

FIRST

Seek First the Kingdom of God!

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OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE FAITH MISSION



THE QUIET TIME

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

» ECHOES OF EDEN: UNVEILING THE LAYERS

» WHAT HAS GOD CALLED YOU TO DO?

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FAITH MISSION COUNTRY EVANGELISM MINISTRIES

**Faith Mission
UK Headquarters**
548 Gilmerton Road
Edinburgh
EH17 7JD
Tel: 0131 664 5814
hq@faithmission.org

**Director for England
Stephen Walker**
Red House Farm, Fen Lane,
Earl Stonham, Stowmarket,
IP14 5EG
Tel: 01904 786289
hq.England@faithmission.org

**Director for Ireland
Garry Tutty**
62 Glenavy Road,
Lisburn,
BT28 3UT
Tel: 028 9262 8286
hq.Ireland@faithmission.org

**Director for Scotland
Gordon Thomson**
9 Westerton Farm Lane,
Bearsden, Glasgow,
G61 1NF
Tel: 0141 942 0841
hq.Scotland@faithmission.org

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BIBLE TRAINING MINISTRIES

Faith Mission Bible College
2 Drum Street, Edinburgh
EH17 8QG, Scotland
Tel: +44 (0)131 664 4336
admin@fmbiblecollege.org.uk

FAITH MISSION BOOKSHOP MINISTRIES

General Manager: **Stephen Dundas**
Scottish Bookshops Regional Manager: **Gavin Harrison**

Ireland
5-7 Queen Street
Belfast, BT1 6EA
Tel: 028 9023 3733
ireland@fmbookshops.com

Scotland
548 Gilmerton Road
Edinburgh, EH17 7JD
Tel: 0131 672 2152
scotland@fmbookshops.com

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A MESSAGE FROM THE FAITH MISSION'S DIRECTOR FOR IRELAND

We thank God for encouragements in the work and rejoice to know of people who have recently put their trust in the Lord. However, as with any Christian ministry, the work of this Mission isn't without its challenges.

During the past twelve months, The Faith Mission Board of Trustees have been undertaking a thorough review of Mission's ministry activities. This led to a voluntary consultation process being undertaken with respect to our literature ministry which resulted in a number of valuable proposals and ideas being submitted for consideration.

Having reviewed and discussed all of these proposals at length we are thankful to have identified a revised structure that enables the Faith Mission to retain a High Street literature ministry. We have therefore brought our voluntary consultation to a conclusion. We will be working with the managers to ensure an effective and efficient model going forwards. In considering the challenges being faced we have sought as far as we are able, to minimise the prospect of any potential closures. However, as is always the case, some locations reach a point where considering closure is the natural thing to do. Therefore, we will shortly be launching a further consultation with respect to a small number of shops and staff. This does not necessarily mean that those shops will close, or those staff be made redundant, however that is a potential outcome. We will share further news in the next edition.

Stephen Dundas and Gavin Harrison have each taken the decision to stand down from their leadership roles in the Bookshops and will be leaving us during the spring. Stephen has given over fifteen years of dedicated service in the

shops and as General Manager has in recent years led our literature ministry. Gavin has served in various roles since joining the Mission in 2012 and been a key part of the oversight of the bookshops in Scotland for the past four years. We will miss both these men and wish them, and their families God's richest blessing for the future.

Gordon Thompson has been struggling with health issues and recently, on his doctor's advice, has made the decision to step down from his responsibilities as Director for Scotland. This will come into effect following the Edinburgh Convention in July. We are delighted that he feels able and willing to continue as Superintendent of the South Scottish District. We commend Gordon and his family to your prayers.

Our annual members meetings take place during the week leading up to Easter followed quickly by the Bangor Convention (Friday 18 – Tuesday 22 April) when John Bennett and John Macleod are to be the main speakers.

Finally, do continue to remember the work of the Bible College. Students will be joining various Mission Members for a full and varied programme of outreach activities during their annual placements in May and June. We also value prayer for the Lord's clear leading as College leadership engage in discussions with another respected theological institution with the aim, over the next two years, of gaining degree accreditation of our course.

Please do pray for wisdom and clear leading from the Lord to outcomes that honour Him for each of the issues mentioned above.

*Garry Tutty,
Director for Ireland.*

The HOLY SPIRIT



BY JOHN BENNETT

'The great mystery is why the church of Christ has so neglected the Holy Spirit down the centuries. That this terrible sin has been committed is beyond dispute. Like Jesus the Holy Spirit has been wounded in the house of His friends.'

Maynard James

From the moment in Genesis 1:1 when, *'the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the deep'* right through to the present, we see undisputable evidence of the vital role played by the Holy Spirit not only in creation but in the lives and ministry of individual people.

Samson

In Judges 14-15 the story of Samson and his amazing strength is a thriller. He was a Nazarite separated unto God from the moment of his birth; his hair was never to be cut. We know from Judges 16 that once his hair was cut, he became as weak as everyone else. Did his strength lie in his long hair? NO, his long hair was a symbol of his obedience as a Nazarite. Where then did he get his strength from? Chapter 14:5-6 records an incident

when a young lion charged towards him, and he tore the lion apart, killing it with his hands. In verse nineteen we see him killing thirty Philistine men. In chapter 15 when surrounded by an army of hostile Philistines, he reaches for a jawbone of a donkey and with it kills 1,000 Philistines. On every occasion we read, *'The Spirit came mightily upon him'* (Judges 14:6; 15:14).

