

# EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE

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Philippians 1 v 9-11

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#### Theme verses

Philippians 1:9-11



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# FIRST WORD

## Face to Face Fellowship and Complete Joy

Over the course of the past year, whilst we have lived through various lockdowns and ever-changing restrictions, I have come to appreciate certain verses and passages of Scripture in a new light. One of these such verses is 2 John 1:12:

“Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete.”

In some ways it is a bit of an obscure verse, isn't it? How many times I must have read that verse before and not really paid much attention to it! However, looking back over the past year there are two things about that verse which have hit home to me in a new way:

### 1) There is a measure of Christian fellowship that can only take place face to face

John wrote this letter to a local church, and in the course of the main body of the letter he has taught them about living in the love of God and walking in the truth of Jesus Christ. It's a great letter, but John brings it to a close very quickly, even though he admits that there is much more that he could say.

Why does John keep this letter so short? He tells us why, here in verse 12. It is because, rather than writing a longer letter to them, John would much rather go and visit this church personally and talk with them 'face to face'.

This implies that this is a church which was fairly nearby to John; a church that he could easily visit sometime soon. It is not like some of Paul's letters, which in some cases were sent hundreds of miles across Europe, or sent during times of imprisonment when Paul wasn't able to travel and see the churches. No, this is a letter sent by John to a church fairly local to where he is; a church that he expects to be able to go and visit in the near future. Far better for him to write just a short letter and then to visit them in person, than to write a long letter and not bother going to visit them!

This tells us something about the nature of Christian fellowship. John understands, there is a measure of Christian fellowship that can only take place face to face.

Now, of course, we can enjoy a certain degree of fellowship with Christians in other places and parts of the world. We can stay in touch with them and pray for them, and write to them or phone them. It's not that our fellowship is completely lost when we are physically separated from one another, but the fullness of Christian fellowship is something that we can only enjoy in person, as we spend time with other Christians. Paper and ink, or Facebook and the internet, just can't do it in the same way.



During those times over recent months when we couldn't gather together as normal, our fellowship as Christians wasn't lost, but it became hindered to a certain degree. Amongst many other things, one thing we missed out on was the full expression of our fellowship with one another as God's people.

That's the first thing we notice from this verse: there is a measure of Christian fellowship that can only take place face to face.

Here's the second thing...

### 2) Christian fellowship completes Christian joy

As we have seen, John is talking in this verse about his desire to go and visit this church and have 'face to face' fellowship with them. But notice what he says in the purpose clause at the end of the verse:

“so that... our joy may be complete.”

Again, John is not saying that when we are physically separated from other Christians our joy completely dissolves, but he is saying that by meeting together with other Christians and experiencing face to face fellowship with them, our joy is enhanced, and is even made "complete". Christian fellowship completes Christian joy! (Notice how the same connection between experiencing Christian fellowship and the 'completion' of Christian joy is made by John in 1 John 1:3-4, and likewise by Paul in Philippians 2:2).

I wonder if this connection between Christian fellowship and completed joy has hit home to you over the last year? That whilst fully-expressed 'face to face' Christian fellowship was hindered, your Christian joy dwindled as well, and felt somehow incomplete. This verse makes sense of that experience: there is a measure of Christian fellowship that can only take place face to face, and Christian fellowship is what completes Christian joy.

As you read these words, I imagine that all of our churches will have resumed in-person ('face to face') services. What a joy it is to gather together once again with beloved brothers and sisters in Christ! Thank God that he has provided Christian fellowship as the context in which Christian joy comes to completion, and commit yourself afresh to gathering with God's people for 'face-to-face' fellowship week by week, so that your joy may be complete!



# “What in the world is going on!”

## Understanding Revelation 12

Since 2020, our quiet predictable lives have been shattered by Covid 19. Many people are asking, “What in the world is going on?”

Revelation 12 gives us a window into what is happening in the world. In fact, this chapter talks about what has always been going on in the world, ever since Christ went back to heaven. This chapter talks about a great struggle, an ongoing war, the war that lies behind all the other wars, the great cosmic struggle between Satan and Jesus. Here we learn why there are wars, disasters, famines, pandemics, why the world is so disordered and chaotic. The main players on the world stage are not the leaders we see on TV but the three characters we read about here in Revelation 12.

### **The Woman, the Dragon and the Child (v1-5)**

We will look first at these three characters, and then we will look at the war that is going on, then at the devil’s tactics, and finally, at how God’s people overcome. We read in verses 1,2 “A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.”

Who is this woman? Mary the mother of Jesus? Well, yes and no. When we read the gospel of Luke, Mary seems to represent the faithful people of God. She, along with Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna, are all waiting for the Messiah to come. They are the faithful people of God from the Old Testament era. The woman in v1 wears a crown of twelve stars, and in Scripture the number twelve signifies the church. The rest of the chapter seems to confirm that this first character, the woman, represents the church.

In v3 we meet the second character – the dragon. “Then another sign appeared in heaven, an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.”

Seven and ten are numbers of completeness. The heads represent authority on earth and the horns are a symbol of strength.

Who is this dragon? John tells us in v9 “The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him.”

The Dragon is the devil, Satan, the serpent from Eden who persuaded Adam and Eve to rebel against God. But God gave Adam and Eve a great promise, that, one day, from

her seed, a child would come and crush the Serpent's head. And here the child appears – the third character in the chapter. He is Jesus the Messiah. See what is said about him in v5 – “He will rule the nations with a rod of iron.” This phrase comes from Psalm 2, the most quoted messianic Psalm in the New Testament. It is all about Jesus.

In v4 we see that the dragon tries to kill the child as soon as he is born. This happened when King Herod heard about the birth of Jesus, the new king of the Jews he ordered all boys under two years to be killed. Satan knows that this birth means that his days are numbered. And so, right from the start he fights against Jesus.

These are the three characters in the chapter. The Church, Satan, and Jesus. Now let us turn our attention to the war – that began in heaven and that still rages around us today.

### **The war**

In v7-9, John tells us how the war began. “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough and they lost their place in heaven, and the great dragon was hurled down.”

The war did not begin in the garden of Eden. It began in the heart of an angel. There remains a great mystery. But this war which began in heaven was won on earth, through the birth of the child Jesus, through his life, and especially his death and resurrection. He conquered Satan and triumphed over him on the cross.

John describes this victory in v10 “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, for the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.”

Here in v10 the voice from heaven is saying: Now has come ... salvation... Now Jesus has triumphed. Now the dragon has been hurled down and now we can begin to see the future with hope and joy, Jesus has triumphed over Satan – and we are winners, now, already, we are more than conquerors.

But... I hear you saying, “If Jesus has triumphed, why are things so bad down here on earth?” A good question. John answers in v12. The devil is angry, furious, “he knows that his time is short,” he knows that Jesus is coming back. You see, the devil believes in the second coming of Jesus, he believes in it more fervently than many Christians! That is why he is wreaking havoc in the world. That is why

we are in such chaos in 2021. The devil must do as much damage as he can, he is on a desperate rampage especially against the people of God.

But we must not think that the suffering of the church is a sign of Satan's victory. No! the opposite is true. The suffering of the church is a sign of Satan's defeat. And it is a sign that he knows he is defeated, and that makes him furious. And since he cannot touch Jesus, he goes after the church for the whole time the church exists on earth. This period is described in v14 as “a time, times and half a time”, probably meaning three and a half years, since back in v6 it is described as 1,260 days. What is that all about? Since v6 speaks about God's people being protected in the desert, it is probably referring to the length of time it took Israel to travel from Egypt to the edge of the Promised Land. There is a parallel here between Israel's wilderness journey and the New Testament church's journey to the promised land of glory. During this time Satan wages war against us. But he cannot overcome us because of Jesus' death. But the time is short, and the devil knows his time is limited, that is why he vents his rage on God's people in the world.

