

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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Volume 87

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A Young Person's Way Through Life

The Bible asks the question: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? (Psalm 119:9). The question amounts to this: How shall a young man – or a young woman, or a boy or a girl – take the right way through life, the way that leads to heaven? And this is the answer the Psalmist gives: "By taking heed thereto according to Thy word". He must pay attention to his way through this world *in the light of God's Word*, the Bible.

But what will the Bible tell young people? First, it will tell them about itself, that it is all true. So this Psalmist sings, "Thy word is true from the beginning" (Psalm 119:160). It is true; it is reliable; and it is relevant. Young people cannot afford to neglect it. It is a perfect guide to show them the safe way through life, and on into eternity. It has never failed anyone who has taken proper heed to it. Let us now notice some more of the true, reliable teachings from the Bible that are so relevant to young people in particular.

1. *God created* all things, including human beings. The universe and everything in it did not come into existence by some series of chance events over a very long period of time. However influential the theory of evolution is today, it is not true. It is God who created all things. And that is highly relevant to young people because they, in particular, must realise that God, who created them, has authority over them. They, in common with everyone else, are under obligation to keep God's commandments.

Many people do not want to keep these commandments; they find it very attractive to believe that there is no God, that there is no Creator. To think that the world, and everything in it, came into existence by chance is truly unbelievable; living creatures especially are far too complicated. Even the fact that the earth is at the right distance from the sun, so that it is neither too hot or too cold for life, points to the fact that a Person of great wisdom designed the universe, a Person with the power to put His plan into effect.

2. There is *something very seriously wrong* with people. The Bible tells us that the man and woman whom God created fell into sin. They rebelled against Him and, because Adam represented his descendants before God, they fell when he fell. So we are all born as sinners; sin is natural to us.

God tells us to love Him “with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind” (Luke 10:27). Even if we do love Him, we do not love Him with our whole heart or soul or strength or mind. So, to the extent that we come short of perfection, we are sinning, and sin must be punished. The Bible speaks to us clearly; it does not deceive us. Sin is serious; sin is doing wrong against God. Young people ought to take heed to the fact that they sin against God and that they need to cleanse their way. They need to be put right; they need to be made perfectly holy.

3. It is possible for sinners *to be put right*. That is why Christ Jesus came into the world – “to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). But if young people, or anyone else, try to cleanse their way by focusing on keeping the Ten Commandments, for instance, they are bound to fail. We sinners just do not have the power to keep these commandments. We need God to change us.

We should feel the obligation that lies on us to keep God's commands, and our failure to keep them perfectly should teach us that we need a greater power than our own to make us able to do so. If we could rescue ourselves from our fallen, sinful condition, Christ would never have come to this world. The fact is that we cannot rescue ourselves.

But what a glorious provision it was for sinners that the Son of God came into the world! This is especially so as He had to suffer and die in their place, to bear their punishment. Because He suffered the punishment that sinners deserve, their sins can be forgiven and their guilt washed away; they can be so changed that they will live pure and holy lives – they will begin to do what is right, according to what the Word of God teaches.

Of course, it is not only young people who need to learn from the Bible; everyone needs it. But we may listen to W S Plumer, an American minister, as he speaks about the verse this article begins with. The Scriptures, he says, “give proper directions, warnings and encouragements to young men”.

He goes on: because they are born in sin, “their way is already defiled”. And they lack experience; “they are self-confident, rash” and they do not consider things as they should. Their knowledge of themselves is very imperfect. “Till taught from heaven, man is [without] wisdom, his will is stubborn,” and he has no patience for God restraining him by His commandments. So God's Word is the only means “by which we can protect ourselves against the corruption of our nature”.

Plumer gives several reasons why Scripture is excellent for young people: (1.) “It is plain”. (2.) “It is easily remembered.” (3.) “It contains perfect rules, which need no amendment.” (4.) “It gives good examples. It points to Joseph, Samuel, David, Solomon” and Daniel and his friends in Babylon. It gives us “one perfect example”, Jesus Christ. (5.) “It holds up bad examples as

warnings” – Absalom, for instance. (6.) “It presents the most powerful motives, drawn from heaven, earth and hell.” (7.) “It encourages us to pray with hope for the influences of the Spirit.”