David

1 Samuel 16:13 records the moment when David was being anointed to be the next king of Israel, *'The Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day.'* When Goliath called for *'...a man to fight...'* (1 Samuel 17:8), he did not reckon on a Spirit-filled man. Zechariah 4:6 clearly states, *'It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord.'*

Jesus

We must not overlook the vital role played by the Holy Spirit in Jesus' earthly life. In Matthew 1:18, *'Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.'* At His baptism, *'...the Holy Spirit descended in bodily shape like a dove on Him'* (Luke 3:22). Jesus' final message to His disciples before His ascension was, *'Wait for the promise of the Father'* (Acts 1:4), and, *'You will receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you'* (Acts 1:8).

Acts

Fifty-five times the Holy Spirit or the Spirit is mentioned in the book of Acts. This book throbs with vitality and power. The moment, *'They were all filled with the Holy Spirit'* (Acts 2:4), a mighty spiritual awakening was born that saw many thousands

of people converted, whole communities transformed, scores of churches planted and a missionary movement commence that continues to this day. It is important to note that many of the people involved in this great awakening were ordinary people. There was not a lot of money, no beautiful church buildings, no Bible colleges, no motorcars or airplanes, yet within a few years the gospel spread, and churches were planted in Asia, Africa and Europe. In fact, their enemies spoke of the believers as, *'...these who have turned the world upside down'* (Acts 17:6). What was their secret? I believe the answer is clear, they were a cleansed, surrendered and obedient people who were filled with the Holy Spirit. The early church knew their weakness, this is why, when facing enemy opposition we find them united in prayer asking God, *'for boldness and for miracles to be done in the name of Jesus'* (Acts 4:29). *'When they prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness'* (Acts 4:31).

Throughout the book we note they were **led by the Holy Spirit**. Acts 13:2, *'...the Holy Spirit said, separate Barnabas*

and Saul for the work I have called them to...; and verse four, *'...being sent forth by the Holy Spirit'*. How many are hearing the call of God in a prayer meeting today? How many young people offering for service are regular attenders of a prayer meeting? How many leaders are hearing the Holy Spirit say, "Separate that person for the work I have called them into." Could this be the reason we are not seeing more young men and women filling our Bible colleges, preparing for service?

When they sought seven men to serve tables, two qualifications were seen as essential, *'Men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom'* (Acts 6:3). I wonder how many churches or missions have a question on their application form asking, if the candidate is filled with the Spirit? Are we in danger of putting more emphasis on degrees than Holy Spirit fullness? A visitor from the East having seen much of North American Christian ministry was asked for his impression of what he had seen. Expecting him to comment on the large churches, wealthy congregations, excellent programs and educated preachers, replied instead that he was amazed at what he saw. He was amazed at how much the church could do without the Holy Spirit!

Jesus made a promise in John 7:37-39, *'If any man thirsts, let him come to Me, and drink. He that believes in Me as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit whom those believing in Him would receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.'* Paul writing to the church at Ephesus commanded them to, *'... be (being) filled with The Spirit'* (Ephesians 5:18). It is all too easy to become stale and fruitless in the Christian life. The river has dried up, and we continue going through the usual routine.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, "Do we not fail in many of our efforts because we practically, though not doctrinally, ignore the Holy Spirit?" How often I have had to get before God and confess my barrenness. One thing I have proved is that yesterday's blessings are not sufficient for today. If I am to stay fresh spiritually, I need to daily, *'... be being filled with the Spirit.'* •



John, originally from Ireland is married to Isabel and both have worked with The Faith Mission in Ireland, UK and Canada. Up until his retirement, he was General Director of The Faith Mission in Canada. John is one of the speakers at our Easter Convention in Bangor, N Ireland.

ECHOES OF EDEN

Unveiling the Layers

BY
STEPHEN
MULLEN

Language is a powerful tool, shaping not only how we communicate but also how we understand the world. Ancient writers, particularly those of biblical texts, used language in ways that go far beyond our modern uses where a single word could hold a mosaic of meanings, each contributing to a fuller understanding of their world. To a modern English speaker, this approach can seem intimidating. We like fixed specific words for fixed specific meanings, but, if we truly want to enter their world, perhaps we need humility to appreciate their multi-layered words weren't seen as confusing, rather, were embraced as a friendly feature not a fault to be fixed.

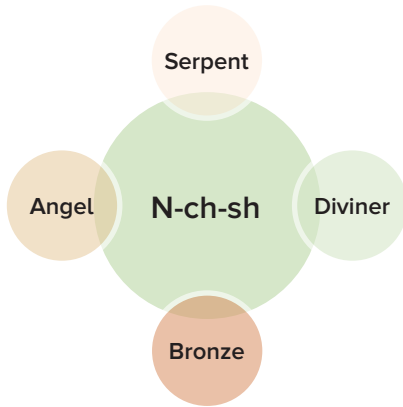
A Multi-layered Word: The Depth of Nachash

Consider the word "Nachash" commonly translated as "serpent" in Genesis 3, but interestingly not always translated as serpent. The Hebrew consonants "N-ch-sh" can also be the root of other related words, including:

- **Nachash** (noun): meaning "snake" or "serpent" (as in Genesis 3:1).
- **Nochesh** (verb): meaning "to practice divination" or "give omens" (as in Genesis 3:4-5).
- **Nachash** (adjective): meaning "bronze" or "brazen" (shiny) (as in 1 Chronicles 4:12, where it refers to "Ir-Nachash,"

meaning “city of copper or bronze”; it can also be linked to divine beings, such as angels in Daniel 10:6).

The original author would have known full well that all four meanings would be in the reader’s mind when reading this account, not only one at the expense of others.



Just as a single colour can have many shades, each one revealing a slightly different nuance of light and depth, the word **N-ch-sh** carries multiple shades of meaning too. While “serpent” might be the most familiar shade, there are also the deeper, more subtle shades of “divination” and “bronze” itself associated with “shiny/bright” and “angel”. Each of these shades adds richness to the picture, allowing us to see the text in a more complete way. Focusing on just one shade gives us part of the story, but recognising all the shades together offers a much fuller and more complete understanding.

