

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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God Was with Joseph

Joseph was a godly lad. So you would expect him to honour his father and mother, Jacob and Rachel, according to the Fifth Commandment. His older brothers were away from home looking after their father's sheep in Shechem and Jacob sent Joseph to see how they were getting on. He went away obediently, but his brothers had moved on to Dothan. When Joseph had caught up with them, they were not at all pleased to see him. They put him in a pit and, when some merchants came along on their camels, his brothers sold Joseph to them for 20 pieces of silver.

The merchants brought Joseph to Egypt, where they sold him to Potiphar, who was one of Pharaoh's officers, and a captain of the guard. The Bible tells us that "the Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2). As a godly young man, he had been born again and he had God's favour. We can say that the Lord was blessing him and that the Lord was helping him. This was why the Bible goes on to say that Joseph "was a prosperous man".

Potiphar "made him overseer over his house", and "all that he had he put into his hand". One could say that Joseph was manager of all Potiphar's possessions. Potiphar trusted Joseph with everything he owned; he knew nothing about anything that belonged to him except the food that he ate. This position in Potiphar's household would have given Joseph useful experience for the time when he was appointed to a very high position under Pharaoh – to manage the supplies of grain for, and during, the famine that was to come.

In those Old Testament times, God often showed His favour by blessing His people in outward things. This was true, not only of Joseph, but also of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for instance. They prospered even in the things of this world; they had such large flocks. In these cases, God was showing that He loved them; but He was also blessing them in their souls with, for example, growth in grace. The outward blessings were a sign of the blessings God was giving them in their souls.

Nowadays these things are different. Paul told the believers in Corinth that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" to be true followers of Christ. Now we have a complete Bible;

and, with all the knowledge God gives us through the Bible, we do not need these outward signs to help us recognise those of whom it can be said: “the Lord was with” them.

Further, because the Lord was with him, He was keeping Joseph from sin and from harm. Potiphar’s wife began to tempt Joseph to commit adultery with her. Joseph refused. No matter how often she tried, Joseph held firm. But notice what he said to her: “How then can I do this great wickedness, *and sin against God?*” He wanted to obey *God*, however difficult his situation might be. And his situation became very difficult. This wicked woman told lies about Joseph to her husband. He believed her and put Joseph in prison.

But “the Lord was [still] with Joseph” (Genesis 39:21), even in prison. The keeper of the prison gave Joseph authority over all the prisoners and, like Potiphar, the jailer left everything under Joseph’s control. Once more, the Lord made what Joseph did to prosper.

At one point during Joseph’s imprisonment, Pharaoh’s chief baker and his chief butler were among the prisoners. One night, both the baker and the butler had a dream which left them feeling sad. Joseph asked them why they looked so sad. They told him that they had been dreaming, but there was no one to interpret their dreams. Joseph asked them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them.”

They did so, and Joseph, as he was shown by God, told them what their dreams meant. The baker was to be put to death; the butler was to be set free and go back to his work. That is just what happened. But Joseph asked the butler to tell Pharaoh about him: he was in prison but he had done nothing wrong. He hoped that Pharaoh would release him from prison. The butler was, no doubt, very glad to be free, but he forgot all about Joseph. How ungrateful people can be! Yet God had a purpose in leaving Joseph in prison, as we will see shortly. God was still with Joseph.

Some time later, Pharaoh had two dreams, but he could not find anyone who could interpret them. But the butler told Pharaoh: “I do remember my faults this day”. He had just remembered about Joseph and he explained how Joseph had correctly interpreted both his dream and the baker’s. So Joseph was sent for and quickly brought to Pharaoh, who told him about his dreams, and Joseph told Pharaoh what the dreams meant – as God had showed him. There were to be seven years of very plentiful crops, followed by seven years of severe famine.

Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint a wise man, with other officials under him, who would gather up a fifth of all the corn grown in Egypt during the seven plentiful years and would manage the distribution of the corn during the famine. Pharaoh accepted the advice and asked Joseph: “Can we find

such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” So Joseph was appointed to administer the supplies of grain before the famine started and while it lasted. It was now very obvious that God was with Joseph, taking care of him in the things of this life and in his soul.

Joseph carried on this very important work throughout the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine. The famine affected Jacob and his other sons, who came down to Egypt to buy corn from Joseph. So Joseph was the means, in God’s providence, of preserving alive the one family in which there was a right knowledge of true religion.

How much we need to have God with us! Let us then seek Him earnestly through Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners like us. Jesus calls us to believe in Him. If we do so, God will be with us all through the rest of our lives in this world, and He will afterwards receive us to eternal glory – to be with us for ever.