One Sabbath morning, a group of careless, thoughtless people were passing a church in the American city of Philadelphia. One of them suggested going into the church: “Let us go and hear what this man has to say, that everybody is running after”. The minister’s name was Bedell; he had clearly become very popular.

Another of the group, a young man, showed that he fitted Plumer’s description very well: he lacked true wisdom; his will was stubborn, for he was in rebellion against God. That was why he answered so foolishly: “No, I would not go into such a place if Christ Himself was preaching”. He was probably showing off how godless he was. But some weeks later he was again passing the church. This time he was alone; he had nothing else to do; so he thought he would go in. This time none of his friends would see him.

As he opened the church door, the young man was struck with the solemn silence inside, though the church was crowded. Bedell was about to begin his sermon, and everyone was paying attention, ready to listen carefully.

The young man’s attention was caught by the words the minister read out as the text for his sermon: “I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding” (Proverbs 7:7). *He* had no spiritual understanding. Now he felt the power of God’s truth in his conscience. He knew that he was described by the text. As he thought back over how wicked he had been, he trembled for the first time in his life because of his sin.

After the service, the young man walked slowly home. No doubt his mind was filled with serious thoughts. When he was younger he had come under the influence of those who rejected the Bible, but now the Holy Spirit awakened him to a sense of his need as a sinner before God. He came regularly to Bedell’s church and, by God’s grace, he cleansed his way by taking heed to it in the light of God’s Word. He began to live a holy life, trusting in Christ Jesus.

Young people today should be asking, How can I cleanse my way through life? The answer still is: “By taking heed thereto according to [God’s] word”. Listen to what the Bible has to say about you: that you are a sinner, a rebel against God. Listen to what the Bible says about Christ as the Saviour of sinners, who calls, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28); He is directing you to trust in Him for salvation. And listen to the teaching of the Bible about holiness of heart and life, seeking by the power of the Holy Spirit to live in obedience to God’s commands.

The Tortoise that Wasn't

Rev K M Watkins

The Free Presbyterian mission in Kenya sponsored the local primary school. We would go there every week to take the assembly worship and the catechism class. One day, the headmistress told us that the school had acquired a tortoise from a place near to Lake Victoria, a couple of hours away. They had been trying to get it to eat, but it refused everything they gave it. Could she bring it to the mission compound to see if there was anything we could do? More than once, we had been brought injured animals or birds, but this was the first time we had been brought such a creature.

It did not look exactly like any tortoise we had seen before, but we assumed it was just a different kind. We had seen huge, giant tortoises in the north of the country. This creature was not large, but many animals in Kenya looked different to the ones we were familiar with. Most of the birds were much more colourful. Wasps, bees, flies, moths, butterflies, ants, spiders – there were many different kinds of these, in various colours, shapes and sizes.

We tried all the usual food a tortoise would eat, but still it would not eat. Also it did not like the large enclosure and shelter we had made for it, which tortoises normally love. It was always trying to scurry away, to hide under large stones or dig into damp soil and get into the shade. Truly, it was not comfortable in its environment. And it turned its head sideways when it moved it in and out of its shell, which was very odd, but quite charming too.

Obviously something was seriously wrong. Eventually we e-mailed a tortoise society in the UK for advice, and they asked us to send pictures, which we did. Their reply made everything clear in an instant. The “tortoise” was not a tortoise at all. It was a *turtle* – a side-necked turtle, to be precise. This is why it would not eat tortoise food, nor do the things a tortoise normally would. And that is why it bent its neck sideways.

It had been called a tortoise. It had been sold and bought as a tortoise. It had been treated as if it were a tortoise. But all the time it was a turtle. It had been acting according to its own nature, not the nature we were told it had. If only we had known it was a turtle, its behaviour would not have appeared strange at all.

Many people are called Christians, and they are treated as if they are. But not all of them are true Christians. Some do not have the new nature of God's born-again children. They still have their old nature. They are hypocrites who have never been really changed by saving grace. Like the turtle, they give themselves away in various ways.

Firstly, it showed it was a turtle by its taste in *food*. It had no appetite for tortoise food. False Christians have little appetite for the true food of Christianity. A real Christian finds that at times he “eats up” God’s Word very eagerly. He can say, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jeremiah 15:16). “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). But the hypocrite turns back from the Lord’s Word when it is presented to him, for he has no spiritual desire for it.