The N-ch-sh as a Supernatural Shining Rebel

The connection between **N-ch-sh** and Satan strengthens when we consider its role as a deceiver. In modern Hebrew, nachash can still describe someone who is cunning or deceitful, echoing the intent to lead humanity astray.

The being’s snake-like features and ability to communicate suggest it was not a typical creature of the field. Instead, its angelic nature and ability to deceive indicate a rebel—a shining, supernatural being seeking to disrupt God’s plan. This interpretation complements descriptions of Satan in the New Testament, where Paul notes, ‘*Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light*’ (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Echoes of Eden...Goliath of Gath

Thankfully, within the narrative of the Fall, God provides a promise of redemption. In Genesis 3:15, God declares to the serpent: ‘*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*’ This prophecy foreshadows the eventual defeat of **N-ch-sh** and the restoration of humanity through the seed of the woman.

Remarkably, we see echoes of this promise throughout biblical history, culminating in the victories of David over Goliath and Christ’s ultimate triumph at Golgotha. These stories intertwine serpent imagery, rebellion, and divine justice, revealing a profound continuity in God’s plan of redemption.

The N-ch-sh and Goliath: Symbols of Shining Rebellion

The **N-ch-sh** in Genesis 3 and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 share striking parallels. Both figures embody defiance against God:

- **The Serpent’s Rebellion:** The serpent tempts humanity to reject God’s command, leading to their fall. With its shining, deceptive nature, it represents cunning rebellion and a challenge to divine authority.
- **Goliath’s Defiance:** Goliath, described as a towering warrior clad in bronze and scale-like armour, symbolizes human pride and

reliance on worldly strength. His mockery of the God of Israel (1 Samuel 17:10) echoes the serpent's challenge to God's sovereignty.

Here the term "serpent" connects to "bronze", linking the serpent's shimmering appearance to Goliath's gleaming armour. The scale-like description of Goliath's armour reinforces his serpent-like symbolism, making him a living representation of the rebellion first seen in Eden.

David as the Seed of the Woman

In David's confrontation with Goliath, the imagery of Genesis 3:15 is also enacted. As the Philistine champion mocks Israel and its God, David emerges as the unlikely representative of God's people - a shepherd armed with believing loyalty. Echoing the promise to Eve, David crushes the enemy's head not with brute force, but with divine empowerment:

- **The Head of the Serpent:** David strikes Goliath in the forehead with a stone before beheading him, a direct fulfilment of the imagery in Genesis 3:15 where the seed of the woman crushes the head of the serpent.
- **Victory for God's People:** This act not only delivers Israel from its oppressors but also prefigures the ultimate triumph of the Messiah, the true seed of the woman at a place called Golgotha.

Golgotha: The Place of the Skull

David brought the head of Goliath to Jerusalem after the battle, placing it as a symbol of victory over defiance prefiguring Christ's crucifixion at Golgotha, the place of the skull. Interestingly, ancient Jewish tradition suggests the place name "Golgotha" is derived from "Goliath of Gath" the very location where David brought the head. If this tradition holds, it adds profound symbolism

to the specific location of Christ's sacrifice in fulfilling Genesis 3:15 for you and me.

Reflection for Modern Readers

These connected events, these echoes from Eden, should encourage you and I to see the Bible as a cohesive interconnected story where God's promises find fulfilment across history.

Interpreting *nachash* as several complementary shades of green reveals the richness of ancient Hebrew and challenges modern readers to engage humbly with the text. This helps us appreciate the world of the ancient writer, and the message they were conveying.

And perhaps the modern reader can also draw personal insights from this approach too. Just as *nachash* reflects multiple complementary meanings which echo through time, could it be that our experiences often carry multiple layered truths that require patience and humility to uncover... truths that also echo through eternity?

Reflection Prompts

- How does understanding the layered meaning of *nachash* change your view of the serpent in Eden?
- How does the continuity of God's plan from Eden to Golgotha encourage you in your faith journey?
- Could there be multiple shades of meaning to the situation you are facing right now, not just one at the expense of others? •



Stephen studied biblical Hebrew at the Israel Institute of Biblical Studies and supports biblical teaching in rural areas. He works as a Senior Lecturer in Engineering with University of Cumbria where he lives with his wife and four daughters.

BY AMY CARMICHAEL

SPRINGING WELLS



‘The God of Jacob who turned the hard rock into a standing water, and the flint-stone into a springing well.’

[fountain of waters KJV] Psalm 114:7-8 (Prayer Book Version)

There was a time when I had to prepare a dear child for a great trial. I knew, though she did not, all that was involved, and everything in me was bent on preparing her to stand strong. Every verse I taught her, every chorus I wrote for her, was bent that way. I learned then more of the heart of God than I had ever known before. Through the love – watchful, constant, set on strengthening and enabling – that He had given to me, He taught me something of the ways of His love.

St. Paul speaks of things said by permission, not of commandment.¹ Speaking so, I would suggest that it is the custom of our Father to do for us just what I tried to do for that beloved child. I

believe that, knowing what we shall be called to face, today, tomorrow, He so plans that in our reading beforehand, there will be exactly the word that will carry us through. That new experience is meant to give us a glorious opportunity to test and prove the word which He has given us.

Sometimes the special word may be given through another child of God, sometimes through some other part of the Book than the place of our usual reading. But God seems to love the ordinary, and it is in the ordinary we mostly find Him. Whichever way He comes to us in preparations, the one thing that matters is that we should be sensitive to His touch, even though, like the child I taught, we do not in the least know what He is doing.