### **The Devil's tactics**

This chapter shows us that the Devil goes after God's people in 3 ways:

In v10 we see that his first tactic is accusing. Day and night, he accuses and slanders us before God and before others, and in our own hearts. He keeps reminding us of our sin. He keeps telling us that God does not love us, that God is against us. He gets into our minds and tells us that we cannot be God's people because of our sins. We must not allow him to do that. We must keep telling him that “the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleanses us from all sin.” We must reject his accusations in the Name of Jesus. We must keep telling him that Christ died for our sins.

In v9 we see that Satan also goes after God's people by deceiving. “He leads the whole world astray.” Jesus called him “the father of lies.” That is why things are as bad as they are in the world today. The devil has always been spreading lies throughout history. Wars have been started by the spread of lies. Satan promotes evil and denies truth. He spreads misinformation (the new word for lies). People do not know what to believe. See the confusion on the internet just now about Covid 19. Satan spreads confusion. He is the master deceiver.

Thirdly, John says the devil is killing God's people. That is why he is called the red dragon (v3) - the colour of blood.

In John 10, Jesus tells us "the thief comes only to steal, to kill and to destroy." Thousands of God's people throughout history have been killed by Satan and he is still killing our brothers and sisters even today, in many countries. These are Satan's tactics, accusing, deceiving, and killing, and he will not give up, even though the war has already been won by Jesus' triumph on the cross.

## How God's people overcome

V11 "They overcame him, by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

This word "overcome" is a key word in the book of Revelation. It comes up in each of the letters to the seven churches. (Ch. 2,3) "To him who overcomes I will give the right to eat of the tree of life... to him who overcomes I will give authority over the nations..." Seven times Jesus makes promises to those who overcome. Indeed, it is the theme of the book of Revelation. It is a great theme for God's people today. But how do we overcome?

We overcome in three ways.

First by the blood of the Lamb. (v11)

The dragon is right – we are sinners – we do not deserve God's love and mercy, but that's not the whole story, there is a Saviour who deals with our sin. When Satan accuses us, we freely admit that we are sinners. But then we tell him, "Jesus Christ has shed his blood for me, and he has risen, and he is in heaven praying for me just now." We overcome by the blood of the Lamb. This is the weapon that first defeated Satan. The blood shed on the cross where Christ triumphed over Satan – we overcome by the blood of the Lamb shed for us. Satan trembles when we talk about the cross and our confidence in the blood shed for us.

"Forbid it Lord that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God. All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood."

2. By the word of their testimony. (v11) They were not ashamed to speak about Christ – to proclaim and defend Christ and his Word. To speak of their own experience of Christ's saving power. A silent witness is no witness. Imagine a court scene where a witness is called, and he is silent. He cannot tell the court what happened. Every witness enters court because he has experienced something, and because he is willing to speak about it. So it is, with God's people. We overcome Satan by speaking about Jesus and what he has done in our lives. When we do not speak, Satan has won another victory.

3. By not being afraid to die.

John mentions fear of death because he is talking about Satan, and it is Satan who holds the power of death.

In Hebrews 2:14-15 we read that Jesus has destroyed Satan who holds the power of death and Jesus has set believers free from the fear of death. We overcome Satan by telling him, "You cannot make me afraid to die. Jesus has died and risen, and you, Satan are defeated." Fear is one of Satan's weapons, especially in these days of Covid 19. He tells us that if we obey Jesus, we will suffer, we may die. Do not let Satan put the fear of death in you. Jesus has destroyed Satan's power.

In v15 the devil spews out this river of deceit and lies and threats of death. But there is another river mentioned in the last chapter in the Bible, it flows in the New Jerusalem – the river of the water of life, clear as crystal. It flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb and it gives life and truth. It is the perfect contrast to Satan's deluge of lies and deceit.

And so, as we face the future, what in the world is going on? There is a war going on. Because of the Fall and the entry of sin into humanity, our world is broken, distorted and chaotic. But God's first interest in this world is his people. They are more important to him than everything else that is going on. Let us not give way to fear. Jesus has conquered Satan, and rescued us, and he has made us conquerors too.

We overcome by the blood of the Lamb, by believing Christ died for us.

We overcome by the word of our testimony, by speaking out for Jesus.

We overcome by refusing to fear death. Christ has conquered both death and Satan. Hallelujah!



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## **The ethics of Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions (Part 2): How doctors decide**

In the first part we had considered what is meant by cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and described some of the technical aspects of the processes involved. We had also thought about some of the situations where CPR may be felt to be inappropriate and tackled some commonly raised questions. In this article I wish to explain the process by which ethical questions are commonly considered in the health care setting, to examine how this process is applied to CPR, and to explain how the differences between the Christian and secular worldviews may result in some tensions.

The practice of medicine is an inherently ethical endeavour. At the heart of medical practice is the encounter between patient and doctor. In such a medical consultation, three questions are asked:

What is wrong?  
What can be done? and  
What should be done for this patient?

Answering the first two questions involves a doctor's diagnostic skill and their knowledge of treatment options, but the third question introduces the ethical dimension. How then do clinicians address this issue? We begin by discussing how ethics is done in the secular sphere.

At this point it is hard to overemphasise the importance of two American bioethicists, Tom Beauchamp and James Childress. There is no doubt that their book *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* is one of the most successful and influential texts on the subject. The book sets out the authors' approach to ethical questions based on four principles: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. In the English-speaking world their method, now known as principlism, has become the standard way to deal with ethical issues in medicine.

We shall therefore explain the terms in more detail.

## Autonomy

The word autonomy is derived from the Greek and means self-rule. It originally would have referred to independent or self-governing cities or states. It is here applied to an individual person's right to make choices and decisions about what happens to their body.

## Beneficence

This word is derived from Latin and means doing good. A beneficial action is one that results in something that improves the object's welfare.

## Non-maleficence

The principle of non-maleficence is an obligation to avoid harming others.

## Justice

Justice can be thought of as treating others in a fair, equitable and appropriate manner.

## Principles and the question of CPR

Beauchamp and Childress's approach is to list the various aspects of an ethical decision under these headings, to weigh the importance of each, and then use the information to make a balanced judgement. We will now see how these principles might be applied to the question of CPR.

## Beneficence

I have chosen beneficence as the starting point because it is key to the decision as to whether or not CPR is appropriate. The question becomes: will it offer some good to the patient, i.e., is there a realistic chance that it will be successful? This is not always clear cut. It is conceivable that circulation may be restored but only for a short time, or that circulation

will be restored but that the patient is so damaged that normal life is not possible, or that circulation may be restored but that they will succumb in a short space of time to another illness, for example consider a cardiac arrest in a patient with terminal cancer.

## Non-maleficence

CPR is traumatic. As mentioned in the previous article, ribs can be broken. A return of circulation but with significant neurological damage would be considered a potential harm. There are also other types of harm, for example the loss of chance of a peaceful death perhaps with family in attendance.

## Autonomy

Of course the patient's wishes are to be considered. In the UK a patient cannot demand a treatment which is felt to be inappropriate and in cases of disagreement a second opinion can be sought.

## Justice

Resources are finite. In most instances the cardiac arrest team is comprised of staff who are on duty in other areas and who only come together for a 'crash call'. It is not inconceivable for two cardiac arrests to occur in close succession or even at the same time. In such instances the question of fairness becomes acute if there is a prolonged resuscitation attempt for a patient with minimal chance of a good outcome. The number of severely ill patients admitted during the coronavirus pandemic has brought this point into sharp focus.

*Principlism* can be seen to be a useful framework for setting out aspects of an ethical question but it is not a sufficient ethical theory in itself. In order to use such a framework, we

need to understand why autonomy matters and what constitutes justice. Even thinking about the concept of beneficence alone, when we speak of seeking the patient's good, do we mean:

Biomedical good – that which can be achieved by medical interventions aiming to treat a disease;

The patient's perception of their own good.