Also a true Christian feeds on Christ and Him crucified. The Saviour told His hearers, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). By eating His flesh, He was talking about faith in His Person as God and Man, for “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). By drinking His blood, He was talking about faith in His sacrifice. A true Christian’s faith keeps him coming back to Christ as Mediator and sacrifice, for without these He cannot live. But, like a turtle offered tortoise food, a false Christian feels little need for Christ and Him crucified. He does not “hunger and thirst after [the] righteousness” (Matthew 5:6) to be found only in Christ.

The turtle had a great appetite for turtle food. We began to feed it with live insects that we caught around the mission. The turtle snapped them up hungrily, one after the other, as many as we could catch. This was its true food – live insects. So it is with the hypocrite. He has his own “food”. He is greedy for worldly, sinful things. He searches these out and swallows them down with great pleasure. He can never get enough of them. His unconverted heart longs for them.

A tortoise eats lettuce and other greens, causing no harm. This is like the true Christian at his best: “harmless” like his Master, the Lord Jesus. A turtle eats other animals as its prey, spreading death everywhere it goes. So does the false Christian, who claims to be spiritually alive but being spiritually dead can only spread death everywhere he goes.

Secondly, the turtle showed what it was by the *places* it wanted to be. It did not feel at home in the tortoise shelter. It was always trying to get away. The false Christian may attend church and may often be among the people of God, but he is never truly at home there. The more spiritual and reverent a church’s worship is, the less the hypocrite will like it. He will try to get away from it, or if he continues attending, he cannot join the true child of God who says in the words of Psalm 122:1,2 (metrical):

“I joy’d when to the house of God, Go up, they said to me.
Jerusalem, within thy gates our feet shall standing be.”

The false Christian does not feel that spiritual joy, nor is he determined to fix his place in the public means of grace.

The turtle longed to be in a place suitable for a turtle. When we were told what it was, we filled a bath with water, put some rocks in it and then put the turtle in. Immediately it was happy! It was in its own element at last. It was in its true home – swimming around in the water. This is like the person who is only *called* a Christian but does not have a Christian character. There are places where he feels comfortable – places of worldly entertainment, places where sinners gather, places where God and Christ are not mentioned.

A tortoise likes to bask in the sun. A turtle has no desire for that, which is why it kept seeking out the shade, digging itself into the cool, damp soil. A true Christian loves to bask in the warmth of the love and fellowship of Christ, who is called “the Sun of righteousness” (Malachi 4:2). Without communion with Christ, he feels a coldness in his soul, so he seeks out the Saviour. But the false Christian has never known the pleasant warmth that makes the heart to burn with love for Christ. And he has no desire for it. He seeks shady places, for “every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (John 3:20). He would rather scurry into the dark and damp places of sin, like the turtle digging into damp soil.

Today there are people called Christians who do not like the food or the places that true Christians do. Yes, we should be charitable. But we should also be careful, especially when we examine ourselves

Felix Neff: Pastor of the High Alps

4. “How Can I Fold My Arms?”

Neff was born in Switzerland in 1798. He was converted while serving in the army. After leaving the army, he began visiting the villages round about Geneva to read the Bible to people and explain it. Later he spent time preaching in Grenoble, Mens and La Baume, towns in south-east France.

Neff realised that he should be set apart to the ministry in a formal way, and in 1823 he set out for London to be ordained. But why not in France, or Switzerland? We really do not know, but someone has suggested that he did not go back to Geneva because, sadly, so many of the ministers at that time did not even believe that Christ is God – in that city where the great Reformer John Calvin used to preach the pure teachings of Scripture.

When he arrived in London, Neff could not at first find anyone who could understand French, but someone brought him to the French church in the

city. At a service there, Neff was glad to hear a good gospel sermon. He was surprised to learn that the minister had been told what he looked like and recognised Neff as soon as he entered the church.

The ministers who gathered to ordain him asked Neff a number of questions and considered a letter from the local church court in France that spoke of his godliness and his gifts for the ministry. Neff told the ministers that Christ, “the great Shepherd of our souls”, had given him a strong desire “to declare the gospel to perishing sinners”. Any time he tried to do other work, he felt in his conscience that he was not doing right and that it was his duty “to preach the kingdom of God”.