Looking back over these many years, I see the hard rock and the flint-stone turned to standing water, clear pools, springing wells, fountains of water.

Shall we look out more carefully for these words that are meant to fortify and rejoice our hearts? Nothing can make up for them, and nothing can draw us closer to our Father than these intimate, tender touches of His love. •

Amy Carmichael served as a missionary in India where she established the Dohnavur sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, and rescued many children from temple slavery and forced prostitution. First published in ‘Thou Givest, They Gather: Truths Gleaned from the Word of God’, CLC Publishing, 1958 (public domain)

References:

¹ 1 Corinthians 7:6



BY SHIRLEY HOUGH

INTEGRITY

'...that you walk worthy of God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory...'

1 Thessalonians 2:12

On a visit to the Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburgh, I was gripped and challenged by a quote that was painted on the wall, "Out of 100 men, one will read the Bible, the other 99 will read the Christian." (DL Moody)

This provoked a lot of deep reflection in my own thoughts and mind. It is such a true fact today, so many people will never enter a church

or a gospel meeting, but every day as Christians just living out our daily lives, we come into contact with so many who do not know Christ. Wherever we go we are surrounded by non-Christians, at work, college, school, the supermarket, dentist, hairdresser, community clubs, towns, cities, parks and on holiday.

People are watching and observing our lives. If we are the only contact they may have

with Christ and the gospel, what are we representing? How are we living out our lives? Are we walking worthy of Him who has called us? Do they see authentic Christianity? Do they see Jesus in us?

Would what they see in the way we live out our Christian lives attract them to Jesus or repel them? Very challenging, very thought provoking!

They need to see reality not religion. Real authentic Christian living is vital, a powerful weapon to make an impact to draw people to Christ. So, how are we going to walk worthy of the name we carry? We need to walk the talk.

Let the Walking Do the Talking

Walk and walking figuratively mean a way of life and conduct. Walking in integrity denotes a way of life and conduct that is complete, upright and morally innocent. The word integrity comes from the Latin adjective 'integer' meaning whole or complete. Defined as undivided or unbroken completeness, genuine, real. Godly integrity therefore is a God-like life of consistency and sincerity, with no deception or pretence. It embodies the qualities of God's nature and helps us live out the Christian faith authentically. It is living out godly standards and biblical principles.

Christlikeness is looking and acting like Jesus. We need consistency, a harmony between what is inside and what is outside, between belief and behaviour, between our words and our beliefs, between our attitudes and our actions, between our values and our practices, especially when no-one is watching.

Christlikeness speaks to God's inward conviction in our heart that leads us to do the right thing, which in the world we live in today may involve taking our stand and holding fast to our biblical principles and beliefs even in the face of intense pressure, testing and challenge. Integrity should be the mark of a Christian. I want us to think about two keys to godly integrity.

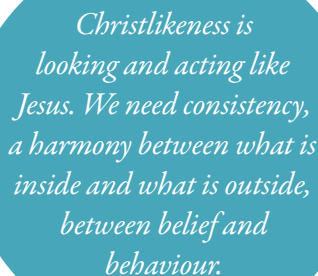
God's Word is Key

In the Bible, God's Word, we find the key to knowing what God expects of us. This should be our standard. The Bible is compared to a mirror. We need to look into it every day, study it and find out what God requires of us.

Find out what Christ was like, and how we can follow His example. A mirror shows us what we are like. It would be strange to get up in the morning, look in the mirror to see how we appear, in order to tidy ourselves up and then just go into the day without making any adjustments.

And so it is with the Bible; we cannot look into it, see where we fall short and then

decide to just continue on without doing anything about it. The Bible itself tells us we cannot just be hearers we MUST also be doers, else there will be no change. We must put into practice what we learn so that transformation can take place. In this way we grow and bear fruit. James speaks in chapter 2 about the differences between a dead faith and a living faith. There must be fruit. This is the evidence of life. Those around us need to see the evidence of our Christian life. The evidence comes through the power of the Holy Spirit living within us.



Christlikeness is looking and acting like Jesus. We need consistency, a harmony between what is inside and what is outside, between belief and behaviour.

We must grasp the understanding of the power that is available to us and not quench it. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is alive in us!

The Power of the Holy Spirit

When we look at the challenge of living out our Christian life with godly integrity and an undivided heart in the day and age that we live in, it can almost seem impossible, and we can feel powerless and become disheartened or frustrated with our own failures. This is where we need the power of the Holy Spirit. This is something God has been speaking afresh to me recently.

When we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. The Bible tells us we are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Our bodies become His dwelling place, and His very presence lives within us. We take Him wherever we go.

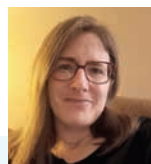
Acts 1:8, *'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be my witnesses...'* We have been given the Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples, but He has not commanded us to do this alone. He promised He would be with us until the end of time. He commissioned the disciples and promised to give them the equipping they would need. They needed the power of His Holy Spirit to live within them and empower them to be His witnesses. His Holy Spirit is key to transforming, equipping and empowering us to live lives worthy of Him. To live a life with godly integrity that reflects our Saviour and draws others to Himself. He

wants us to be Christ-like so that others can see Him through us. This is made possible by the power of His Holy Spirit living out His life within us.

We must grasp the understanding of the power that is available to us and not quench it. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is alive in us (Romans 8:11)! *'He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world!'* (1 John 4:4). When the task seems so great we need to remember these truths. Standing on them will enable us to be encouraged, bold, courageous, intentional, obedient and available.

People may not go to church or read the Bible, but we have now become the temples of God that go out into the world. Let us present our bodies to Him as living sacrifices, available to be used by Him. Let us allow Him to live out His life within us so that if we are the only Bible somebody reads, they might see Jesus in us, and be drawn to Him.