The good of the patient as a human person capable of reasoned choices.

The ultimate good – that which accords with basic convictions and core beliefs?

Clearly there is more involved in ethical deliberation than the simple balancing of the four principles. How then do we consider ethical questions?

Philosopher Henry David Aiken proposes that when we consider the 'ethical' response to a situation, that is, deciding whether something is 'right' or 'good' or what 'ought' to be done, we can think on four different levels. Aiken's system has been refined by Christian ethicists Glen Stassen and David Gushee in their book *Kingdom Ethics*. I have combined these approaches and will describe the four levels below:

### 1. *The expressive-evocative level*

This describes our initial, unreflective response to a situation. For example the 'Bravo!' or 'Hurrah!' elicited by a good play or result for the sports team, or the 'What rotten luck' in response to bad news. Such responses are subjective, uncritical and reserved for situations where there is little ambiguity or complexity (or at least little apparent ambiguity or complexity). Such expressions merely give vent to our emotions at that time and no question of justification can arise.



## **2. The moral level - What do the rules say?**

At this level we are aware that our gut reaction may not be sufficient and we look to rules for guidance. Also at this level would be the influence of moral rules and norms which specify the behaviours approved by a given community. Aiken notes that moral discourse seldom progresses beyond this level.

## **3. The ethical level - What principles support the rules?**

Sometimes situations arise when it is appropriate to question the rules themselves. Broader principles, such as justice, equality and respect for persons, are sought as the basis and justification of the rules. For example, consider debates in parliament around issues such as abortion or physician-assisted suicide. In such debates, it is the validity of the rules (laws) which is the subject of discussion. Aiken notes that for moral criticism to be something more than an ad hoc expression of personal attitudes is impossible unless we accept that there are ethical principles which are general in normative appeal.

## **4. The post-ethical level - What does it mean to be good?**

Finally, at the post-ethical level Aiken considers discussion which questions the very 'ground' of moral reasoning, including 'Why should I be moral?' At this point we see the influence of the basic convictions that form an individual's worldview. Basic convictions are the basis for our principles, rules and overall ethical reasoning. You can't go deeper than basic convictions.

Again, let us apply this scheme to the question of CPR.

## **The emotive response.**

Here we may observe the uncritical gut reaction of the individual, whether they are in favour or against the idea of CPR being performed in a particular instance. Tacit views about quality of life or value of the individual may underlie our biases.

## **Rules**

Rules and guidance can dictate best practice, but the rules may come under scrutiny. For example, during the earlier stages of the coronavirus pandemic there was concern that new guidance about CPR and referral to intensive care would disadvantage the elderly and those with physical or intellectual disabilities. Rules can change and rules can be critiqued. For example, legislation regarding abortion in both Ireland and Northern Ireland has changed in recent years. Many would seek to change the law in order to permit euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

## **Principles**

What principles underpin the rules or cause us to question them? For those who hold to a utilitarian approach, that is, seeking the greatest good for the greatest number of patients, it would seem prudent to have a lower threshold for DNACPR decisions in order to safeguard limited intensive care resources for those most likely to benefit. But, taken on its own, utilitarianism has little regard for the value of an individual or the duty of care that health workers have to the vulnerable, and so a conflict arises. Where the chance of success is less clear cut, we may also see a conflict between those who hold to the principle of sanctity of life and those for whom quality of life is more important. There will also be a conflict between those who hold autonomy as the overriding principle and those for whom this must be balanced with other factors.

## **Basic convictions**

As above, ultimately, how an individual prioritises the competing principles will depend on their basic convictions or worldview.

Aiken reckoned that few ethical deliberations went beyond the level of rules. Indeed, psychologists will tell us that most ethical decisions are reached at the expressive / evocative level and that we devise arguments after the decision has come to mind. That may be the case but it is not so surprising when you consider that our beliefs at the deepest level will greatly influence the emotive response.

## **The Christian mind**

What forms the basic convictions of the Christian? In his book *The Christian Mind*, Harry Blamers, one-time student of CS Lewis, notes its distinctive features as follows:

Its supernatural orientation - the Christian mind is aware of God's transcendent presence as creator and sustainer of all that there is.  
Its awareness of evil - the Christian mind is aware of evil, not just in terms of breaking civil laws or transgressing society's mores but evil as sin against God.  
Its conception of truth - in contrast to contemporary relativism, the Christian mind understands that there is, as Francis Schaeffer put it, 'true truth', that is verifiable, objective reality.  
Its acceptance of authority - the Christian mind understands and accepts the authorities that God has put in place and does so because it accepts the ultimate authority of God himself (Titus 3:1).  
Its concern for the person - the Christian mind sees individuals as fellow beings made in the image of God.

We will discuss this further when we consider personhood [in the next article].

Its sacramental cast - for the Christian mind there is no sacred/ secular split. All is to be done for the glory of God (Col. 3:17, 3:23).

It is important to note that, even if we are striving for a Biblical perspective, and desire to make decisions that honour God, we are still fallen and very fallible. Our initial - and even our most carefully reasoned - responses may still be wrong. There may be factors we have not considered, possible unintended consequences, or we may simply have not understood the question correctly. Sometimes there may seem to be no clear right decision. It is good practice to critique our gut reactions to make sure we are not making the wrong decision. Our consciences need trained.

What then forms the secular mind? A number of factors are involved. Philosophers will refer to intuitive notions of what is right or good. The principle of common grace tells us that there are still good things in secular life and individuals may seek what they perceive to be good. This should not surprise us as when Paul speaks of the Gentile world in Romans chapter 2, he notes that 'the requirements of the law are written on their hearts.' But their understanding of that law is compromised. In chapter 1 of the same letter Paul tells us that those hearts are 'foolish and darkened.' Upbringing and culture are important influences too. We may lament the trend away from Biblical principles in public life but we have been living in a good time for Christian morals. The legacy of Reformation thinking, the influence of men such as Wilberforce and Shaftesbury, along with the revivals associated with Wesley

and Whitefield meant there has been a strong Christian influence on public morality. That time is passing. Modern society suppresses the truth about God. The opening chapters of Romans are a damning indictment of a culture that is turning from God. In addition spiritual forces are at work - their minds are 'blinded' (2 Corinthians 4:4). We live in a post-Christian society and its members have, as Harry Blamires described, a post-Christian mind.

At present, in DNACPR discussions, there is often a high degree of agreement between those with secular and Christian worldviews, as to what constitutes a good outcome and the right way to proceed but this may change. Where disagreements occur it will often involve perceptions of quality of life and the value of the one whose life is in question. The coronavirus pandemic has raised such questions, as a more utilitarian approach to DNACPR decisions had been suggested as being appropriate. We will consider this matter further in the next part.



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# Conversations with the King

*Ben-Israel conducts the second of 4 interviews with Solomon, king of Israel.*

## ***Ben-Israel***

“You’re a man of your word, Your Majesty; you said you’d have me in again for another interview after the temple project was completed, and I was delighted to get the invitation to come and see you. Our readers benefited from your godly wisdom last time and I’m keen to glean more of the same. The building of the temple has been a true milestone in your reign; seven years in the building and the opening ceremony was a glorious occasion indeed. My sources tell me that the building was actually completed almost a year before the opening, perhaps I could ask you why there was a delay?”

## ***King Solomon***

“The LORD’s name be praised Ben, it’s good to see you again and share with you what the LORD has been doing, all the glory must go to Him. You’re right, the grand opening was eleven months after the completion of the construction of the temple, but such was the LORD’s timing. The temple marks a whole new era for us as God’s people. You’ll know how each year we celebrate the end of the wandering and living in tents with the Feast of Tabernacles, and we remember how the LORD shepherded us through the wilderness; this new era is a similar milestone in our history. Not only is the time of wandering over, now the time of war is over; so I wanted the opening to coincide with that festival. Yes, I’m sure some wondered at the delay, but God’s timing is perfect. Often we are impatient and keen to press on, but as my father David wrote in one of his many psalms, our times are in the LORD’s hands.”