Advice to a Lad Who Had Left Home

Robert Murray M’Cheyne

M’Cheyne is best-known as a godly minister in Dundee. Before then, he was the assistant to the minister in Larbert, in central Scotland. He wrote this letter, now edited, in 1836 to a lad who had just left home, and so was no longer in the Larbert congregation. His first name began with G. M’Cheyne speaks about the congregation as *sad*, probably because it was so large that the ministers could not get to know the people well. Every reader, when you can understand it, is strongly recommended to read M’Cheyne’s life, which is available as a paperback. Also, perhaps when you are a bit older, you should read *Memoir & Remains of Robert Murray M’Cheyne*, which contains a lot more material, including other letters, and sermons.

You will be surprised to hear from me. I have often wished to know you better; but in these sad parishes we cannot manage to know well everyone that we would desire to. Now you have left your father’s home and our ministry. Still my desires go after you, as well as the kind thoughts of many others. And since I cannot now speak to you, I take this way of expressing my thoughts to you.

I do not know in what light you look upon me, whether as a solemn and gloomy minister, or as one who might be a companion and friend. But really, it is so short a while since I was just like you, when I enjoyed the games which you now enjoy, and read the books which you now read, that I never can think of myself as anything more than a boy.

This is one great reason why I write to you. The same youthful blood flows in my veins that flows in yours; so that when I would persuade you to

come with me to the same Saviour, and to walk the rest of your life “led by the Spirit of God”, I am not persuading you to anything beyond your years. I am not like a grey-headed grandfather; then you might answer all I say by telling me that you are a boy. No; I am almost as much a boy as you are; as fond of happiness and of life as you are; as fond of scampering over the hills, and seeing all that is to be seen, as you are.

Another thing that persuades me to write you is that I have felt in my own experience the lack of having a friend to direct and advise me. I had a kind brother as you have, who taught me many things. He gave me a Bible and persuaded me to read it; he tried to train me as a gardener trains the apple tree on the wall; but all in vain. I thought myself far wiser than he was, and would always take my own way. Many a time, I well remember, I have seen him reading his Bible, or shutting his bedroom to pray, when I have been dressing to go to some entertainment, or some foolish dance.

Well, this dear friend and brother died; and though his death made a greater impression on me than ever his life had done, still I found the misery of being friendless. I do not mean that I had no relations and worldly friends, for I had many; but I had no friend who cared for my soul. I had no one to direct me to the Saviour, no one to awaken my slumbering conscience, no one to tell me about the blood of Jesus washing away all sin, no one to tell me of the Holy Spirit who is so willing to change the heart, and give the victory over my passions.

I had no minister to take me by the hand, and say, Come with me, and we will do thee good. Yes, I had one friend and minister, but that was Jesus Himself, and He led me in a way that makes me give Him, and Him only, all the praise. Now, though Jesus may do this again, yet the more common way with Him is to use earthly guides. Now, if I could supply the place of such a guide to you, I should be happy. All that I want is to be pointing out the way. This is what I so much needed myself; this is what you do not need to be without, unless you wish to.

Tell me, would you work less pleasantly through the day, would you walk the streets with a sadder step, would you eat your food with less gladness of heart, would you sleep less calmly at night, if you had the forgiveness of sins – that is, if all your wicked thoughts and deeds, lies, thefts and Sabbath-breaking were all blotted out of God’s book of remembrance? Would this make you less happy, do you think? You dare not say it would.

But would the forgiveness of sins not make you more happy than you are? Perhaps you will tell me that you are very happy as you are. I quite believe you. I know that I was very happy when I was unforgiven. I know that I had great pleasure in many sins, in Sabbath-breaking, for instance. Many a

delightful walk I have had, speaking my own words, thinking my own thoughts and seeking my own pleasure on God's holy day. I imagine few boys were ever happier in an unconverted state than I was. No sorrow clouded my brow, no tears filled my eyes unless over some nice story book; so that I know that you say what is quite true, when you say that you are happy as you are.

But is this not just the saddest thing of all, that you should be happy while you are a child of wrath, that you should smile and eat and drink and be merry and sleep soundly, when this very night you may be in hell? Happy while unforgiven! A terrible happiness. It is like the Hindu widow who sits on the funeral pile with her dead husband, and sings songs of joy when they are setting fire to the wood with which she is to be burned. [This practice was made illegal about the time when M'Cheyne was writing this letter.] Yes, you may be quite happy in this way, till you die; but if you have to look back from hell, you will say it was a miserable kind of happiness.

Now, do you not think it would give you more happiness to be forgiven, to be able to put on Jesus and say, God's anger is turned away? Would you not be happier at work, and happier in the house, and happier in your bed? I can assure you from all that I have ever felt of it, the pleasures of being forgiven are as superior to all the pleasures of an unforgiven man, as heaven is higher than hell.