He also told the ministers what he believed. He knew, he said, that sin exists, that “it dwells in our hearts”, and so we “bring forth evil fruits” – sinful effects – for which we deserve to be condemned”. He knew that everyone sins and that we cannot free ourselves from this lost condition, but that God has sent His Son into the world to save sinners.

“I believe that this Saviour has, for us, obeyed all the commandments of the law,” Neff told the ministers, “and that thus He has wrought out that righteousness which we needed. He suffered both in body and soul, even to the death of the cross, all the curse to which we were exposed.”

He believed also that those who are converted are convinced of their sinfulness and of what they deserve: to be condemned for ever. They must cast away all confidence in their own merits and trust completely on the sufferings and the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

He also spoke about the believer’s duty to read God’s Word, to think about it, to pray, to live in the light of God’s commands and not trust in himself. Neff said much more than this but, in the end, he told the ministers that he approved of the confessions of faith that were drawn up by the Protestant Churches of France and Switzerland at the time of the Reformation.

After he was ordained to the ministry of the gospel, Neff returned to Mens. He received a very warm welcome; the people crowded out onto the streets to greet him, and in the village of St Jean d’Iéran, someone ran ahead to bring the people the good news, crying out, “He is coming; he is coming”. But Neff was afraid that people who were opposed to his ministry would make a bad use of what was happening; so he asked one of his friends to tell the people of the village that they should go home and Neff would visit them in their houses.

In fact, Neff’s enemies had already been busy spreading false reports about him. They claimed that he and others were spreading new, dangerous teachings, but also that Neff was acting in France on behalf of Britain. This was serious because the two countries had often been at war with each other. The

French government claimed to be alarmed and imposed severe restrictions on those who were preaching the gospel. No one was to preach, they declared, unless he was born in France and was ordained there. Neff, of course, did not qualify on either of these points, as the government saw things.

Neff went to speak to the chief official in the local area and explained why he had gone to London and also defended himself against any charges that were being made against him. The official listened politely, and assured Neff that he was perfectly satisfied with what he had heard.

At this stage, Neff decided that he would be better to move to some other district. One might not be surprised that he would come to this conclusion because of what his enemies were saying. But there was something else; he told his fellow pastor in Mens: "I am too much beloved; these people esteem me too highly". They had too much to say in praise of him, a mere man, and so he felt they were in danger of thinking too little of Christ. Neff could see his own faults and failings; so he said, "Surely they do not know me".

Some people were saying that Neff was preaching new doctrines; so he often told his congregation to examine for themselves the passages that he referred to in the Bible, so that they might see he was preaching nothing new; what he was teaching was as old as the Bible. For the same reason, he sometimes quoted from an old catechism and an old confession of faith. And he often read to the congregation sermons preached by a Pastor Berenger in France nearly 60 years before.

His fellow pastor was afraid that Neff was not taking proper care of his health and that he was wearing himself out. But Neff would answer, "How can I fold my arms and sink into rest when I see around me so large a field of labour and so few labourers?" Because there were so few preachers he wanted to do as much as he could. Even in the depths of winter, when the snow was up to his knees, he might walk for several miles to visit people in his congregation.

One day Neff spent a lot of time talking with another minister, who rejected many of the teachings of the Bible. Neff told him firmly that they must believe that God inspired the Bible, that man is under God's condemnation because he has a corrupt nature, that he needs a Saviour, and that they must think of Jesus Christ as "God blessed for ever". Otherwise, they would no longer pray to Him, or baptize children in His name, or give themselves over to serving Him. Indeed they would just *appear* to be ministers; they would not be carrying out the duties of their office.

Altogether Neff spent almost two years in Mens. God blessed his work there: many people became seriously concerned about their souls; many began to read the Bible with more attention; many learned better what their

duty was as professing Christians, and put what they learned into practice; many began to have family worship in their homes; fewer people followed sinful entertainments; and poor people were better looked after.

While Neff was meeting opposition, he was invited to various other places to serve as a pastor. One of these invitations came from two churches in the High Alps district. Neff believed that God was calling him to be a minister there. He knew that the people of the area were poor and needed to be taught from the Bible; there was so much they did not know about spiritual things. He was not put off by having to walk large distances to visit people living in scattered little villages. Indeed he found the idea of “the wandering life of a missionary” attractive. And he accepted the invitation.