## ***Ben-Israel***

“Wise words indeed Your Majesty; I’m often very impatient with my colleagues and nothing good comes from it! The day of the opening was a truly magnificent day and we’ll always remember it. Every time we have the feast, we’ll remember the end of wandering and the end of war. Not all of our readers were at the opening, although many packed into Jerusalem for the occasion; perhaps you can give us your personal account of the day.”

## **King Solomon**

“Gladly Ben, I’ll never forget it! First of all the people assembled, all the elders and the heads of the tribes, and the chief fathers of the children of Israel, all the congregation of Israel came together. The priests brought up the Ark of the Covenant and carefully placed it in the heart of the new temple, the Most Holy Place. Many sacrifices were made, because we were approaching God – and as you know we sinners need our sins to be atoned for if we are to truly meet with God. But meet with Him we did, for the LORD God came and made His holy presence visible, His glory cloud filled the temple... we were in awe! We knew the nearness of our God through that cloud – it both concealed and revealed the fringes of His infinite glory. The priests had to stop their work, and together we were still and knew that the LORD was God! The LORD of hosts is with us! The God of Jacob is our refuge!

Then I had to speak, the congregation were all ears and I knew that in that moment I had to lead our people in covenant renewal, I had to rededicate our whole nation to the LORD and not just this new building. By God’s grace I spoke and the theme was clear, it had to be clear – to God be the glory, great things He has done! The narrative of how we got here centred on God’s promise to my father David. The LORD had promised him that this temple would be built by his son, and so the occasion was one in which to remember God’s faithfulness. He makes wonderful promises and He always keeps His promises! With the backdrop of God’s holy presence, I encouraged the congregation to devote their loyalty and their lives to the LORD. I urged them to walk in His ways and keep His commandments, I urged them to be a faithful witness to our faithful God.

Then I spread out my hands toward heaven and prayed. I led our people in adoration of the LORD. The One who is holy, the One who has mercy for His people, the One who keeps His word, the One who cannot be contained in any building no matter how grand, the One who has condescended to meet with His people, and the One who hears the cries of His people. Our cry even in that day had to be a cry for salvation: “Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive.” I confessed our sins before the LORD; sins against one another and sins against God Himself. I prayed for God’s compassion to be upon us as His covenant people for He is the One

who has called us to Himself to be His inheritance. I pray it still; that God would keep on bringing His people back to Himself. That’s what the whole temple is about – God drawing His people out of the world, forgiving their sins and bringing them near to Himself. The temple prayer was “Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee.””

## **Ben-Israel**

“I sense you have your father’s heart King Solomon, for he too prayed in Psalm 27 “One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.” I can tell that this is a desire you want to see in all of God’s people. It is indeed a wonderful thing that God has done, drawing near to His people through the temple, and making His presence felt. No wonder the celebrations lasted a full week, and I hear there were many more sacrifices and much feasting! Now that that week has just ended, we are left with a permanent reminder of the presence of God in our midst, a place where we can go to meet with the LORD, what a wonderful blessing! I can see just why it requires such a wonderful building, for it is as you call it “The House of God.” Tell me then, how did you even begin to design such a place?”

## **King Solomon**

“Only by God’s grace, Ben! And according to God’s promise – He had promised my father that I would build it and it was at God’s command that I started this project! I thank the LORD for the wisdom He gave me not only to start but to see it through to its completion. I suppose the starting point for me was that it had to be worthy of the LORD’s name. As it says in Psalm 115 “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory...” It had to be magnificent then, no expense was to be spared. But more than that; this was to be a meeting place – a place where God wants to meet with His people. It also had to be a place of rest, a place where people can find peace with God. And it had to be a place that reflected something of the glory of the LORD – so there’s a lot of gold!

Three things were never far from my mind in its design and construction: beauty, fear and invitation. Beauty, because of the words you’ve already quoted from my father’s 27th Psalm; to dwell in the house of the LORD is to “behold the beauty of the LORD”. It had to be beautiful,

indeed Psalm 96 says "...strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." Fear, because the LORD God is holy, He is to be feared, He is not to be trifled with, He is not to be mocked, He is not to be ignored. If you were to step into the Most Holy Place, you'd see two large statues of cherubim with their wings outstretched, guarding the Ark of the Covenant. They serve as a reminder that the temple is not a gym hall or a shopping centre – this is no casual place, it is God's holy place. God is to be feared. That said, the LORD in His mercy has given us this temple as a meeting place – it is also to be inviting. There are two large golden doors which open! There is a way to meet with God, just one way into the temple, one glorious way! They remind us all of the coming Messiah, the One who will be the true and eternal mediator between God and man.

And even before the golden doors stand 2 glorious pillars! They are, I believe, the most glorious parts of the exterior. They are tall, 30 feet tall, and 5 and a half feet wide with ornate heads on them, and like the cherubim in the Most Holy Place they stand as sentries to the structure. God has given them names: on the right we have Jachin, meaning "He shall establish", and on the left we have Boaz, meaning "In Him is strength". For every Israelite they stand as monuments to the grace of the LORD. Confronted with greatness, the holiness, and the power of the LORD, we feel our smallness, our sinfulness, and our weakness. How can I approach God? How can I draw near to such a One as the LORD? Look to the right – and hear the promise of God: "I will establish." The one who comes to God, He will by no means cast out; Jachin encourages us to trust God's promise and enter by God's grace. And likewise Boaz on the left: when you feel that you just don't have the strength to turn again to God, when you feel like a failure and unable to step towards the door; Boaz says "In Him is strength". It's only as we turn to God in our weakness that we find in Him the strength we need. "

### ***Ben-Israel***

"The LORD has granted you much wisdom indeed King Solomon; it's as if you've read my heart; confronted with the beauty and worthiness of our God, I often feel so unworthy to draw near to Him. Jachin and Boaz will be a helpful testimony to the promise and power of the LORD for all God's people as we draw near to His house. I can see why they mean so much to you, and I understand

now why you made them so big! Maybe I can quiz you about one more item in the temple complex which is also big – The Sea. What's the significance of this giant wash basin?"

### ***King Solomon***

"The Sea is indeed a giant wash basin Ben, and there are 10 other smaller basins around the temple building. The smaller ones are for the washing of offerings and utensils used in the sacrifices, but The Sea is reserved for the washing of the priests themselves. It is very large, a full 15 feet in diameter and it holds over ten thousand gallons of water! Its size is meant to demonstrate its importance – as we draw near to God, we need to be clean. My father's great psalm of repentance teaches us how to pray when we draw near to God: "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." The Sea, like every other part of the temple complex, is an object lesson on how we are to meet with God – we first of all go to Him for cleansing. Make sure you understand this Ben, The Sea does not teach that we need to clean ourselves up before we come to God – rather it teaches that we must come to God to be made clean.

You need this, Ben, as do I. We must come humbly to God's appointed priest and ask for God's forgiveness – only through his work can we be made clean and made fit to meet with God. Our priests here at the temple are faithful men Ben, but we still await God's final and forever Priest, that Priest who will make final propitiation for the sins of the people. In Psalm 24 my father David foretold that one day He will ascend this hill of the LORD and that He will stand in this holy place – there He is described as the King of Glory! He is the one who will save His people from their sins. And not just Israel as we know it today, that final Priest will be the Saviour of the world, and that's why the base of The Sea is so elaborate. The huge basin stands on a square of 12 oxen, 3 facing in each direction of the compass. They speak of God's power to cleanse not just Israel, but all the families of the earth – just as He promised our father Abraham. And so it is, the temple stands not only as a witness for our nation, but it is to be a light to the nations of the world. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. It is my heart's desire Ben, that many will come to meet the LORD God through the witness of this temple, that they would find rest for their souls and forgiveness for their sins."