May God help us to live lives worthy of Him for the honour and glory of His Name and the salvation of many. •



Shirley Hough was a missionary in Brazil for 20 years, and is now reaching the lost in the north of England. She has written of her experiences in her book, 'Made in Brazil: One Woman's Story of Being Moulded into the Beauty of God's Image Through Her Calling.'





Practical Suggestions for the

QUIET TIME

BY DR. HOWARD W. GUINNESS

Initial Considerations

Go to bed in time. Late nights are the relentless enemy of the Quiet Time. It is physically impossible habitually to sit up to the small hours of the morning talking with one's friends and then to get up each morning fit for a proper Quiet Time. The Devil will fight a man here. He must be fought back. Here lies the initial victory. Pray about your getting up the night before.

As for getting up, Dr Holden used to stress the fact that all that is required is a, "momentary act of the will." Once the bedclothes are off it is scarcely worth going back to bed again. The battle is lost, or won, during the few seconds which elapse between waking and a purposeful movement of hand or foot. Get wide awake before starting your reading or prayer. If you tend to get drowsy, change your position at once.

The Right Approach

Let your first conscious thoughts on waking be of your Saviour whom you are rising to meet. *He* is waiting for you. *He* has been interceding for you through the night watches.

Editor's note:

A faded little booklet was passed onto me, it had once belonged to my grandfather, a missionary in Nigeria, one of the 'victory generation'. Although we could fill out the phrases with modern terms, the practical advice it contains still holds true. We face the same problems with different guises, old distractions replaced with new, but the need for the 'Quiet Time' with our Saviour is the same.

At the commencement, a moment or two of quiet thought in which one is reminded of the aim of the Quiet Time is essential if we are really to appreciate the presence of God.

Bring back your thoughts again and again during your reading and prayer to the fact that you are not alone. Two of you are sharing the room and the Bible. Reverently remind yourself of His presence by your side. He is there. The realisation of this fact makes the Quiet Time a living reality.

Don't do all the talking! There should be stillness and expectancy (Ps. 46:10). God reveals Himself to you not as you struggle to get into His presence and to feel Him, but as you yield freely to Him. This does not mean that you are to make your mind a blank, but that the attitude of reception is necessary as you concentrate your thoughts on the glorious Person of Christ and meditate on the Scriptures you have read, thinking into their inner meaning. The Holy Spirit reveals the deeper things only to those who are at leisure to receive from Him the secrets of the Scriptures.

Be the time available long or short, it must be unhurried (Isa. 30:15) – i.e. if there is not much time available do not attempt to crowd in too much.

Come to the Bible and prayer willing to obey and to put into practice all He shows you, instantaneously and unquestioningly (John 2:5).

Bible Study

Some method is necessary as to the order of reading the Scriptures. There are several methods of reading through the Bible in one, two or three years according to the time which is available each day. For the Quiet Time the Scripture must be approached *mainly* from the devotional standpoint.

A notebook should be used in which to write thoughts which the Holy Spirit may give you as you read and peruse your morning's portion. But do not attempt too elaborate note-taking, as this will tend to distract your attention.

Remember that you are coming to the Scriptures at these times for the satisfaction of your own needs. Reading in order to help others, or to prepare addresses, should normally be done at other times.

If you are not getting much from your daily reading, cross-examine yourself by such questions as –

- Is there any example for me to follow?
- Is there any command for me to obey?
- Is there any error for me to avoid?
- Is there any sin for me to forsake?
- Is there any promise for me to claim?
- Is there any new thought about God Himself?

Prayer

Remember that this does not mean a mere recital of things which you need. Daily prayer should contain at least some of the following: *Thanksgiving* (see the Psalms); *Worship* (consider the Names of God); *Confession* (see I John 1); *Intercession* for others (Rom. 15:30); Committal of the new day to Christ. It is doubtful if any Christian should let a day pass without having devoutly thanked the Lord Jesus for Calvary.

There are methods for regularly remembering certain needs daily and others at weekly or monthly intervals. But beware of any method which is too complicated.

Avoid formality. As soon as prayer becomes formal, it is dead. Ask God to show you what is wrong. Has sin, or a careless, lazy spirit come between Him and you? Remember the

hint which seems to be enshrined in George Muller's method. [George Muller always read his Bible first and then prayed, because he always found something new for which to praise God as he read the Scriptures.]

Concluding Remarks

If you miss your Quiet Time for one reason or another, do not imagine that the day will necessarily be a failure. It need not be. If the fault is yours, confess it, obtain immediate cleansing, and as you go out into the day claim the full power of the Holy Spirit for that day. If the fault is not yours, remember that God on His side is not necessarily limited by the amount of time His servant has spent in direct communion with Him. He is sovereign. [Do not regard the Quiet Time as having a mechanical connection with divine blessing. It is our highest wisdom to spend as much time with God as we are able, but He does not use us *merely* because we have spent so much time in prayer or preparation.]

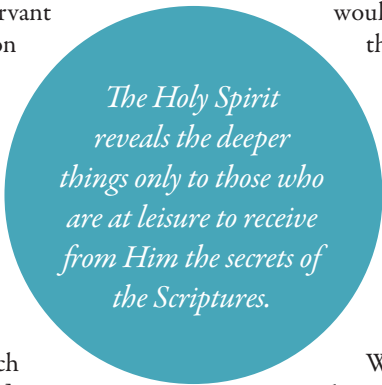
If you have no sense of His Presence and feel that your prayer is empty and worthless, tell Him about it quite frankly. At the same time tell Him that you believe He is there because of His promises (John 14:16, Heb. 13:5, Matt 28:20, etc.), and that you know He will answer prayer quite independently of your feelings.

