the Spirit of God dwelling in Him and he was thus strengthened by the Spirit to endure much affliction for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

He could write to Timothy: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing". Far from being overwhelmed with grief and fear, Paul, like Abraham before him, was "strong in faith, giving glory to God".

A Famous Thinker and an Old Woman

David Hume was born in Edinburgh in 1711 and many people thought a lot of him as a thinker. He was well educated and is still said to be "generally regarded as one of the most important philosophers to write in English". But he did not believe the Bible.

One day Hume was walking along a road not far from where he lived. Outside a little cottage by the roadside, a poor old woman was sitting by her door. She had worked hard all her life, but after all her hard work, she was still poor.

As Hume walked along, the woman was busy knitting. Unlike him, she had very little education. Yet she knew how to read, and there she was, reading as she knitted, and it was probably almost the only book she ever read. But she believed that this book, the Bible, was true, and that she could depend on everything it said. And she trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of her soul – for she found in that precious book all she needed to know about salvation for sinners like herself.

The woman did not know Hume well, but she had heard from others what kind of man he was, especially how he rejected the Bible. He noticed what she

was doing and he stopped and spoke to her. They then had a conversation which went something like this:

“You are reading the Bible?” he asked. She agreed.

“And you believe what you read?”

“Yes, I do believe what I read.” And she looked sadly and seriously into Hume’s face.

He noticed that she looked sad and said to her rather teasingly, “I could never understand how it is that you Christians, who believe in the Bible, always seem so miserable. You tell us that the book is full of comfort, but you don’t show it.”

“Ah,” she replied, “that is easily explained. You never see us except when we can see you; and the very sight of you and such as you, who are living in unbelief and under the curse of sin, is enough to make any Christian look sad.”

The philosopher walked on. Did he wonder, even for a moment, if the old woman was right and he was wrong? No one can now tell, but there is no indication that he ever changed his mind about the Bible.

Who would you wish to be like? The famous philosopher, whom lots of people admired, both in his lifetime and since, but who rejected the Bible and its teachings, and salvation through Jesus Christ? Or the old woman who was so poor and had to work so very hard, but who found the way of salvation in the Bible and walked in that way, looking unto Jesus – and so she went straight to heaven when she left this world?

For Younger Readers

Johnny and His Wheelbarrow

It was Johnny’s birthday. He was now six. His parents gave him a little wheelbarrow as a present. “Now I can wheel Mother’s things home from market,” he said, “and I can help Father, and do ever so many things.”

For two days he often asked, “Mother, what can I wheel for you?”

But she had nothing to be wheeled, and so she said, “Thank you, Johnny; later I shall have something for you to do”. Johnny wished it was now, and not later.

About four days afterwards, Johnny took his barrow and went to play with some other boys down by the frog pond. And what do you think they were wheeling? Four mud turtles which one of the boys

found in the swamp. I do not know how much pleasure it gave the turtles, for they could not talk about it, but the boys had a lot of fun.

After a little while, Johnny's mother called him. He heard her call him the first time, and the second, but he was too busy to pay attention to it.

Then his sister came to find him and told him: "Johnny, Mother wants you to go down the street and bring home some fish".

"Don't want to," he answered.

"Yes, but mother wants you to," said his sister.

"I'm taking my turtles for a ride, and I can't," cried Johnny. "I don't want to."

"Come," called his sister.

"In a minute," Johnny screamed.

How long do you think that minute was? Nearly half an hour, and it might have been much longer, but he fell into the mud. Over he went, wheelbarrow and all.

He picked himself up and looked at his dirty clothes. *Now* he thought of his mother. He could run to her fast enough, now that he badly needed her help. But he could not go when she needed his help. The selfish little boy!

He knew he had done wrong and felt uncomfortable about it. He left the other boys to fetch his barrow. He came into the kitchen, almost ready to cry, partly because of the mud, but mostly for fear of what his mother would say. She heard him and turned round.

The mother took her boy, washed him and gave him clean clothes. She did not talk much, but she was very kind. Johnny felt her kindness, and more and more he felt his own disobedience.

"Mother," he said at last, "I am going to kill my turtles."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because they would not let me go down the street for you."

"Did the poor turtles ask you not to pay attention to Mother?"

"Not in so many words," Johnny answered slowly; "but they seemed to say, Stay, stay a minute."

"And do you think it was the poor little turtles that said that?" his mother asked seriously.