### ***Ben-Israel***

“May the LORD give us all that same passion and vision for the lost, O King. Thank you for your time, and above all thank you for sharing the wisdom that the LORD has given to you in abundance.”

### ***King Solomon***

“Always good to see you Ben, perhaps you could publish the final blessing from the opening ceremony – not all of your readers would have heard it, but it is for them, for every single one of them.

“Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses. May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers. And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the LORD, be near the LORD our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day may require, that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day.””



Robert Johnston is minister of Knock congregation in East Belfast. He is married to Julie and together they are blessed (and kept busy!) with three children; Ben (14), Luke (13) and Sophie (10).



# Hey, Campers!

## EPC Camp - the highlight of your year.

But the big question is, "Are camps happening this summer?"

We'd like to think so, but only God knows for sure. In the meantime, leaders haven't forgotten you and have been making tentative, provisional plans for camp. So, even if things are a bit different, let's pray that there will be opportunities for friendship, fun and learning from God's word together this summer.

### Watch this space!



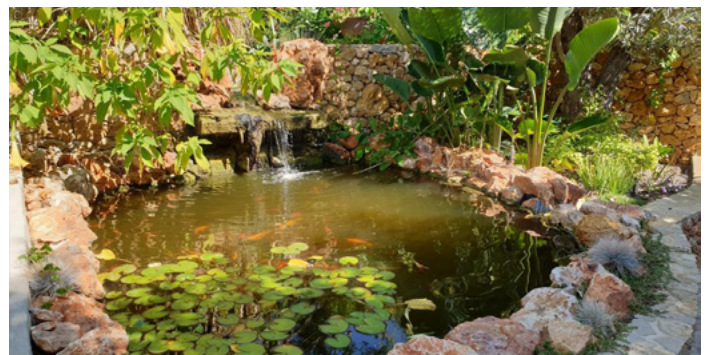
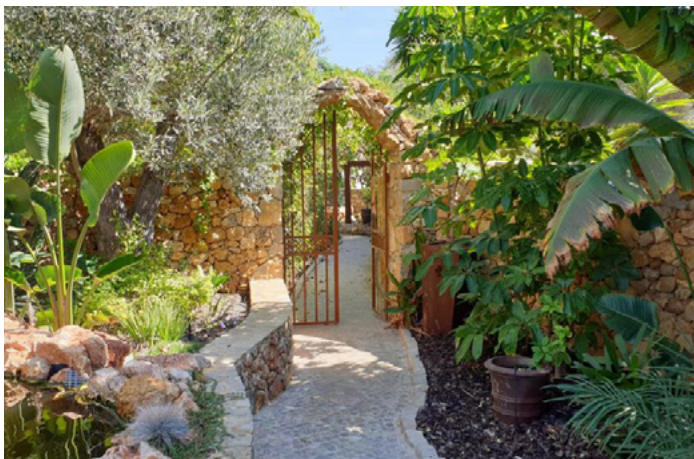
## Peter Moore (Crumlin EPC)

Hi, my name is Peter and I go to Crumlin EPC. For the past six months I have been in Portugal, studying at the International Theological Learning College. The course has been good so far and the teaching has been great with topics such as Old Testament Survey, the life of Jesus, Evangelism and Christian Discipleship to name a few.

The course is due to run until mid-June and then the plan is for three weeks of kids' camp in July, but with Covid we just have to wait and see if the camp can still go ahead. I am not 100% sure where this may lead but for a number of years I have been involved with ACRE International and I would like to continue to work with that mission as much as possible.



*Peter, second from left.*





## Evangelism conference: for the crisis we face

Introducing a vibrant talk on personal evangelism at the ReformationUK conference, church-planting minister Revd Andy Young summed up the crisis we face: "Europe is the only continent in the world where the church is receding". How can we reach family, friends and neighbours with the glorious gospel - those who have 'no hope and are without God' (Ephesians 2:12)? We know that few will enter a church; many will only hear the Lord Jesus' name as a swear word. Truly we face a crisis that must be addressed urgently.

### **"Launch out into the deep"**

To stir us into action Revd Geoff Thomas, pastor of more than 50 years' experience, fittingly opened the conference by speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ's miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5). Here the Lord had directed seasoned fishermen - who had caught nothing all night - to simply "launch out into the deep". To be successful fishers of men in this crisis nothing is needed more than to take Christ at his word.

### **"Every talk was...full of Biblical truth, practical wisdom"**

Therefore being led by the principles found in the word of God, Revds David Strain, Bill Schweitzer, and Dan Peters gave particularly edifying conference addresses. Other conference speakers included Matthew Roberts (IPC), Peter Naylor, Andy Young and Donald John MacLean (EPCEW).

The conference topics answered the questions: 'What is the Gospel?', 'What is evangelism?', and "How do we evangelise?" Topics included prayerful dependence on God, evangelistic preaching, personal evangelism, and youth work.

Attendee Revd Douglas McCallum - minister of Cambridge Presbyterian Church - said: "I was hugely blessed by this year's Evangelism conference. Every talk was of a very high quality - full of Biblical truth, practical wisdom, and an appropriate level of challenge. The fellowship was a real encouragement...I am already looking forward to the conference in 2021."

### **Highlights**

Bill Schweitzer, speaking on I Cor 15:3-5, reminded us that the Gospel is not just any good news- it is the Gospel of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, and has eternal consequences. He also showed us, from Revelation 14:6, that the Gospel is a noun as well as a verb and needs to be proclaimed - the apostle John saw an angel "having the eternal gospel to gospel". Andy Young then gave two stirring addresses on preaching and presenting Christ - the One who is 'chief among ten thousand' (Song of Solomon 5:10). It dovetailed well with Dan Peters' talk on evangelistic preaching, which encouraged ministers to be exegetical, yet enterprising, preachers. Donald John MacLean spoke on the

free offer of the Gospel - noting that it is an invitation from the Lord Jesus Himself: a pleading, a selling, a promise to be offered to all freely (Isa 51:5). Peter Naylor then spoke on the necessity of teaching the young people whom God has entrusted to our care. He stressed that what a person learns first will be the last thing they lose, and if we do not teach our young people, others will. Therefore practical advice was given on how to perform the important task of catechising our children.

Of course, all these tasks are only possible by God's grace. Revd David Strain's talk on 'prayerful dependence on the sovereign God' undergirded much of what was said by other conference speakers. His very insightful talk on 'Today's False Gospels' - therapeutic, reactionary, and social - left delegates thankful for Christ's work on the cross, which deals with the heart of the problem: the human heart.

### **"I loved being there" (Liam, aged 24)**

One delegate, Liam, commented: "The conference was an exceptional time of Christian fellowship, alongside solid reformed teaching, with a real emphasis on the glory of God as revealed in the Gospel. I loved being there and very much look forward to attending next year!"

At the end of the conference Jonathan Winch, Executive Director of Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary (who hosted the conference), concluded, "It's great that hundreds joined us, online and in-person from across four continents. The challenge now is to 'launch out into the deep' with this good news. The cross of Christ is the only answer to the crisis of our time."

The conference was hosted by Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary - based in Newcastle, England. They run a conference every year - this year is on the Mission of the Church. Conference addresses can be freely viewed online via their YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/c/WestminsterPresbyterianTheologicalSeminaryUK/videos](http://www.youtube.com/c/WestminsterPresbyterianTheologicalSeminaryUK/videos)

# A new website!

Back in January, a new website for our denomination was launched on [www.epcni.org.uk](http://www.epcni.org.uk). Please visit the new site, where you'll find information about our beliefs, history, congregations and denominational ministries; as well as being able to download our POVCA guidelines (Committed to Care) and child protection forms. We hope to keep the site regularly updated with denominational news and events.