Finally, there are some Christians who find it very difficult to concentrate. There is a great need of perseverance in the avoiding of wandering thoughts. The apostle meant this when he wrote to the Ephesians of the need of, '*watching thereunto with all perseverance*' (Eph. 6:18).

The secret lies in the Person of our Lord. Though there may be many who find it difficult to concentrate their thoughts on abstractions, few are unable to think for long about a *person* whom they really love! But they may argue that they have seen the physical form of those they love on earth and that the Person of our Lord seems to them little more than an abstraction. It is precisely for these people that the Quiet Time is absolutely indispensable!

What special view-points of our Lord's many-sided character do we need chiefly to carry with us to prayer? All Bible teachers would probably agree that after the Cross (which must be kept ever before us) we should do well to concentrate more on the Resurrection and the Throne. How many Christians really live in the daily enjoyment of our Lord's present position of authority at the right hand of God's Throne? We would urge those who have difficulty in concentrating first to allow the (scriptural) portrait of the Cross to come before them and then to turn their thoughts to the glorified Christ in whom all power now resides. The books of Hebrews and Revelation give the necessary portraits.

When the Christian church awakes to the true glory of her Lord's Presence and really grasps the reality of His Resurrection power, in *that day* there will be a mighty revival. God is willing. Are you? •



The Holy Spirit reveals the deeper things only to those who are at leisure to receive from Him the secrets of the Scriptures.

Selections from 'The Quiet Time' first published in Inter-Varsity Papers No. 1, London, The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 3rd edition, 1933 (public domain)

ST MOLUAG

Apostle to the Picts

BY MORNA ALLAN

Celtic Christianity had a profound effect on the evangelisation of the British Isles, and Western and Northern Europe in the 5th through to the 11th century. ‘Wanderers’ (peregrinati), primarily Irish monks set out for far away places, often travelling by sea in their coracles –they simply prayed, and went. Where they landed, if their mission to the area bore fruit, they would settle and establish a new monastery. The Celtic monastery was not a place of retreat from the world but a place of preparation for mission. The bishops were the evangelists and led teams out to evangelise and they came back to the monastery for refreshment and renewal. Celtic monasteries were mission stations which fulfilled the role of hospital, place of education and retreat, a house of prayer and spiritual healing. If we ‘sift out’ the mythical accounts and romanticisation of the Celtic



saints what is revealed is an authentic Christianity that was relevant to the cultural context whilst remaining true to the gospel message - an ardent missional movement.

On a recent trip to the Isle of Lismore, in Loch Linnhe, I became interested to know more about a lesser known Celtic Saint, St Moluag. I was excited to find out

about recent archaeological research that had been carried out by a team of community archaeologists from the Lismore Historical Society. The team spent six years searching the location for the monastery of St Moluag. It was assumed the monastery was near the medieval Cathedral of Argyll on Lismore, which was dedicated to St Moluag in the 13th century. The building that remains today is from the chancel of the Cathedral and is now the parish Church of Scotland. Although there are no visible signs of the monastic enclosure the archaeologists believe they have found the site of St Moluag's monastery in a wet field below the parish church. The discovery of an oval stone building has been dated to between the 7th and 10th century, the era of the early monastery. A workshop where precious metals were used has also been uncovered and nearby fine carvings in stone, wood, bone and antler have been found. There is a total of 1,500 significant finds from the site. Their search has revealed that the monastic community on Lismore could have historical significance much like Iona, Portmahomack, and Inchmartin. So who was St Moluag the founder of the monastery on Lismore?

It is thought that St Moluag was born between 500 and

520 AD. An Irish noble of the Dál nAraide (one of the main tribes of the Ulaid, now called Ulster in Ireland) and contemporary of St Columba. Various versions of the name St Moluag appear in historical lists and references, the most common being St Lughaidh (from the Irish). Others appear as Lugdach, Malew, Molonachus, Moloc or Molucus. He was a Bishop and ordained St Comgall, a close relative, who established Bangor Abbey, Ireland. Some 3,000 monks lived under Comgall's monastic rule.

Having helped St. Comgall set up Bangor Abbey, St Moluag went to Lismore in 562 AD with twelve companions as missionaries to the area. Lismore, *Lios mor*, ancient Gaelic for 'great monastery', is an island of the Lyn of Lorn in Argyll. It was known as 'the Great Garden' because of its rich fertile soil due to its limestone deposits. Ancient grains and good crops grew on Lismore. A far cry from the barren rocks or peat bogs of the Western Isles where it was hard to produce food. The beach where Moluag landed still holds the Saint's name *Port Moluag* and this is thought to be the site of his first chapel, subsequently moving the monastic fellowship to Clachan further into the Island.

Lismore was already a very important sacred site for the pagan Western Picts, whose capital was at Begeronium, across the water at Benderloch. They cremated their kings on an ancient man-made 'burial mound' *Choc Aingeil* (Gaelic for 'Hill of Fire') at Bachuil. As was often the case in Celtic Christianity it therefore made it a perfect spot for a monastery where the missionaries could share the gospel and point the locals to the true God. The Celtic missionaries thought that it was important to see the similarities between early Christianity and Paganism rather than to focus on the differences between them. The conversion process was one of gradual education to true Christian worship rather than outright confrontation, and it is interesting that there were remarkably few martyrs in the area.

Some scholars have suggested that Moluag was the 'Apostle to the Picts'. Being bi-lingual, speaking Gaelic and Pictish it would seem that he won favour with the Kings of Dalriada and the Pictish King Brude. Indeed the Irish Annals tell us that Saint Comgall of Bangor travelled with St Moluag to King Brude of the Northern Picts at Inverness to obtain his authority for Moluag's mission within Brude's kingdom. Moluag

was given much freedom to minister in Brude's kingdom, allowing Christianity to spread amongst the Picts.