Johnny hung down his head, as well he might, trying to throw the

blame of his disobedience on the turtles, not where it properly belonged, on his own naughty will. Adam and Eve did just that when they did not remember God in the Garden of Eden. Eve said it was the serpent who made her do wrong. You see, doing wrong is often cowardly – when you try to make excuses and throw the blame on somebody else. Is it not mean?

“Do you really think,” asked Johnny’s mother again, “that the poor little turtles are to blame for you not coming when Mother called you? Do *they* deserve to be punished?”

“No,” cried Johnny, finding the way she looked at him hard to take; “it was only I, naughty I. It was I that said, Stay, stay. And, Mother, God punished me; and you made me feel bad; you were so kind.” And tears streamed down Johnny’s cheeks. “Do let me go down the street now for you. Mother, do.”

But his mother no longer needed the little message he grudged to do for her. Someone else had brought the fish to her. Johnny pleaded to be sent to do something else. But she had nothing for him to do just then. And for all that day, and for some days afterwards, a sorrowful shadow rested on Johnny’s heart, for that lost chance of helping his mother.

Adapted from The Christian Treasury

Looking Around Us

Prince Philip’s Death

On 9 April 2021 Prince Philip died, at the great age of 99. Every death is sad and it is only right that there should be a huge outpouring of sympathy for the Queen, as has taken place. It is no doubt particularly sad for Her Majesty, as she and the Prince were married for the long period of 73 years.

We should remember that, however long we may be spared in this world, our life must come to an end. As sinners, we must die. And we should ask ourselves, particularly when we hear of someone’s death: If I was to die today, would I go to heaven? We should ask, again and again: Am I ready to die? Do I trust in Christ alone for salvation, not on anything I may do in the hope of making myself acceptable to God? Are there holy desires in my heart going out to God, however imperfect they are? Have I good reason to believe that the Holy Spirit has worked in my soul to make me a new creature?

On 20 November 1997 Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip celebrated their Golden Wedding, the fiftieth anniversary of their marriage. Speaking at an event to mark the occasion, the Queen said of her husband: "He has, quite simply, been my strength and stay all these years". That is just what a husband should be for his wife. He should support her in all her responsibilities.

But David could say, "The Lord was my *stay*", and, "The Lord is . . . my *strength*" (Psalm 18:18,1). He meant that God was the One on whom he was leaning for support and the One who had given him strength. Certainly the Queen has more need than ever to look to the Lord for strength and support, now that she has lost her husband. And we would wish that she would indeed do so, especially for the needs of her soul. What a blessing it would be for the United Kingdom and for the whole of the Commonwealth if she was to show a godly example to her subjects!

A Church Reborn?

A writer in *The Herald* has pointed out the steep decline in the number of members in the Church of Scotland over the past 65 years. She herself was raised in the Church "despite having no real belief in God". Yet she quotes a Church of Scotland minister, Rev Martin Fair, who believes that "the Church can be reborn so long as it becomes a servant of its communities".

Examples are given of such service to communities: providing meals for people in need of food and company, and opening churches "at 3 am on Saturdays for those spilling out" of entertainment venues "to spill into". No doubt the first of these suggestions would be welcomed by those who need food, but it is hardly the first priority for a church seeking to serve God. But one cannot imagine many wishing to spill into a church building at 3 am.

What then should be the Church's first priority? Jesus told His disciples, the core of His Church at that time, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). These disciples were to proclaim to people everywhere that God had sent His Son into the world to save sinners. These men were ambassadors from Christ; their duty it was to persuade sinners to flee from the wrath to come and to lay hold of eternal life. Christ had died so that He might give this life to all who would believe on Him.

The Church today must still focus on preaching – on preaching these vital truths – if it is to be faithful to its Master. Nothing else can be of *permanent* value. Nothing else can prepare a sinner for eternity. Whatever may help people in some outward way, the real reason why God established the Church was that sinners would get good for their souls and that He might be glorified – not least through the godly lives of believers. Apart from preaching the gospel, the Church must continue to decline.

For Junior Readers

Seeking Early

Have you ever noticed the titles at the beginning of some of the Psalms in your Bible? They sometimes tell who wrote the Psalm and sometimes also something about when it was written. If you look up Psalm 63, it says, “A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah”.