Scriptural Teaching on the Family (3)

Matthew Vogan

Earlier sections of this Youth Conference paper have begun to answer the question, Does the family have a future? The answer continues here. The previous article, last month, ended by quoting some of the many promises that the family of those that fear God will be preserved in future generations

Despite having such promises, we cannot sit back and say, Well, God will save the family whatever happens, and then abandon our own responsibility. The promises are both an encouragement and a spur to action. We need to use the means that God has appointed for building families in the Church and society.

The Bible focuses a great deal on families and we need to follow its focus. There is a biblical blueprint: God designed the family and, as it were, He has given us the instructions for it.

“God setteth the solitary in families” (Psalm 68:6). How does He do this? How does God build a family? God brought together the first family directly, as we learn from Genesis 2:22-24: “The rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

This shows us that the so-called nuclear family is God’s design and pattern. This is what we are to copy. The word *made* in relation to the woman literally means *built*. God then built a marriage, a family and a society – a worshipping community.

Few have written more widely about how to shape family life according to Scripture than the Presbyterian Puritan, William Gouge. He stressed that the family is the foundation of the Church and the nation. It is like a beehive “out of which are sent many swarms of bees”. God first placed us into a family (and it is important to note that married people are a family even before they have children) and provided for the future of mankind in that way. Gouge notes that “husband and wife, parent and child were before” rulers and subjects, ministers and congregations. When God destroyed the world with a flood, He preserved humanity by means of a family. “A family is a little Church and a little commonwealth,” he says. It is the training ground for authority, order and obedience in society.

One of those who ministered in London at the same time as William Gouge was the Presbyterian, Robert Abbott (1588?-1662?). He published a similar book called *A Christian Family Builde by God*. He uses Psalm 127:1 to show how families must be built by God or they will not be happy and blessed. In a practical way he goes on to consider this in different aspects of family life. Building a Christian home is not simply about going to Church and having some Christian interests and activities that influence the family in a vague way.

How does God build Christian families? Abbott says that, if we want to have blessed families, we must have them built by God. Husband, wife and children must not be like rotten posts or like straw, hay and stubble on a good foundation. They must be built by God. The whole house must be finished and furnished by God. Abraham was built by God, and see how he teaches his family (Genesis 18:19). Joshua was built by God, and see what he says (Joshua 24:15). Naomi was built by God, and notice what is said about her (Ruth 1:16 and 3:1).

If a whole family is built in this way, what a joint serving of God there is. Husbands and wives are faithful; children are obedient; goods are blessed. Most complain (and they have just cause) that husbands are drunkards and tyrants, wives are stubborn and children are disorderly. More complain that there is little love, much arguing, many fights, floods of drunkenness and volleys of oaths. The reason of it all is that they are not built by God.

God's building is a family well ordered by the Word of God. It is an orderly head and orderly members in fitting relations with each other. An orderly head is one who can with good conscience say, “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart” (Psalm 101:2). Orderly members are those that depend on the head and can say with a good conscience what Ruth said to Naomi in Ruth 1:16: “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God”.

The Word of God is the rule by which this house is built. A house must

be built “through wisdom” (Proverbs 24:3-4), not the wisdom of the world, for that is foolishness, but that of the Word. We may use common sense and natural wisdom to establish good order in the family. We read of this in Scripture (Proverbs 31:15-16). But beware of natural wisdom that conflicts with God’s Word. Observe four rules in this: (a) It must not prejudice the honour of God; (b) It must not prejudice the truth of a good conscience; (c) It must not prejudice the justice which is due to man; and (d) It must be lawful and within our sphere of responsibility.

A Father's Advice

Joseph Irons was a minister in London. One of his sons emigrated to North America. It seems that, in the past, the son had not behaved well and had experienced some difficulties as a result. Irons wrote to him in May 1850. Here is his letter, with some editing.

As you so frankly acknowledge in your note to me “that all [your] calamities might have been avoided, if [you] had attended to a kind father’s counsel,” I feel encouraged to write you a few words of counsel for your use in the new world. And first, as soon as you read this, get alone somewhere to read a portion of Scripture; go on your knees and ask God to teach you how to pray, and to direct all your future steps.