On the site you'll also find that a new blog entitled FOCUS has been launched. The aim of FOCUS is to provide short articles which help & encourage you in your Christian life. We hope to release 2-3 articles each week, so please check the blog regularly and share the articles with others if you've found them helpful.

For those of you on Facebook, you can follow the denomination's new account (<https://www.facebook.com/epcireland>), which will keep you up-to-date with new articles and information on the site.

We are immensely thankful to Christopher Doherty and others, who have tirelessly maintained our website over the past 10 years or so, keeping us up-to-date with denominational news and resources, and providing information on our church to potential visitors. Please keep the work and ministry of the website and FOCUS in your prayers.



[About us](#) [News](#) [Find a church](#) [Ministries](#) [Focus](#)

[Watch Online](#)

## Proclaiming Christ & Him crucified

[About us](#)

We are an evangelical denomination committed to the reformed faith, who exist to worship God and spread the good news of his gospel

We have eleven congregations across Northern Ireland. While we meet in different locations, we have a common aim - we love Jesus & want to make him known. We are sinners, who have experienced God's grace, through Jesus Christ his Son.

### LATEST NEWS



#### Presbytery

Details of December's Presbytery Meeting.  
27 Jan 2021

#### EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE



#### The Evangelical Presbyterian

The Jan-Mar 2021 edition of The Evangelical Presbyterian is now available.  
22 Jan 2021

#### EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE



#### The Evangelical Presbyterian

The latest edition of the Magazine is now available.  
10 Dec 2020

### FOCUS

#### The Scandal of Easter

Mark Johnston

#### Does how we worship really matter? (Part Three)

Andy Hambleton

#### Facing the unexpected

Harold Gibson

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised"

## Andrew, Eunice & Joy Moody



### Who are we?

Andrew is from Ballymena, is a trained pharmacist and has also studied theology. Eunice is from Jeju Island, South Korea, and is a trained nurse and midwife. They met while they were working as missionaries in Kuluva Hospital, Uganda.

### What do we do?

In April 2004 we began working with Nebbi Diocese in North West Uganda. Andrew opened the Christian Resource Centre (CRC) which stocks Bibles (in various languages), hymn books and a good range of Christian books. We also sell stationery and provide photocopying services. This helps to pay the staff so that the books can be sold as cheaply as possible. Since 2017 Andrew and his friend, Rev. Paul Kim, have been teaching theology in a number of refugee camps. They taught a two-year course in these camps, which included subjects such as Old Testament and New Testament survey, Bible doctrine, preaching, and church history. The students were pastors, preachers and youth leaders from South Sudan. So far over 300 people have finished this course. We were teaching a new group of around 100 students when we had to stop due to Covid-19 restrictions. Please pray that we will be able to restart teaching this group and other new groups, later this year.

Eunice had been working as the Diocesan Health Coordinator. This meant working alongside the five health units in the Diocese, giving them advice and connecting them with government programmes. She handed this work over to a Ugandan doctor before we came to UK. When we return, she will continue to help the Diocese in an advisory capacity. She is also trying to raise funds for three projects in Nebbi Diocese. One is a new children's ward in Padwot Health Unit, the second is an operating theatre in Zumbo Health Unit, the third is for a Nurse and Midwife training college. Nebbi Diocese covers three districts in Uganda. There are currently no such training facilities in these districts. The local government has asked the church to open one. Please pray that the necessary funding will be received. Unfortunately, Bishop Alphonse died in January. So far, the Diocese has been unable to agree on a new bishop. Retired Bishop/Archbishop Henry is currently acting as their Bishop. Please pray that a new Bishop can be appointed soon.

### How is Joy?

Our daughter, Joy, is now 17 years old. She is a student at Northern Regional College (NRC), Ballymena campus. She is studying a basic entry course, since she left her school in Kenya with no official qualifications. This course should allow her to progress to higher level courses. She will continue to stay with Andrew's mother when we return to Uganda.

### Future Plans?

We have been in N Ireland since July 2020. This has been to help Joy settle into the UK education system. She will stay in Ballymena with Andrew's mother while she studies at NRC. Andrew and Eunice hope to return to Uganda by the summer. Once there we plan to finish building our new house in Yumbe. Yumbe is much further north than Goli and the area is 80% Muslim. It is also close to Bidi Bidi refugee camp which is the biggest camp in Uganda with a population of over 250,000. Andrew has already taught there several times and he hopes to start a regular training course there as soon as our house is finished. Eunice hopes to start a ministry with local women in Yumbe. We plan to divide our time between Goli and Yumbe.

### Prayer Points

- That Nebbi Diocese will appoint their next bishop soon.
- That we be able to enter Uganda before the summer.
- That God will make clear what our future ministry in Yumbe should be.

### Praise God

Joy is happy to study at NRC.  
We have had a good visit in South Korea.



## Obituary of Mr Dobbin Kelly (Groomsport EPC)



Mr T.A.D Kelly, one of the elders in our congregation, better known as "Dobbin", passed away on 10th December 2020. Dobbin's health had been declining for some time, but prior to that he had been most faithful in his attendance at the means of grace. His association with our denomination began in our Stranmillis Church where he was elected as a deacon in 1969. He was later made an elder in 1990 and in those days he was particularly remembered for his frequent solos at Harvest Thanksgiving services and other such occasions. Twenty five years ago he became the founding father of the work in Groomsport, along with his family, and it would be no exaggeration to say that, humanly speaking, the work would not have begun without his contribution. Dobbin was pre-eminently a man of prayer, in fact the first time I heard his voice was at a prayer meeting in Stranmillis, while the last word he spoke was "Amen", in response to my prayer. How fitting!

Dobbin was "Mr Loyalty" - loyal to his dear wife, his family, his local church and above all else, to his Lord. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Jean, his children Ken, Irene, Mervyn, Sandra, and Karen, their spouses Jen, Kevin, Vivienne, Ken and Roy, their 14 grandchildren and 31 great grandchildren. By the kind mercy of God, Dobbin lived to see the promise of Psalm 145v4 fulfilled in his family circle, "One generation shall praise thy works to another and shall declare thy mighty acts". Sadly, because of the present circumstances, we had to limit the funeral proceedings to a brief service at the graveside. He is gone but not forgotten. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116v15).

## Professor Robert Rogers (Groomsport EPC)



Professor Robert Rogers, commonly known as "Bob", went to be with his Lord on the morning of 11th January 2021. Bob had been in and out of hospital for some time but, in the kind providence of God, he died in his son Owen's home. Bob began to worship with us soon after our new building opened in Groomsport and he was a popular member of our fellowship. He was a great lover of Reformed books and I enjoyed his personal company at the Banner of Truth conference on numerous occasions. In the distant past Bob was the Minister of Grange Baptist Church. After that he acted as Governor of the Maze prison for a time, but perhaps he will be remembered most for his work in Hungary. He established a theological college there and taught a generation of students the doctrines of the Reformed Faith. The great day will reveal his achievements, but he was even honoured in this life a few years ago for his contribution to Hungarian society. The Hungarian government presented him with a gold medal, a rare honour indeed. Bob is survived by his son Owen and daughter-in-law Elaine plus two grandchildren, Sam and Anna. By his own request, the funeral consisted of a private committal at the graveside. We lament Bob's passing but we rejoice that he is now "absent from the body, but present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5v8). He was a Christian gentleman.

### Obituary of Elizabeth McKenzie (Ballyclare EPC)

Elizabeth McKenzie will likely be known by many older readers. Part of the McKenzie clan, she leaves behind her two sisters, Phoebe and Evangeline, together with her brothers, RB McKenzie, who has for some years lived on the North Coast, and Wesley, with other siblings having pre-deceased her. We send our loving sympathies to these and all the wider family and perhaps especially to her niece, Cynthia, who did so much for her.