Moluag spent extensive time travelling from Lismore into the ancient Kingdom of Dalriada, also up the 'Great Glen' in Northern Pictland and over to the east coast of Scotland. As well as Lismore, he founded two other great monastic centres of teaching at Rosemarkie, on the Black Isle and Mortlach, in Aberdeenshire. Celtic cells were established in his name on Tiree, Mull, Skye and Raasay. A church on Lewis is dedicated to him and it is from this remote spot that he is thought to have sailed to Iceland. It is also thought he went south to the Isle of Man. The Annals of Bangor in Ireland, where he trained, state that he died on 25 June, 592 AD, five years before St. Augustine arrived at Canterbury. He is credited with founding over 100 monasteries. Many believed he died in Rosemarkie on the Black Isle and was buried there and that his body was later returned to Lismore. 592 AD is remembered for a solar eclipse that has awarded Moluag the title the 'Sun of Lismore'.

His crozier, *Bacchuill Mor*, "the great staff", a piece of

blackthorn 34 inches long and originally covered in a gilded copper case, is preserved on Lismore in Bachuil village in the care of the Livingstone family who hold the ancient title of Barons of Bachuil. With this amazing historical artefact still in existence it is interesting there is not more written about St Moluag unlike St Columba. We have the hagiography of Columba written by his descendant St Adomnan, *Life of St Columba*, some 100 years after his death but nothing of this level of writing for St Moluag. However, Moluag's evangelistic fervour is clear because his extensive travels produced centres of ecclesiastical learning and many churches today are dedicated to him.

The Celtic Monastic Movement gave a true understanding of mission and evangelism. The monasteries were transforming communities of faith that reflected the love of Jesus for the world through practical means and in proclamation of the gospel message. What is clear from history is that the Celtic Christians were thoroughly immersed in the scriptures. In the monasteries they avidly made copies of the Bible and of commentaries. Celtic Christians had a strong Trinitarian understanding of God, that God was present

and actively involved throughout the whole of creation. They had a deep respect for creation, seeing it as God's good creation, but a fallen creation in need of redemption. You can see their appreciation of God's creation in their artwork, Celtic crosses and manuscripts imbued with flora and fauna. St Moluag does not appear to have had his life's work written out like Columba, whose fame spread because of Adomnan's *Life of Columba*; or Bede's *Life of St Cuthbert* or Stephen of Ripon's *Life of St Wilfred*. Certainly, little survives of St Moluag's exemplary life other than traditions, dedications and place-names. However, the evangelisation of the Picts is fact and historical records highlight Moluag's leadership in this mission. We can thank God for Moluag's simple life's work of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who did not know Him and his dedication in the evangelisation of the British Isles and far beyond. •



Morna has lectured in Christian History and Celtic Christianity at Cliff College, Derbyshire. She and her husband, Gary, are pastors of Fresh Water Church, Fort William.

MATTERS OF THE HEART



Testimony by Ryan Malone



I was born in 1999, into a mixed family, where one parent is Protestant and the other is Roman Catholic. I was the first person in my family to become a Christian. It was a worrying time for my family when I was born because I stopped breathing in my mum's arms. My auntie was there as my mum said, "Run! Quick! Get the midwife, he has stopped breathing." My aunt thought mum was joking, until she looked round and saw that I had stopped breathing. While she ran to get the midwife, my mother resuscitated me in her arms.

I was blue-lighted from the City Hospital to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, and I needed emergency open-heart surgery. My arteries were the wrong way round, so the oxygenated blood was mixing with the

de-oxygenated blood. The open-heart surgery which I underwent is called the transposition of the great vessels. This is where the surgeon switches the aorta and the pulmonary artery of the heart.

Growing up I was healthy and active, until aged eleven when I had to stop all sport. The sports I enjoyed the most were squash, tennis, swimming and attending the gym. I had to have open heart surgery when I was twelve years old because there was extra muscle around the aorta of my heart causing me to have palpitations and fainting. Then when I was fourteen and fifteen, I had a TIA (transient ischaemic attack) each year. The symptoms of this were slurred speech, numbness down my left side and my face dropped on one side.

Shortly after this, I put everything I could into my Roman Catholic faith. I had been baptised, had my Holy Communion and confirmation. I prayed the rosary beads every night, attended every Mass and extra classes at the chapel. The Catholic priest took me for extra classes as I wanted to be a Catholic priest. Every year I attended the Clonard Novena, which is a nine day Catholic religious event held annually at Clonard Monastery, West Belfast. I honestly believed that these works would get me to Heaven.

One day changed that. I was walking up Royal Avenue in Belfast when I heard a street evangelist. As I approached him, he asked me, "Are you a Christian son?" I replied, "Yes, I'm a Catholic." He

“I trusted the Lord Jesus as my Lord and Saviour for my salvation, rather than my works. Christ paid that once for all sacrifice for my sins as He shed His blood on Calvary, where He died, was buried and rose again.”

replied, “It isn’t about Catholic or Protestant, ye must be born again.” He then quoted Ephesians 2:8-9, which is the passage I got saved through. I told him of the works that I did to get me to Heaven. After explaining the Scriptures to me he encouraged me to read the Bible for myself. I wanted to keep in contact with him, in case I had any questions about the Bible or about being born again, so I got his number and Facebook.