Then go to the people to whom you have letters of introduction and seek to get employment as soon as possible. And when you have succeeded (which, I pray God, may be soon), repeat often the Psalmist’s prayer: “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on Thee”. Never, for any reason, break your promise; but strive to obtain and keep the entire confidence of those who employ you.

Make only a few friends, and let them all be men who have a good reputation. And prove this before you keep company with them, for if you once stoop to mix with people who have a worse reputation than you have, you will never rise again.

And may God Almighty make you a Christian. With the hope of this (for which I am daily praying), let me further advise you to avoid Sabbath-breaking. Enquire at once for some place of worship where the same doctrines are preached which you have often heard in Grove Chapel, and meditate on what you hear.

Now may God, “whose I am and whom I serve,” preserve you from all evil and give you spiritual life; so that if I never see you again in this world, I may meet you at His right hand in heaven.

For Junior Readers

Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

Have you ever thought what a blessing it is to be able to worship God freely without fear of persecution or punishment? It is something to be very thankful for. In many other countries round the world, Christians cannot worship without being afraid. At the moment, the countries where Christians face the worst persecution are: Afghanistan, then North Korea, Somalia, Libya, Yemen, Eritrea, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iran and India. Perhaps you will look up an atlas and find these countries, to help you think of people who suffer for their faith.

For many years, North Korea was top of the list. Afghanistan has now replaced it. Christians in Afghanistan know that the Taliban are seeking them out and would murder them without a second thought. Across the world nearly 6000 Christians were murdered for their faith last year, many of them in Nigeria. That is a shocking figure! Many others face varying levels of discrimination, injustice, intolerance, abuse and violence.

Persecution of Christians in India has also intensified. Hindu extremists regard Christians as not truly Indian; they think their country should be purged of them and turned into a pure Hindu nation. There have been increasing numbers of attacks on Christians – for example, storming churches, assaulting worshippers, and burning Christian books and other writings. “Anti-conversion” laws have been passed in several states; they make it a crime to become a Christian. Missions have been targeted; even inviting someone to a church service could lead to arrest. Pastors and church leaders are in real danger of persecution.

Surely we should remember those persecuted Christians in our prayers, asking God to protect them and help them to be strong, and that He would comfort them and their loved ones. Paul exhorted the Hebrews (13:3) to “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body”. Surely that is good advice for us also.

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

Johnnie and Charlie

Johnnie Lindsay had been playing with some marbles. Charlie Meadows was playing with him. Johnnie asked Charlie: “Where

have my two marbles gone? I had six just now, and here are only four. You've got them. I know you have. I saw you put your hand in your pocket. Give them to me." And Johnnie started to cry as Charlie moved away.

Charlie just said, "I don't want your marbles", and kept on going away. Then Charlie's father appeared. He saw that Johnnie was crying and asked him why. Johnnie told him that Charlie had taken two of his marbles and would not give them back.

"Charles, have you taken his marbles?" His father asked him.

"No", Charlie said.

"I thought not", Charlie's father answered. He believed that Johnnie had made a mistake and that the marbles had rolled away into the grass. "Look round," he told Johnnie; "you'll find them." Then he took Charlie's hand and they walked away home.

Charlie felt dull as they ate their dinner, but later he was happy again. Later on, his mother asked him why he put so much stuff in his pockets. She had often told him not to do that. She pulled several things out of his pocket. Among them were two marbles. Charlie jumped up to put the marbles back in his pocket and was glad that his father did not seem to notice them. In fact, his father walked out of the room.

But soon his father called Charlie into another room. He told Charlie that what he had done made him very sad. Charlie burst into tears. He very much wished that he had not made his father sad. But it was too late now to change what had happened.

His father asked, "Where did you get those marbles?"

"I took them from Johnnie this morning", Charlie told him; "and I am so sorry."

His father took Charlie's hand, looked him in the face and said, "You took them, Charles! What is he called who takes what does not belong to him?"

"A thief", a frightened Charlie answered.

His father then asked what someone is called who denies what he has done.

Charlie told him: "A liar". By now he was very upset.

Thief and *liar*, his father explained, were words that described Charlie Meadows and what he did wrong. These were sins, and God saw them.

Charlie asked his father to forgive him. But his father asked, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Charlie had done wrong against God. And his father reminded him that nothing is hidden from God, even if no one else sees it. Then his father left Charlie on his own, for an hour, to think about what he had done.