Elizabeth was brought up and lived all her days in Ballyclare. She had worked in a number of settings and was certainly not afraid of hard toil. That was always to be seen in the way that she kept her home and with a particular emphasis on the brass which had to shine. She was greatly loved by neighbours and friends, many of whom had shown great practical concern for her in her latter years. Elizabeth would often be seen walking in the town, usually laden with her shopping and stopping for a chat with one of her many acquaintances.

She was greatly loved and appreciated in the Ballyclare congregation and often brought a smile to faces. She was extremely deaf which could sometimes make communication very difficult, but, over the years, by means of a variety of devices, it was her great joy to hear God's word. She loved the Saviour, she loved his word, and she loved the salvation he brought, and it was her particular delight to muse upon the inexplicable sovereign grace of God that had reached down to one born in trespasses and sins but made alive in Christ.

A few years ago, she had been told that she had a serious illness and so expected to live only a short time. Elizabeth was always ready to get something of a word in for the Lord, but this news only served to freshly stir her evangelistic concern and many will have heard her testimony. In practice, she lived much longer than expected and leaves behind her a very lovely tribute to her Saviour.

Our joy is that she is with Jesus, which is far better. Elizabeth's funeral service was held on Wednesday 3rd February under Covid restrictions but was streamed so that her wider family and friends could be involved.

# PRAISE & PRAYER

Give thanks for the Lord's day, for freedom to worship corporately and for men who are faithful stewards of God's word. Pray that we will consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting one another.

Thank God and pray for those who use their skills and knowledge of technology to support the work of the church, especially in COVID times. Thank him for the launch of the denomination's new website and blog. Pray for those who write articles for FOCUS and ask that these will be useful within and beyond our denomination.

Thank God for the theology courses which Andrew Moody and Rev. Paul Kim have taught in refugee camps in North West Uganda. Praise him for the South Sudanese pastors, preachers and youth leaders who attended. Pray for these brothers in their difficult situations, remembering the students whose course was interrupted by COVID restrictions. Pray that Andrew will be able to restart teaching this group later this year.

Give thanks for the good work Eunice Moody has done as Health Coordinator in Nebbi Diocese, Uganda. Pray for the necessary funding for the planned children's ward, operating theatre and Nurse and Midwife Training College.

Pray for Joy Moody. Ask that she will know God's help in her studies at NRC and in her time living with her Granny as her parents return to Uganda.

Praise God for godly men and women who have gone before and who have pointed us to Christ by their teaching and example. Pray that those who have lost loved ones will know the Lord's comfort.

## PRAISE & PRAYER

Praise God for the knowledge that those who are his shall see his face in righteousness and will be satisfied when they awake in his likeness.

Pray for Peter Moore studying at theological college in Portugal. Pray that his studies will equip him to be useful in the Lord's work and that he will know God's leading for his future involvement with ACRE International.

Confess before God the sins of our nation, praying that he will have mercy on us and grant repentance to many. Pray that Christians will know his word and stand firm in a day of fast-shifting social norms. Pray especially for young people to be kept from the devil's lies in an age of gender confusion.

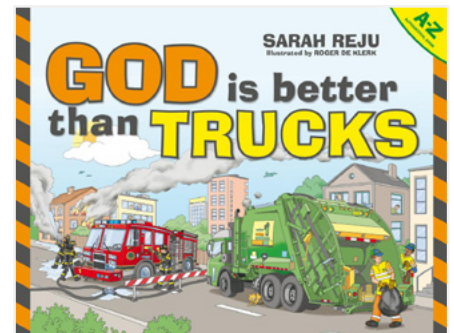
Pray that church camps and holiday Bible clubs will be able to take place this summer. Pray that leaders will be wise in their planning. Pray for spiritual blessing to come to our children and teenagers.

Thank God for the ongoing witness and ministry of the Evangelical Bookshop and for online sales continuing over lockdown. Pray for the staff and trustees as they steer the shop through challenging times. Pray that good books will be used to exalt the name of Christ and strengthen the church.

Pray for many in our congregations who have poor health. Ask that they will know the comfort of God's presence and relief from pain and distress. Thank God for the access we have to health care, medicines etc. Praise God for spiritual healing found in Christ.

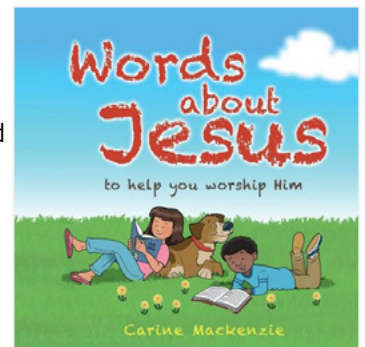
By the time you read this, it is hoped that the Evangelical Book Shop will have reopened its doors for business. In the meantime, new stock has been arriving and online sales have been continuing. There's no better time to visit the website or, if permissible, get along to the shop in person. Here's a short selection of titles for toddlers, teens and in-betweens. End-of-session prize-givings may not be happening in the same way, but if you are a Sunday school teacher or youth leader, giving a book is still a great way to reach out with God's truth and keep children connected.

Title: [God is better than Trucks](#)  
Author: [Sarah Reju](#)  
Publisher: [Christian Focus](#)  
RRP £7.99  
Our Price £5.99



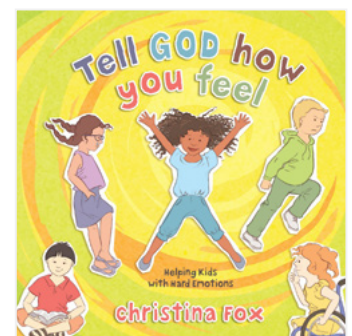
From A - Z, find out about Ambulances, Bulldozers and Car Carriers, and about how God is better than all of them. Little people will love the illustrations in this and its companion book, God is better than Princesses.

Title: [Words about Jesus to help you worship him](#)  
Author: [Carine Mackenzie](#)  
Publisher: [Christian Focus](#)  
RRP £7.99 Our Price £6.99



The Bible uses words like Saviour, Christ, Immanuel and Redeemer, but what do they mean? With child-friendly explanations and full-colour illustrations throughout, this book will help children worship the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

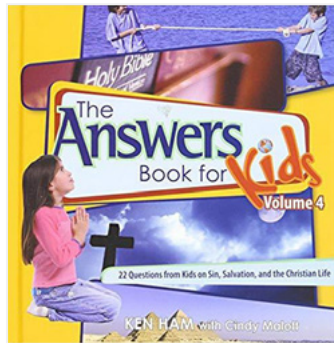
Title: [Tell God how you feel](#)  
Author: [Christina Fox](#)  
Publisher: [Christian Focus](#)  
RRP £9.99 Our Price £8.99



Join children Mia and Josh as they experience fear, hurt, loneliness and disappointment. And then discover that the psalm-writers knew all about those emotions, told God how they felt and learned to find his help. Each chapter comes with questions to encourage discussion at home.

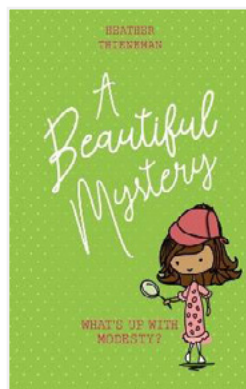
# BOOK REVIEWS

Title: [The Answers Book for Kids series](#)  
 Authors: [Ken Ham & others](#)  
 Publisher: [Master Books](#)  
 RRP £5.99 each  
 Our Price £4.99 each



By answering interesting questions from kids, this six book series equips children to defend their faith against a secular worldview in a fallen world. Topics include dinosaurs and the flood, Babel and the Ice Age, space and astronomy. (Also from Master Books, check out Answers Book 4 Teens)

Title: [A Beautiful Mystery](#)  
 Author: [Heather Thieneman](#)  
 Publisher: [Christian Focus](#)  
 RRP £12.99 Our Price £9.99



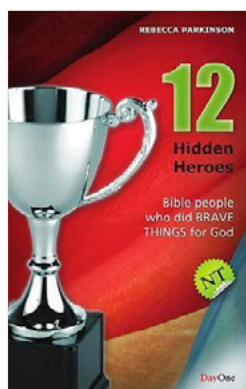
In a sensitive, age-appropriate way, this book opens up from scripture the themes of body image, inner beauty, modesty, God's design for marriage and, above all, the need for Christ. Mothers will welcome the opportunity to address these issues with their pre-adolescent daughters. Girls will love the artwork, humour and illustrations drawn from a variety of familiar sources.