The peace of being forgiven reminds me of the calm, blue sky, which no earthly clamours can disturb. It lightens all labour, sweetens every morsel of bread, and makes a sick bed all soft and downy. Yes, it takes away the scowl of death. Now, forgiveness may be yours now. It is not given to those who are good. It is not given to any because they are less wicked than others. It is given only to those who, feeling that their sins have brought a curse on them which they cannot lift off, look unto Jesus, as bearing all sin away.

Now I have no wish to weary you. If you are anything like what I was, you will have yawned many a time already over this letter. But if the Lord will deal graciously with you and touch your young heart, as I pray He may, with a desire to be forgiven and to be made a child of God, perhaps you will not take badly what I have written to you in much haste.

As this is the first time you have been away from home, perhaps you have not learned to write letters yet; but if you have, I would like to hear from you, how you come on, what convictions you feel if you feel any, what difficulties in the Bible puzzle you, and then I would do my best to unravel them.

You read your Bible regularly, of course; but do try to understand it – and still more, try to *feel* what it is saying. Read more parts than one at a time.

For example, if you are reading Genesis, read a psalm also; or if you are reading Matthew, read a small bit of an epistle also.

Turn the Bible into prayer. Thus, if you were reading the first psalm, kneel, spread the Bible on the chair in front of you, and pray, "O Lord, give me the blessedness of the man . . .". "Let me not stand in the counsel of the ungodly . . .". This is the best way of knowing the meaning of the Bible and of learning to pray.

In prayer confess your various sins, going over those of the past day one by one. Pray for your friend by name, and your father and mother, and so on. If you love them, surely you will pray for their souls. I know well that there are prayers constantly going up for you from your own house; and will you not pray for them too? Do this regularly. If you pray sincerely for others, it will make you pray for yourself.

Can the Christian Church Survive?

4. The Reformation

Another section of a Youth Conference paper. Last month's article told about Augustine, whom God raised up to oppose the false, dangerous teaching that human beings are able to do all that God requires, by their own power. The article went on to outline the false teachings that the church in Rome spread about over the centuries, as it developed into what became known as the Roman Catholic Church.

Anyone around 1500 who looked at the professing Church, with a mind somewhat influenced by Scripture truth, might have wondered if it could possibly survive; it was becoming so corrupt. Yet there *were* some godly people throughout these centuries, people who were truly trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation from sin.

We know of very few of these true believers. Yet we do know of John Wycliffe in England, who died in 1384; he was the driving force behind a translation of the Bible into English. Though it was translated from Latin rather than from the original languages of Hebrew and Greek and its circulation was limited because printing had not yet been developed, it was most useful.

Another of these Reformers before the Reformation was John Huss in Bohemia, most of which is now part of the Czech Republic. He was burnt to death in 1415, for his scriptural beliefs. He was heavily influenced by the writings of John Wycliffe.

The readiness of the Roman Church to persecute people who believed the

truths of the Bible was one of its greatest sins. Among those who suffered severe persecution for believing the truths of the Bible were people who lived in the Alpine valleys in the north of Italy. They were called the Waldensians; many of them were tortured and killed.

But serious as the Church situation was at the beginning of the 1500s, God was able to raise up ministers and people who would serve Him sincerely in the light of Scripture. And that was what He did.

One of the first men whom God raised up at the start of the Reformation was Martin Luther. He was then a professor lecturing on the Bible in the University of Wittenberg, in Germany. He had been converted after a long struggle.

But in 1517 Luther was disturbed by what he heard about a monk called Tetzel, who was going about selling indulgences. An indulgence could be purchased to bring about the forgiveness of sin – not only the sins of the person buying the indulgence, but also the sins of his relations who were already, supposedly, in purgatory. By paying for an indulgence, it was claimed falsely, people could escape going to purgatory to suffer for their sins, and they could also buy others out of it, or at least reduce the time that they would have to spend there. Tetzel's advertising slogan was: "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, / a soul from purgatory springs".

Obviously there is no scriptural authority for selling indulgences; forgiveness comes only through faith in Jesus Christ as the One who suffered and died in the place of sinners. And purgatory does not exist.

In fact, the money raised from the sale of indulgences was intended to help build St Peter's, a large church building in Rome. Luther was horrified at how people were being deceived, and he wrote out 95 statements (he called them theses) which people could debate, and he had them nailed to a church door in Wittenberg. He did not expect that his theses would have much impact on the people around him, but in fact they were printed and circulated over a very wide area.