An hour later, the father came back. Charlie ran to him; he was very upset. The father then went on his knees, and he asked Charlie to kneel down beside him. The father was going to pray to God. He wanted Charlie to think about his sin and to tell God about it. He asked God to forgive Charlie for his sin, for Christ's sake.

The next day, the father walked with Charlie to Johnnie's house to return the two stolen marbles. He asked Johnnie to forgive him, which he did.

Charlie learned that he must ask God to keep him from sinning. And when Charlie grew up, he knew that he had to ask God every day to keep him from doing what is wrong. All of us need to ask God, again and again, to keep us from sinning.

Making Bibles in Eimeo

Tahiti is a beautiful island in the Pacific Ocean. Near it is the small island of Moorea (in the past it was known as Eimeo). Over 200 years ago, the first missionaries to the Pacific islands landed on Tahiti, and for 15 years they worked hard and prayed much before a blessing came from God, and the gospel triumphed. Great good was done. Many confessed that they were believers in Jesus. Idolatry lost its power, and many people felt a great longing to know more of gospel truth.

It was now necessary to give the people the Bible in their own language, and a printing press, the first in the southern Pacific Ocean, was set up on Moorea. This awakened very great curiosity. Such a thing as a machine to print books was quite unknown, and people flocked from far and wide to see it. The King went every day into the building where the Bibles were being printed and watched the workers setting up the words on the pages to be

printed, and looked at the sheets of paper as they were printed off. The chiefs also begged to be allowed to come and watch, while the people crowded round the doors and windows, and every other place where they could get a glimpse of what was going on.

Great numbers of people came from every district of Moorea, and from all the nearby islands. For several weeks the place where the printing was going on was crowded. The beach was lined with canoes from distant places. The houses were filled with visitors. The fields were covered with tents set up by those who could not get a place to stay in the town. And the school-room and the church, which could seat 600 people, were too small for the numbers that pressed into them – all of them waiting for a chance to get a peep at the wonderful machine. All of them were eager to carry back with them some copies of the Book; and the usual question they asked when landing was, “When will the books be ready?”

The first copy to be finished was presented to the King. He was so happy to get it. The Queen and the chiefs were next to get a copy; but then the missionaries almost had to stop printing as they were running out of proper materials to bind the Bibles. They needed boards for the front and back and then some leather to cover them and these quickly ran out.

The people soon found a substitute for the boards by beating pieces of bark-cloth together till they formed a good firm board; they also cut very thin pieces of wood of the same size as the boards. To get the quantity of leather they needed, the missionaries taught the people how to tan skins. And now lots of people set to work to make the leather. Various animals were killed for their skins; to find covers for the Word of God. The printing office was almost like a tanning-yard; and as you passed through the village, almost every hut had a skin of some sort stretched on a board and drying in the sun.

The people were so eager for the books that there were not enough binders to do the work. But every chief sent one or more men to learn how to tan leather and they helped to supply the leather that was needed. The missionaries were very pleased to see the people employed in this way.

Though it was a time of great toil, it was also one of great enjoyment. For many weeks and months this eagerness lasted, and the demand for Bibles was so great that 30 or 40 canoes were often seen in the bay, waiting five or six weeks for their supply of Bibles. Each canoe would generally bring eight or ten people, and they would hand to the missionaries a large roll of plantain leaves, each of which had an order on it for one or more copies from people who could not come.

One evening about sunset, a canoe arrived from Tahiti with five men to

buy Bibles. The moment they landed, they hurried to the missionaries' home and asked for "the Word of Luke". No copies were ready, but they were told that, if they would wait till the next morning, they should have as many as they needed. They were advised to look in one of the villages for somewhere to spend the night. But they were afraid to go away from the missionaries' home in case someone else would come and be given the copies of the Bible that they were so earnestly waiting for.

So they gathered up some dry coconut leaves for a bed and, wrapping themselves in their bark-cloth cloaks, they lay down just outside the missionary's house and slept there till daylight came. The missionary found them there in the morning. He saw their great desire to have a Bible and lost no time in supplying each of them with a copy – and one for a sister and another for the mother of one of them.

Each of them wrapped his book in a piece of white bark-cloth, put it inside his clothes and said, "Goodbye", to the missionary. Then without eating or drinking anything, they hurried away to the boat, hoisted the sail and steered away towards home, full of joy.