So you know that it was David who wrote this Psalm; also that it was at a time in his life when he was escaping or hiding from those who were seeking to kill him. He was not able to worship God with His people at God’s tabernacle, and this Psalm shows his longing for public worship. David did not give up singing because he was in the wilderness, but penned this Psalm to express his desires after his God.

In the very first verse, David states his faith in God and says then what he wants to do and what he means to do: “*Early will I seek Thee*”.

Early. Think how you can apply that to yourself, and resolve to do so, saying to God: “*Early will I seek Thee*”.

Surely you should be seeking God *early in life*. That is now, at the age you are now! What did the wise man say? “Remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”

Life only gets busier – more duties, more responsibilities, more distractions. So it is best to seek God early in life. Did the Saviour not say, “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness”? So that is what the Bible tells you – to seek God early, to seek Him now and to seek Him first. That should be your priority! And the Lord gives you a promise to encourage you: “Those that seek me early *shall find Me*” (Proverbs 8:17).

Then, should you not seek God *early each day*? Each morning before you get involved in other things, should you not read God’s Word and pray for mercy, for His help, and for His blessing on your day? What did David say in Psalm 5?

“Lord, Thou shalt *early* hear my voice: I *early* will direct
My prayer to Thee; and, looking up, an answer will expect.”

Clearly David felt his need of calling on God early every day, and should you not follow his example? And be encouraged by the assurance you find in Psalm 145: “God’s near to all that call on Him, in truth that on Him call”.

Also in every situation in life when you feel the need of direction, should you not seek God *early*? When you are making new plans and new friendships, or thinking about new jobs, should you not take these situations *early* to God in prayer? “In *all* thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths,” you are told in Proverbs.

What did Nehemiah do when he heard the sad news about the state of Jerusalem? "I prayed before the God of heaven". And what did he do when the king asked why he was sad and what he wanted? "So I prayed to the God of heaven". The Lord has also given you a promise for this: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

Will you not then seek God *early* in life, *early* every day and *early* in every situation?

J van Kralingen

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2020-21

Exercise 3

All answers from *overseas* should be sent to *Miss Naomi Clemence*, 60 Dougalston Gardens South, Milngavie, Glasgow, G62 6HT. The correctors should have your answers before the end of May. These exercises are based on 2 Chronicles 18 to Job 26, and Matthew 12 to Mark 16.

Senior Section (15 years old and over)

UK answers to *Mrs J Hicklin*, 22 Lasswade Road, Eskbank, EH22 3EF.

Old Testament

1. Read Esther 2. What do we read in this chapter that suggests that:
 - (a) Mordecai was a loving guardian of Esther; (2)
 - (b) Esther loved and respected Mordecai; (2)
 - (c) Mordecai was an important man; (1)
 - (d) Mordecai was an honest and faithful man; (2)
2. Read Esther 3.
 - (a) What did Mordecai refuse to do that angered Haman? (1)
 - (b) What disproportionate revenge did Haman seek to take? (1)
3. Read Esther 4.
 - (a) How did Mordecai show his grief at the news? (3)
 - (b) What did he ask Esther to do, and why was this difficult? (2)
 - (c) What reasons did Mordecai give to persuade Esther to take this course of action? (3)
 - (d) What did Esther ask Mordecai to do for her? (2)
4. Read Esther 5.
 - (a) What reception did Esther get when she went in to the king? (3)
 - (b) What did Haman boast about to his friends and family when he returned from the banquet? (4)
 - (c) Why was he still unhappy? (1)
 - (d) Read Job 20:1-7. Find and write out a verse that describes the story of Haman very well. (2)

New Testament

Read Matthew 18.

1. What question did the disciples ask at the beginning of the chapter? (1)
2. Why was this not a good question to ask? (1)
3. In what way did they have to become like children in order to enter the kingdom of heaven at all? (1)
4. Give three reasons, in the chapter, that Jesus gives which show the seriousness of the sin of despising or offending a weak or young believer? (3)
5. What do you think Jesus means in verses 7-9 when he tells His disciples to cut off their hand or foot, or pluck out their eye, if it offended them (that is, caused them to stumble into sin)? (2)
6. What question did Peter ask in verse 21? (1)
7. How did Jesus respond and what do you think He meant? (2)

8. Summarise the parable that Jesus tells in verses 23-35. (5)
9. What is the main lesson we should learn from this parable? (2)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 98 in the Shorter Catechism:
What is prayer? (3)

Intermediate Section (13 and 14 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs E Couper, 17 Duncan Street, Thurso, Caithness, KW14 7HU.*