Title: [Maud Kells, Fearless in the Forest](#)  
 Author: [Jean Gibson](#)  
 Publisher: [Christian Focus](#)  
 RRP £5.99 Our Price £4.50



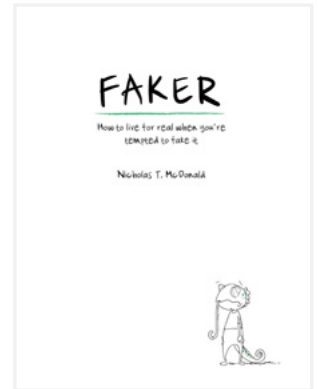
Written for young teens, this is the story of a young Northern Irish girl who went to Africa despite her family's objections, due to the crystal clear call on her life of a God who assured her, 'I am with you, I am all you need.' Maud found that out to be absolutely true in all circumstances.

Title: [12 Hidden Heroes \(OT\), 12 Hidden Heroes \(NT\)](#)  
 Author: [Rebecca Parkinson](#)  
 Publisher: [Day One Publications](#)  
 RRP £5 Our Price £3.99



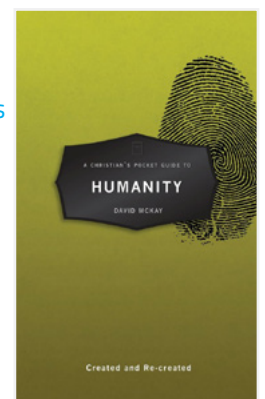
The Bible is full of unnoticed characters like Abishai, Hiram and Paul's nephew. Learn about them and from them and how they were used by God in great ways. Each chapter concludes with application and a What do you think? section aimed at young people.

Title: [Faker](#)  
 Author: [Nicholas T. McDonald](#)  
 Publisher: [The Good Book Company](#)



RRP £5.99 Our Price £4.50  
 Have you ever felt like a faker? If people really knew who we were, what would they think? Would they still care? What would life look like if we stopped pretending? This richly illustrated book for teens and older explores these questions and provides the thrilling answer found in a story told 2000 years ago.

Title: [The Christian's Pocket Guide to Humanity - Created and Re-created](#)  
 Author: [David McKay](#)  
 Publisher: [Christian Focus Publications](#)  
 Pages: 113  
 RRP £5.99 Our Price £4.47



Many of us are simply bewildered by all the discussion with which we are regularly bombarded in the media on issues of identity and gender. Not only are we bewildered but we also struggle to apply clear Biblical teaching into a debate where new issues seem to arise every second week. Here, in four chapters, David McKay takes us to the heart of things. He sets before us what the Scriptures teach on the creation of man, the Fall, the work of Christ and future glory, and applies these truths with great effectiveness into the current situation.

The present reviewer was amazed that in such a slim volume not only were the 'big' issues of identity and gender considered but lots of other matters as well were skilfully touched upon – the origin of the soul, trichotomy and singleness to name but a few.

The book is attractively presented and can be profitably read by any individual in a couple of hours. It would also be suitable for small group Bible study.

The author should need no introduction to readers of the 'Evangelical Presbyterian'. David McKay has taught Systematic Theology and Ethics at the Reformed Theological College for many years, as well as serving as minister of Shaftesbury Square Reformed Presbyterian Church. His God-given expertise in the fields of Theology and Ethics are superbly brought together in these pages.

GNB

# Best of the Blogs

## **[A Rationale for Evening Services \(Harrison Perkins\)](https://modernreformation.org/resource-library/web-exclusive-articles/a-rationale-for-evening-services/)**

<https://modernreformation.org/resource-library/web-exclusive-articles/a-rationale-for-evening-services/>

"For a long time, it was assumed that Reformed churches would hold a service both on Sunday morning and Sunday evening. Although still practiced in many congregations, this pattern is no longer necessarily the expectation or assumption concerning how the Lord's Day will be observed. If we believe in Reformed principles, however, we must consider well what the best use of the Lord's Day is."

## **[Mental Health and a Weary Church \(Andrew Collins\)](https://www.biblicalcounselling.org.uk/weakness/mental-health-and-a-weary-church/)**

<https://www.biblicalcounselling.org.uk/weakness/mental-health-and-a-weary-church/>

"Let's be honest, we're weary. Flatness of mood, flagging energy, feeling 'fed-up': these are experiences we've all had lately. Churches face the effort of re-thinking meetings, Zoom fatigue, fears as those near us and we ourselves contract Covid, the sense of defeat and disappointment as ministries we've given ourselves to for years now appear to fall apart. It's as much as we can manage to do the essentials of home, work and church life. How does a tired and weary church community continue to care well and respond constructively in these days?"

## **[Covid-19 & Making Decisions in the light of all Scripture \(Mark Loughridge\)](https://gentlereformation.com/2021/02/06/covid-19-making-decisions-in-the-light-of-all-scripture/)**

<https://gentlereformation.com/2021/02/06/covid-19-making-decisions-in-the-light-of-all-scripture/>

"I think there has been a tendency among some to reduce Scripture to one verse. Either saying, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29), or "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities" (Rom 13:1). But we mustn't be single verse Christians. We need to have a whole Bible approach to this. There are multiple parts of Scripture and multiple strands that need to be woven together. We've found it useful as elders to consider at least 4 circles of biblical truth."

## **[How the Bible defines Anxiety \(Cory Brock\)](https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/how-the-bible-defines-anxiety-2021-02/)**

<https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/how-the-bible-defines-anxiety-2021-02/>

"In 1947 and less than two years after Germany's surrender in World War II, W.H. Auden published an epic poem that encapsulated in its title the condition of the twentieth-century Western heart: "The Age of Anxiety." While Auden himself said it was "frightfully long," he does from the very beginning capture in verse the human quest to find an

identity and purpose in a mechanical, lonely world. Auden was correct. Anxiety is an ever-increasing and prevailing quality of contemporary Western culture. But while anxiety has been on the increase for the last seventy years, it is indeed a problem of the universal human condition. The good news is that long before figures such as Sigmund Freud or B.F. Skinner would develop the modern science of psychology, the Bible addressed this monumental problem of the human psyche in its own prescription for a life of wisdom."

## **[Everybody Hurts \(Doug McCallum\)](https://www.gr-uk.org/vlogs/everybody-hurts)**

<https://www.gr-uk.org/vlogs/everybody-hurts>

"Growing up, one of my favourite bands was REM. I remember as a young teenager going to the local HMV store and buying their album, Automatic for the People, on cassette (yes, I am that old!) and listening to it over and over again. My favourite song was called Everybody Hurts, a hauntingly beautiful track about the pain and suffering we all experience in our lives."

## **[Eight Reasons Online Worship is Incomplete Worship \(Barry York\)](https://gentlereformation.com/2021/03/22/ten-reasons-online-worship-is-incomplete-worship/)**

<https://gentlereformation.com/2021/03/22/ten-reasons-online-worship-is-incomplete-worship/>

"Many shepherds of God's flock are noticing that though the Lord has mercifully lowered the death rate, is bringing warmer weather that lowers transmission rates, and provides vaccinations to many, a good number of the sheep are not returning to worship services. The ease of online worship, combined with ongoing fears, can make it difficult for people to see the need to return."