Does this great eagerness of the islanders not put to shame many in the countries which have long had Bibles? Let us follow their deep interest in God's Book. As we may have many copies of it in our homes, let us never be condemned for being careless about it.

Adapted from The Young People's Magazine for June 1976.

Why Should We Value the Bible?

1 The Bible is a revelation from the eternal God. He knows everything about everything. So we can be perfectly sure that His Book tells us the truth. It is completely reliable.

2. The Bible tells us about ourselves. It tells us that we are sinners, that we keep on sinning against God and that we need to be put right.

3. The Bible tells us that God has provided a way to escape punishment due to us because of sin. We read in it that God "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). The Bible tells us that Christ suffered and died in the place of sinners.

4. The Bible tells us how we should live in this world and how we get to heaven at last.

How valuable is a book from God that tells us reliably how to be saved! Let us read it regularly. Let us pray that God would bless it to us, that the Holy Spirit would apply it to our souls, making us able to believe on Christ.

Looking Around Us

Happiness and Marriage

A prominent personality in “reality” TV has divorced for the third time. This third marriage had lasted for less than eight years. Yet at each of her three wedding ceremonies, she presumably vowed to love the man she was marrying, until death would separate them. I am in no position to say whether she or her husband was responsible – or more responsible – for the breakup of the marriage, but we can surely learn something about the proper attitudes that married couples should have to each other.

This TV personality has said that she chose to make herself happy even if it “caused my divorce”. This suggests a degree of selfishness on her part. Looking back, she states that, “for so long, I did what made other people happy”. She also said, “I think in the last two years I decided I’m going to make myself happy”.

But in a marriage, no one should think that only one of the parties can be happy. If people do think in that way, it is likely that something has already gone wrong with the marriage. The Bible tells us: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”. And who are closer neighbours than a husband and wife? So there ought to be no problem for them both to do all they can to make each other happy. It is part of sincere love for each other.

This raises a question: Did the TV personality and her husband pay any attention to the Bible and what it teaches about marriage? And even more importantly, did they pay any attention to what it teaches about God and our relationship to Him?

Sadly, in a fallen world, mistakes are likely to be made in almost every situation, including marriage. So, when people are thinking of entering into such an important relationship, intended to last for life, they should bring the whole matter before God in prayer.

They should ask Him to guide them as to who they should choose as their marriage partner. They should ask Him to show them, before it is too late to turn back, if the one they have begun to love is really suitable. And they should ask for God’s blessing on their marriage, so that they would not only have some degree of happiness together but would also be able to live in a way that glorifies God and is an example to other people around them.

In every marriage, both the man and the woman should have a real respect for each other. In every decision they have to make, they should take this question into account: How does my wife / husband feel about this matter? Selfishness may seem a good way to bring about happiness but, in the long run, it is much more likely to bring unhappiness rather than happiness.

UK Youth Conference 2022

Arrangements (God willing)

Venue: Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perth, PH2 9EG.

Dates: Tuesday, April 5, to Thursday, April 7.

Chairman: Rev Kenneth Macleod.

Lower Age Limit: 16 years old.

Applications: to Free Presbyterian Church, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE, or nm.fpchurch@btconnect.com. (Please make contact by March 14, if possible). If necessary, you can contact Rev J B Jardine by phoning 01859 502253. The fee is £50 for those in full-time employment and £25 for others. Cheques should be payable to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland; to pay by bank transfer contact the e-mail address above.

Programme

Tuesday, April 5

2.30 pm **The Law of God**

The Difference between Right and Wrong
by *Rev K M Watkins*

7.00 pm **David Livingstone**

Why He Deserves to Be Remembered
by *Rev D W B Somerset*

Wednesday, April 6

9.30 am **George Wishart**

Preacher, Reformer, Martyr
by *Rev David Campbell*

2.30 pm **Historical Tour to St Andrews**

Scotland's Early Reformers
conducted by *Rev David Campbell*

7.00 pm **The Zimbabwe Mission Today**

A Visual Introduction
by *Rev J B Jardine*

Thursday, April 7

9.30 am **Lessons from the Life of Jacob**

His Relevance for Today
by *Rev J B Jardine*

Price £1.00