No more did the authorities in the Roman Church think at first that Luther and his theses would have much effect. But Luther's action is taken to be the beginning of the Reformation, which had such a wonderful effect on many parts of Europe. The preaching of God's Word influenced many people throughout large areas in Europe, as did the circulation of the Scriptures in the language of the various peoples – something that Rome furiously opposed for hundreds of years.

The Reformation movement was a powerful force in the hand of God for the spiritual good of souls. The invention of printing made it possible to produce copies of the Bible relatively cheaply. The printing of the Scriptures

was intended in God's providence for the spiritual good of many. Printing also made it possible to circulate widely the writings of men like Luther, which were of great use in strengthening the Reformation Church. Without taking away from the great work that, with God's blessing, Luther was able to do, we should notice that his teaching was not perfect; for instance, his ideas about the Lord's Supper were flawed.

In the next generation, other men like John Calvin were raised up. He was a Frenchman, born in 1509, who became the most prominent Reformer in Geneva, but his influence for good was huge – especially through his writings. Even his letters, some of them written to influential people in many countries, did much good.

John Knox, the most prominent Reformer in Scotland, was one of many who took refuge for a time in Geneva, when persecution in Scotland and England meant that it was not safe for him to remain there. He found Geneva to be “the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the Apostles. In other places,” he said, “I confess Christ to be truly preached, but manners and religion so truly reformed I have not yet seen in any other place.”

It was the Genevan form of Protestantism, truly scriptural Christianity, that Knox took the lead in establishing in Scotland. When Protestantism was established there in 1560, it took the Presbyterian form, with general assemblies, synods and – at the local level – kirk sessions; presbyteries were established later.

The Reformation came to Scotland later than to most other parts of Europe, though Patrick Hamilton had boldly preached Reformation doctrine in Scotland before he was put to death by burning in 1528 at St Andrews. The most prominent of the other martyrs in Scotland was George Wishart, who was burnt, also in St Andrews, in 1546.

After Wishart's death, the question might have been asked in the face of the persecution that faced true believers in Scotland: Can a pure Church be established in Scotland? But that is what God brought about. And that is what God, to an extent, preserved during the reign of James VI, in spite of his persistent attempts to bring down Presbyterianism and establish bishops in the Scottish Church.

We may note that, in countries such as Spain and Italy, there were the beginnings of a strong Reformation movement, but these beginnings were swept away by intense Roman Catholic persecution. Again in Poland, which today is a strongly Roman Catholic country, the Reformation made considerable progress, but that progress was rolled back by serious heresy in the Protestant Church.

James Renwick

7. Preaching in Spite of Persecution

F R Daubney

Another section of a paper given at last year's Youth Conference. Last month's article told about the hardships Renwick suffered as he went about parts of southern Scotland preaching. It spoke too of what other Covenanters suffered in these times of persecution.

About this time, Renwick was on his way to a general meeting of the Societies (Covenanter groups) at a remote spot near Strathaven, in South Lanarkshire. He and his three friends were on foot, but a sympathiser loaned Renwick, who was very weary, a horse. A party of dragoons [soldiers] overtook them, and his three friends were wounded and captured.

Renwick rode off and tried to find a place to hide. He sent his horse away and crept into a cairn of stones that local shepherd boys had made. He prayed earnestly that he would not be found, finding comfort in the words of Psalm 6, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping".

After hours of searching, the soldiers gave up looking, and Renwick set off in the dark, not knowing where he was, but was found by a sympathiser who sheltered him in his house. Here, a day or two later, he held a house meeting while the soldiers were still searching the moors for him. "Time would fail me to relate the Lord's works of wonder for poor unworthy me", is what Renwick said.

In August 1684, the King's Advocate, Sir George Mackenzie, issued a summons requiring Renwick to appear before the Justice Court in Edinburgh to answer charges. He was accused of being a rebel at Bothwell Bridge (this was ridiculous, as at that time he was a 17-year-old student at university in Edinburgh), and that he marched up and down the country with armed men killing and murdering soldiers and loyal subjects.

He was depicted as a terrorist, a public danger to the state, committing acts of high treason and rebellion. The indictment said that he preached poison, sedition and rebellion. The truth, of course, was that he was preaching the gospel to poor, persecuted people. Renwick did not obey the summons, and he was officially declared a rebel, with severe penalties threatened on anyone who associated with him or even spoke to him.

The Societies responded by producing a document in which they confirmed their position, disowned the King and declared war on him and those who were acting with him. This was fixed to market crosses and church doors across the country and caused a sensation. The authorities responded by

producing an Oath of Abjuration which suspects were required to take, denouncing the Sanquhar Declaration (see the September 2025 issue). If they did not, they were to be put to death immediately.