Old Testament

1. Read Nehemiah 1.
 - (a) Where did Nehemiah work? (1)
 - (b) What was his occupation? (1)
 - (c) What made Nehemiah sit down and weep? (3)
 - (d) What did he also do when he heard the sad news? (3)
2. Read Nehemiah 2.
 - (a) Where did he ask the King to send him, and why? (2)
 - (b) What practical help did he request from Asaph? (2)
 - (c) How did Sanballat and Tobiah react to Nehemiah's plans? (3)
 - (d) How many times does Nehemiah refer to God as "my God"? (2)
 - (e) Give any one lesson you can learn from Nehemiah? (2)
3. Read Esther 1:10-17.
 - (a) Why was King Ahasuerus angry with Queen Vashti? (2)
 - (b) Why did he want to show Queen Vashti to the people and the princes? (1)
 - (c) Write out the verse from Proverbs 31 which begins with: "Favour is deceitful . . .". (2)

New Testament

1. The following quotations are from Matthew 14:22-36
 - (a) "Be of good cheer . . ." (b) "O thou of little faith . . ." (c) "Of a truth . . .".

For each of these three: (1) Complete the quotation. (2) Who spoke these words?
(3) To whom were they spoken? (4) Why were they spoken? (12)
2. Read Mark 1:34-45.
 - (a) What did the leper say to Jesus? (2)
 - (b) What did Jesus do and say to the leper? (3)
 - (c) What was the amazing result? (2)
3. Read Mark 2:24-28 and Mark 3:1-6.
 - (a) On which day did Jesus heal the man with a withered hand? (1)
 - (b) Which group of people were ready to find fault with Jesus? (1)
 - (c) Give the reason why what Jesus did was lawful. (2)
4. Read Mark 8:1-9.
 - (a) In what way did Jesus show concern for the multitude? (2)
 - (b) Why did He not want them to go away hungry? (2)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 42 in the Shorter Catechism:
What is the sum of the Ten Commandments? (3)

Junior Section (11 and 12 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Logan, 188 Willowbrae Road, Edinburgh EH8 7QH.*

Old Testament

1. Read about Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 26 to 29
 - (a) Which of them became a leper because he had sinned? (end of chapter 26) (1)
 - (b) Why did this happen to him? (1)
 - (c) Why was it wrong for him to do what he did? (1)

- (d) Which king sacrificed to the gods of Damascus? (end of chapter 28) (1)
- (e) Which king ordered the temple to be cleansed? (middle of chapter 29) (1)
- (f) Where did the Levites put the uncleanness after it was taken from the temple? (1)
- (g) Which king had a mother called Jerushah? (chapter 27) (1)
- (h) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Hosea were prophets. Which two prophesied during the reigns of these four kings? (Look up chapter 1, verse 1 of each book to find out.) (2)
2. Read the book of Esther 1-7.
- (a) Why was king Ahasuerus angry with Queen Vashti? (middle of chapter 1) (1)
- (b) Who replaced her as queen? (chapter 2) (1)
- (c) What relation was Mordecai to the new queen? (beginning of chapter 2) (1)
- (d) Why was Haman angry with Mordecai? (beginning of chapter 3) (1)
- (e) What caused Mordecai to become extremely sad? (chapter 3:8 – chapter 4:1) (1)
- (f) What eventually happened to Haman? (chapter 7) (1)

New Testament

1. Read the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-30.
- (a) When did the enemy sow the tares? (1)
- (b) Why were the servants not allowed to gather up the tares? (1)
- (c) When would the wheat be separated from the tares? (1)
- Later in the chapter, we read the explanation of the parable.
- (d) Who is the enemy? (1)
- (e) Who are the tares? (1)
- (f) Who are referred to as the wheat, the good seed? (1)
- (g) What is the field? (1)
- (h) What is the harvest? (1)
- (i) Who are the reapers? (1)
- (j) What is to happen to the tares and to the wheat at the end of this world? (2)
2. In Mark, chapters 1,2,3 and 5, we read about Jesus' miracles of healing on these people:
- The man with the unclean spirit Mark 1:23-26
- Simon's mother-in-law Mark 1:30-31
- The man who was sick of the palsy Mark 2:3-12
- The man with the withered hand Mark 3:1-5
- Jairus' daughter Mark 5:40-43.

Complete the table below, putting each miracle under the correct heading.