There followed in the spring and early summer of 1685 the most appalling oppression. Many were shot on the merest suspicion. In May, John Brown of Priesthill, a man of “shining piety” was shot in front of his wife and children for refusing to take the Abjuration Oath. Also, in May the two Margarets were tied to stakes before the incoming tide in the sea at Wigtown, in south-west Scotland, and drowned, for refusing to declare that the King was head of the Church.

A writer during the 1800s summed up the situation: “Nothing less was intended than to consume and destroy every individual member of the detested sect. . . . The execution of the laws was committed wholly and absolutely to the soldiers. They had no limited instructions: they had powers and express orders to go through the whole country and kill; kill in the house; kill in the field; kill one or many, as they should meet them; kill with full indemnity against consequences, kill at their own discretion, and kill instantly and upon the spot. These times are still named with a shudder, ‘The killing times of Scotland’.”

A bright spot in 1685 was Renwick’s reconciliation with Alexander Peden. This other field preacher returned from Ireland and Renwick invited him to join in the work of preaching, but he declined. Peden had come to believe some of the untrue reports about Renwick and had said some bitter things about him. But he came to regret this, and when he was dying, he asked to meet Renwick, who very quickly went to see him.

Peden was meeting Renwick for the first time, and he was astonished at his youth (Renwick was 23) and fragile appearance. After conversation they parted with Peden’s encouragement, and the prayer that the Lord might “spirit, strengthen, support and comfort him in all duties and difficulties”.

In February 1685 Charles II died, and his brother, the Duke of York, succeeded him, becoming James II of England and VII of Scotland. Nothing changed in terms of the persecution experienced by the Covenanters, but things were made slightly easier in that the authorities were distracted by two rebellions, one led by the Duke of Monmouth in England, and the other led by the Earl of Argyll, who launched an invasion from Holland. Both met with defeat and the rebels, both in England and Scotland, were brutally treated. Argyll (the son of the Marquis who was executed under Charles II shortly after the Restoration of 1660) was captured and executed.

Lack of support for Argyll by the United Societies caused division and further criticism of Renwick. His enemies in Scotland published all manner

of lies about him, calling into question his ordination by a church in Holland that was not fully Reformed, suggesting that he preached only rarely and then ran away, leaving his followers to face the consequences, that he was secretly a government agent and was even in the pay of the Roman Catholics.

Renwick bore all this with patience and by the end of 1686 most of this unbelievably malicious campaign calmed down. During all this time he continued to preach to large gatherings, but in December 1686 his situation became even more perilous when a royal proclamation was published which offered a £100 reward (£16 000 today) for his capture, dead or alive.

Renwick was encouraged towards the end of 1686, by being joined in his preaching by his friend Alexander Shields, who had been a prisoner on the Bass Rock but escaped when he was being taken to Edinburgh. Another ministerial addition was David Houston from Ireland. Renwick said of Houston, “he preaches very zealously and faithfully wherever he goes”.

In spite of this help, Renwick was sometimes so worn out by his labours and hardships that he had to be carried by friends to and from the place of preaching; he was often in great pain. Renwick’s view of this was that “it is part of my glory and joy to bear such infirmities, contracted through my poor and small labour, in my Master’s vineyard”.

For Younger Readers

Whiter Than Snow

Some of you would have seen snow in the early days of this year. We in Inverness had snow lying on the ground for several days. But in countries like Zimbabwe and Australia, there was no snow. It was too warm. Some of you never see snow where you live; it is always too hot.

Do you know if you can find the word *snow* in the Bible? In fact, the word appears there 24 times. One of these times is when David was asking God to clean him from his sins.

When we do wrong, we are sinning against God. Sin is filthy. Only God can take away sin and make us clean. So David asked God: “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow”.

Snow is white. It is very white. So what can be whiter than snow? I do not think there is anything we can see around us that can be whiter than snow. But when God takes away someone’s sin, He will

make that person so pure and holy that he or she will become whiter than snow.

Ask God to make *you* whiter than snow.

For Junior Readers

Spiders

A guest was invited for dinner at a grand house. She looked up, and there on the ceiling was a large, fat spider! She hoped that neither the hostess nor any of the other guests would notice it. In hundreds of cottages you might see a spider, and you could very likely find one in some room even in the Queen's palace (or the King's). The Bible says, "The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces" (Proverbs 30:28).

I know that some people are very afraid of spiders, and there are others who call them nasty, ugly creatures. But they are really very wonderful and clever, and if you examine their webs you cannot help being astonished.

I also heard about a spider saving a man's life. He was a baker in France a long time ago, a good Christian man. Sadly there were soldiers hunting for him, to kill him during the fearful killings, on Saint Bartholemew's Day in 1572. So the baker got into his big oven, which had not been heated that day, and he closed the door on himself.