Healed by the power of His word only	Healed by the power of His touch only	Healed by the power of both His word and touch

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write down the answer to Question 44 in the Shorter Catechism:

What doth the preface to the ten commandments teach us? (2)

Upper Primary Section (9 and 10 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Schouten, 58 Fairfield Road, Inverness, IV3 5QW.*

Old Testament

All questions are from the Book of Esther.

1. Chapter 1 is about the feast of King Ahasuerus. Read verses 10-12.

What was Queen Vashti commanded to do and why was the King very angry? (2)

2. Chapter 2 is about a new Queen. Read verses 5-7 and verse 17.

What was her name? What was Mordecai's religion? (2)

3. Chapter 3 is about enemies. Read verses 1-6.

Why did Haman hate Mordecai? Whom did he want to destroy? (2)

4. Chapter 4 speaks of "for such a time as this". Read verses 13-17.

Write in your own words Esther's answer to Mordecai. (2)

5. Chapter 5 is about an invitation. Read verses 1-5.

Who did Esther invite to her banquet? (1)

6. Chapter 6 tells about a sleepless night. Read verses 1-3 and 10-12.

Who had plotted against the King? How was Mordecai rewarded? (2)

7. Chapter 7 is about the enemy destroyed. Read verses 7-10.

What happened to wicked Haman? (1)

8. Chapter 8 tells about the salvation of the Jews. Read verses 10-14.

On which day were the Jews allowed to fight against their attackers? (1)

9. Chapter 9 tells about days to remember. Read verses 20-22 and 26-28.

What special name was given to these days? What was being remembered? (2)

10. Chapter 10 gives the ending. Read verse 3.

How do we know that Mordecai was now a very important man? (1)

New Testament

1. In Matthew we read of two different times when Christ fed the multitudes. Read the verses and fill in the table.

	Matthew 14:15-21	Matthew 15:32-39
How many people were fed?		
What did Jesus use to feed them?		
How many baskets of food were left over?		

(6)

2. These questions are all about children. Read the verses and answer the questions.

(a) Matthew 14:6-11. Whose daughter asked for the head of John the Baptist?

(b) Matthew 15:21-28. What was wrong with the daughter of the woman of "great" faith?

(c) Matthew 19:13-15. What did Jesus say to His disciples before laying His hands on the children?

- (d) Mark 5:22,23 and 38-43. What age was the girl in this miracle?
 (e) Mark 9:21-27. What did the father of the child in this miracle cry out to Jesus? (5)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write down the answer to Question 63 in the Shorter Catechism:
 Which is the Fifth Commandment? (3)

Lower Primary Section (8 years old and under)

UK answers to *Mrs R J Dickie, 11 Churchill Drive, Stornoway, Lewis, HS1 2NP.*

Old Testament

Nehemiah was sad to hear of the terrible trouble in Jerusalem.

1. What had happened to the wall? (Nehemiah 1:3)
2. What had happened to the gates? (Nehemiah 1:3)
3. What did Nehemiah do first, when the king asked him what was his request? (Nehemiah 2:4)
4. What did Nehemiah want to do for the city? (last part of Nehemiah 2:5)
5. Did the king send him? (Nehemiah 2:6)
6. The king agreed to send letters to those who could help him with the work. Did Nehemiah see how good God was in this? (Nehemiah 2:8)
7. We read about some men in verse 10. Were they friends or enemies to the work? (Nehemiah 2:10)
8. Nehemiah knew that God would help. (Fill in the words.) The G____ of h____, he will p____ us. (Nehemiah 2:20)

New Testament

Jesus told the disciples to go in a ship to the other side of the sea.

1. Why did Jesus go up into a mountain alone? (Matthew 14:23)
2. Were the disciples having an easy journey? (Matthew 14:24)
3. How did Jesus go to them that night in the storm? (Matthew 14:25)
4. What did Jesus say to them when they were afraid? (Fill in the words)
 Be of g____ c____; it is I; be not a____. (Matthew 14:27)
5. Who wanted to come to Jesus on the water? (Matthew 14:28)
6. Did he walk on the water? (Matthew 14:29)
7. He began to sink. What were the three words he cried to Jesus?
 (Matthew 14:30)
8. Did Jesus catch him? (Matthew 14:31)
9. They went into the ship and the wind stopped. Those in the ship worshipped Jesus. They said, Of a truth thou art the S____ of G____.
 (Matthew 14:33)

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