As soon as he did so, God sent one of His little creatures, a spider. It wove its web all over the oven door. When the soldiers searched the bakehouse, one of them suggested that the baker might be hiding in the oven.

"No, man," said another soldier, "he is not there; don't you see a spider's web all over the door?" So they went away and the baker escaped. The Lord had used a spider to save his life!

Now look again at the verse: "The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces." What do you think it means? It has not been put in the Bible merely to tell us what is well known already: that a spider could be found in a palace as well as in a cottage! Surely there must be a deeper meaning, some lesson, some truth that the Spirit of God would teach us!

This verse is one of four which tell of little things that are very wise in spite of their smallness. The spider is little and weak and insignificant, and perhaps rather ugly, and not of much value. But it is wise and takes hold with her hands and climbs up into a place of safety.

Now alter the word "spider" to "sinner". Think a moment! Is not the sinner little and weak, and insignificant and ugly too, in the sight of God?

And what is there in fallen man that the great God should set any value on him, or take any notice of him?

Learn wisdom from the spider then. Take fast hold of the Lord Jesus Christ with the hands of faith and love. Clasp Him with the hands of your soul, and you will certainly be found one day in the palace of the great King of heaven.

Adapted from *The Young People's Magazine* for May 1975. The writer is not known.

Looking Around Us

Too Young for A Heart Attack?

A young woman was shocked to have a heart attack when she was just 24. She “couldn’t believe” that she could have had something so drastic happen to her when she was so young. She said “I couldn’t believe that something that serious would be happening”.

She was on holiday in Paris when she started to have chest pains and vomited. She said afterwards: “I can’t really remember a lot, but I just felt I was in really bad pain, something I’ve never felt before”. She experienced “a feeling of doom, like the world was closing in”. The attack was so serious that she needed a heart transplant. She added: “It’s just something you never really think that you’re going to have to deal with.”

But in a world like this, unexpected things do happen that we do not welcome. At the beginning, Adam and Eve were perfectly healthy, but after they fell into sin, they could not expect to continue healthy for ever. In the end, they both died. The Bible does not tell us how long Eve lived, but it tells us that Adam was 930 years old when he passed away.

No one today can expect to live for anything like so long. We are told, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Yes, our death is appointed. God has made the appointment. He has not told us when; so it is all the more necessary to prepare for passing out of this world into eternity.

God calls especially to young people. He says, “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). He calls on them to come to Him, through Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. They are to trust in Christ for salvation while they are young.

There are two very significant benefits of coming early to Jesus that they should have in mind: (1.) No matter how soon death will come for them, they will be ready; they will go straight to heaven; (2.) They will share in all

the blessings Christ has provided for those who trust in Him. They will not be left without a refuge when serious troubles come their way – such as a heart attack, or some other medical crisis.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2025-26

Exercise 2

All answers from *overseas* should be sent to *Miss Naomi Clemence*, 60 Dougalston Gardens South, Milngavie, Glasgow, G62 6HT; naomi.clemence@gmail.com. The correctors should have your answers before the end of March. These exercises are based on Psalm 129 to Isaiah 40, and John 7 to Acts 19.

Senior Section (15 years old and over)

UK answers to *Mrs J Hicklin, 22 Lasswade Road, Eskbank, EH22 3EF; jmhicklin86@gmail.com*.

Old Testament

1. Turn to Proverbs 1.
 - (a) Who is the author of the book? What did he ask God to give him as a new king? (See 1 Kings 3:3-12.) (2)
 - (b) What does he say is the beginning of wisdom in chapter 1 verse 7? (1)
 - (c) Who does he tell his son to listen to and who not to listen to? (2)
- Turn to Proverbs 3.
2. (a) What benefits are promised to those who keep God's commandments, in verses 1-10? (6)
- (b) What behaviour is encouraged in the following passages?

(1) Proverbs 6:6-11	(2) Proverbs 11:1	(3) Proverbs 11:17	(4) Proverbs 11:25
(5) Proverbs 12:1	(6) Proverbs 12:10	(7) Proverbs 13:20	(8) Proverbs 15:1

New Testament

1. Read John 19.
 - (a) Describe in your own words how Pilate and the soldiers humiliated Jesus in verses 1-3. (4)
 - (b) What further charge did the Jews bring against Jesus when Pilate wanted to acquit him? (1)
 - (c) Why was Pilate surprised that Jesus would not answer his questions? (1)
 - (d) What reason did Jesus give Pilate for not being afraid of him? (2)
 - (e) Give two pieces of evidence from verses 8-12 that show that Pilate to some extent accepted Jesus' claims. (2)
 - (f) What final argument did the Jews bring to persuade Pilate (verse 12)? (1)
 - (g) What title was written on Jesus' cross? Why do you think Pilate chose to write this? (2)
 - (h) Most of Jesus' followers had run away. Who was still there watching the crucifixion? (5)
 - (i) What four things does John say that Jesus said on the cross? (4)
 - (j) List three verses that mention Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah in this chapter. (3)
 - (k) Which two men prepared Jesus' body for burial? Why is this surprising? (3)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 27 in the Shorter Catechism: Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist? (3)

Intermediate Section (13 and 14 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Munro, 3 Borve, Isle of Harris, HS3 3HT; morag.rothach@hotmail.co.uk*.

Old Testament

1. Read Psalm 139. This psalm speaks to us about God's all seeing eye.
 - (a) State three areas of our lives mentioned by the psalmist as being known to God. (3)
 - (b) Which of these is known only to ourselves and God? (1)

- (c) State the four places the Psalmist uses to show we cannot hide from God. (4)
 (d) Why does the Psalmist want wicked men to depart from him? (2)
 (e) What is he praying for in the last two verses of the Psalm? (4)
2. Read Isaiah 37.
 (a) What did Hezekiah do when he read the threatening letter from the King of Assyria? (1)
 (b) What, in your own words, were the petitions in Hezekiah's prayer. (4)
 (c) What was the answer to Hezekiah's prayer? (4)
 (d) What happened to Sennacherib? (1)

New Testament

Read John 11.

1. (a) Name the members of the family in Bethany who loved Jesus and were loved by Him (3)
 (b) What did Jesus do when He got the message that Lazarus was ill? (1)
 (c) Why was Jesus glad that He was not in Bethany before Lazarus died? (2)
 (d) How long was Lazarus dead before Jesus came to Bethany? (1)
 (e) What did Martha say to Jesus when He arrived in Bethany? (2)
 (f) What was Martha's answer when Jesus told her that her brother would rise? (1)
 (g) Quote the verse in which Jesus speaks about the resurrection. (2)
 (h) Explain what happened at the grave. (4)
 (i) Why were the chief priests and Pharisees worried? (3)
 (j) What was Caiaphas's prophecy? (2)
 (k) What did the chief priests and Pharisees decide they must do about Jesus? (1)
 (l) What effect had this on Jesus' movements? (2)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 38 in the Shorter Catechism:
 What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection? (3)

Junior Section (11 and 12 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Logan, 21 Leys Drive, Inverness, IV2 3JB; moira.logan@btinternet.com*

Old Testament

1. Many verses in the book of Proverbs contain contrasting truths, for example, "A wise son maketh a glad father but [in contrast] a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.
 Find the following quotations in Proverbs chapter 12 and write down the contrasting truth.
 (a) A good man obtaineth favour of the Lord
 (b) The counsels of the wicked are deceit
 (c) The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel
 (d) The way of the fool is right in his own eyes
 (e) There shall no evil happen to the just (5)

2. Read Ecclesiastes chapter 12.

(a) In verses 3-5, people in old age are described. Complete the table with these parts of the body – eyes, hands/arms, legs, white hair, teeth, body – matching each of them to the words in the "Description" column.

Description	Parts of the body
Strong men	
House	
Keepers	
Grinders	
Almond tree	
Windows	

- (b) What is referred to as "his long home"? (See Job 17 verse 13) (3)
 (1)

- (c) What is the conclusion of the whole matter? (1)
3. Read Proverbs 13 verse 3 and, in your own words, explain what advice is being given. (1)
- (Psalm 141 verse 3 will also help)
4. Read Isaiah chapter 40. (1)
- (a) Who is the voice referred to in verse 3? (See Matthew 3 verse 3) (1)
- (b) Who is the shepherd referred to in verse 11? (See John 10 verse 11) (1)
- (c) What four things are promised to them "that wait upon the Lord"? (2)

New Testament

1. Read Acts chapter 2
- (a) In your own words, describe what happened to the apostles when they were gathered together on the Day of Pentecost. (verses 2-11) (4)
- (b) What effect did this have on the people? (2)
- (c) Who preached the great sermon on the Day of Pentecost and how many were converted? (2)
2. Read Acts chapter 12
- (a) Who put Peter in prison and why did he do this? (1)
- (b) What was Peter thinking as he followed the angel? (1)
- (c) What did he realise when he "was come to himself"? (1)
- (d) What happened when Peter knocked on the door? (2)
- (e) Many were praying for Peter at this time. What does this teach us about prayer? (2)

Memory Exercise

- Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 58 in the Shorter Catechism: What is required in the fourth commandment? (3)

Upper Primary Section (9 and 10 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Schouten, 58 Fairfield Road, Inverness, IV3 5QW.*
mary.schouten59@gmail.com.

Old Testament

Lessons from the Book of Proverbs.

1. Read chapter 1, verses 1-5.
- (a) Who wrote almost all of these proverbs? (1)
- (b) Fill in the missing words of the sentence:
 The proverbs are to teach us what w_____ is so that we would become w____. (2)
2. Read these verses and match them with the lesson to be learned .
- | | |
|-------------|---|
| (a) 1: 7-9 | 1. Trust in the Lord and not in your own wisdom. |
| (b) 3:5-7 | 2. Choose your words wisely. |
| (c) 8:32-33 | 3. Choose your friends / companions wisely. |
| (d) 13:20. | 4. Wisdom begins with the fear of God. |
| (e) 15:1-2. | 5. To have a good character is better than being very rich. |
| (f) 19:17. | 6. Wise children hear and obey God. |
| (g) 22:1-2. | 7. The Lord rewards those that are kind to the poor. (7) |
3. Read 8:17. What promise does the Lord make to children who seek Him? (1)

New Testament

- 1 (a) Read Acts 1:1-3. How many days was Jesus on earth after His resurrection and before He went into heaven? (1)
- (b) Read Acts 1:4-8. Which verse tells us that the gospel is to be spread to all parts of the world? (1)
- (c) Read Acts 1:9-11. Which verse tells us that Jesus will come again from heaven back to earth? (1)

2. These questions, from the Gospel of John, are the sayings of Jesus which begin with, “I am”. Read the verses and complete the blanks in the table below.

Chapter and verse	I am the . . .	Rest of the verse
(a) 6:35		And Jesus said unto them . . . He that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.
(b) 8:12	light of the world	
(c) 10:9		by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.
(d) 10:14	good shepherd	
(e) 11:25		he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.
(f) 14:6	way, the truth, and the life	
(g) 15:5		he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

(7)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write down the answer to Question 28 in the Shorter Catechism: Wherein consisteth Christ’s exaltation?

(3)

Lower Primary Section (8 years old and under)

UK answers to *Mrs A MacLean, 12 Craigs Crescent, Edinburgh, EH12 8HT*
mrs.a.maclean@proton.me.

Old Testament

Write in the missing words: mercy stars sing grass great:

1. Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to s_____ praises unto our God.

Psalm 147:1

2. He telleth (counts) the number of the s_____ and calls them all by their names.

Psalm 147:4

3. Great is our Lord and of g_____ power.

Psalm 147:5

4. God covers the heaven with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, and makes g_____ grow on the mountains.

Psalm 147:8

5. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his m_____.

Psalm 147:11

New Testament

Read Acts 3:1-16. Each day a poor man was carried and laid down at the Beautiful gate of the temple. He had been lame since he was born.

Write the missing words: God gold Peter lifted saved strong.

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Cover picture: A snowscape in Aberdeenshire.

The Young People's Magazine

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1. Seeing P_____ and John about to go into the temple, he asked alms of them. Acts 3:3

2. Peter said, Silver and g_____ have I none, but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. Acts 3:6

3. He took the man by the right hand, and l_____ him up. Immediately the man's feet and ankle bones became strong. Acts 3:7

4. He leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising G_____. Acts 3:8

All the people saw and were amazed. They seemed to think Peter and John had done this by their own power or holiness. But Peter taught them the truth. God had glorified His Son Jesus, and raised Him from the dead:

5. And His name, through faith in His name, made this man s_____. Acts 3:16

In the next chapter we read more about Jesus:

6. There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be s_____. Acts 4:12

UK Youth Conference 2026

The Conference will be held, God willing, at Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perth, PH2 9EG, from Tuesday, April 14, to Thursday, April 16. (Please note that the days of the week for the Conference are different from last year, but the same as previous years.) The lower age limit is 16. The cost is the same as before: £50 for those in full-time employment and £25 for others. Payment may be made by cheque to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland; to pay by bank transfer, contact: nm.fpchurch@btconnect.com. Please apply early – if possible, by the middle of March (to Free Presbyterian Church, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE, or use the e-mail address shown above). If necessary, you can contact Rev J B Jardine by phoning 01859 502253. Further details about the Conference will be sent to applicants later. The titles of the papers and the speakers are listed below:

1. **Law and Gospel** *Rev J B Jardine*
2. **Creation** *Rev K D Macleod*
3. **Formation of the Free Presbyterian Church** *Rev A W MacColl*
4. **Guided Tour to Dunfermline** conducted by *Dr R J Dickie*
5. **Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine** *Mr Jan Freeke*
6. **Life of Sarah** *Mr R W van Kralingen*

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