To find out more I went and got one of my dad’s King James Bibles that he had received from Sunday school in the 1970’s. I read it cover-to-cover. I would have read from 8pm to 4am each night over the summer, and asked the street preacher many questions. I soon learned he had preached the truth to me. I discovered rosary beads are of no benefit and that Christ is the only Mediator between God and mankind (1 Timothy 2:5), not Mary or anyone else. That Matthew 23:9 says to, *‘Call no man*

father upon the earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven.’ When I asked the catholic priest, he simply said, “You are reading into it too much.”

I trusted the Lord Jesus as my Lord and Saviour for my salvation, rather than my works. Christ paid that once for all sacrifice for my sins as He shed His blood on Calvary, where He died, was buried and rose again. I can know I have eternal life by believing on the Lord Jesus to be saved. This choice is open to everyone, Heaven or Hell. From the point that I came to Christ, I have enjoyed doing street evangelism and door-to-door evangelism and realised the importance of personal Bible reading to know the truth.

I went to Faith Mission Bible College, Edinburgh in September 2022 and sadly lasted five weeks. I came home for mid-term and at that time the hospital discovered a leak in my aortic valve. I had my final open-heart surgery

on 1st December. It was an aortic valve replacement. It went very successfully, and I returned to the Faith Mission Bible College in September 2023.

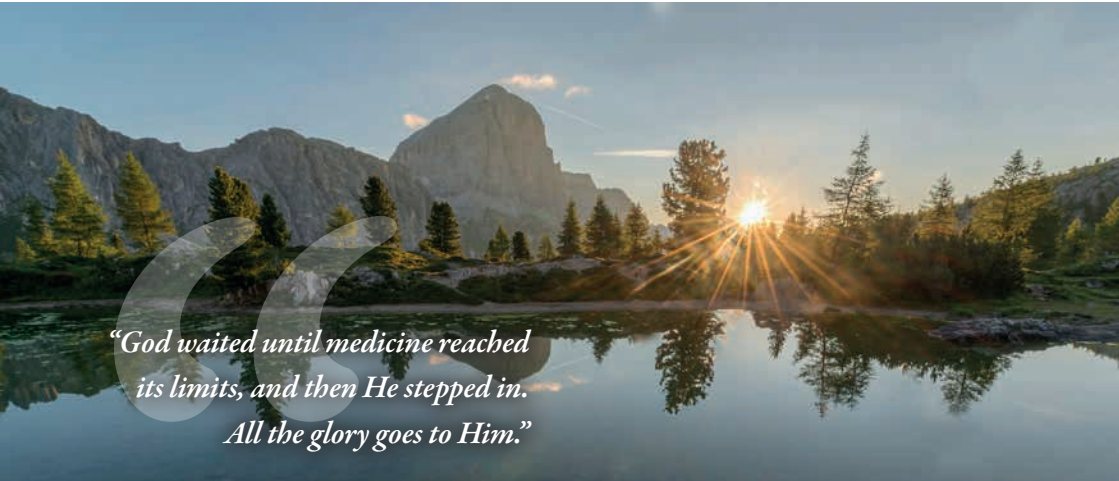
During my time in hospital, the Lord spoke to me through reading my Bible every day, showing me that He would be with me and not leave me, and that He would strengthen my heart. I learned the importance of committing my ways unto the Lord (Deuteronomy 31:6, Deuteronomy 31:8, Psalm 27:14, and Psalm 37:5).

I am very thankful to the Lord for being with me through these tough times, and I am grateful that He has brought me this far. I am now in the final term of my second year at the Bible College, getting more prepared to serve the Lord where He leads me. I know some of you have been praying for me while I have been at the college, and for that I want to thank you. I am grateful for your prayers and support. •

A STORY OF GOD'S ABUNDANT
GRACE, MERCY AND LOVE.

ABUNDANT LIFE

BY DR JENNY BALMER



*“God waited until medicine reached
its limits, and then He stepped in.
All the glory goes to Him.”*

This is a story about one of the toughest times I have ever experienced. But it is also a story of the abundant grace, mercy and love of God to impact on any one of us in and through those darkest of days. It starts long before I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

I retired as a GP in September 2018, and I rapidly became too busy. My spiritual health deteriorated to a dry and weary place. This was not right. I pondered this scripture one day, *‘The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but I came that they may have life in all its abundance’* (John 10:10). I resolved to pray for that abundant life that Jesus died to bring us.

I was still praying that prayer over a year on when I started to become unwell. On 22nd June 2020,

I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. It was an awful shock and certainly not what I was expecting, given what I had been praying for. All those years as a GP, had informed my opinion that pancreatic cancer was one of the worst cancers known. But despite that knowledge, God gave me the strength to utter three things in response, ‘He is bigger than this, it is no surprise to Him, all will be well.’ Utterances of a weak but present faith.

That night, the most extraordinary thing happened. I was wakened at 3.30am and immediately knew that the bedroom was filled with the most profound peace I have ever experienced. The room was heavy with God’s presence. I sat straight up with His unmistakable still small voice, the Lord spoke to me, “Jenny,

I am doing a new thing in your life. You will receive boldness to speak to people who need to hear about Jesus. I will send you souls who need to hear." Wow, I had just been commissioned by the Lord Himself! There was no indication how long my life would last to fulfil this commission, or how it would fit with any medical treatment in the weeks ahead. I did, however, resolve to speak of Jesus wherever I went.

As I waited for the medical plan, we called the elders of our church. We wanted to be faithful to scripture's direction in James 5. Having been cleared for potential curative surgery, I received four cycles of brutal chemotherapy first. A huge fear of the unknown hit me, compounded by fear of looking too far ahead. I felt awful because of the chemo, I felt awful because of the cancer. But worst of all in the suffering, I couldn't see or experience the Lord's presence as I stared down the gun barrel of my own mortality. I was being stripped in every conceivable way. These were dark times. I found myself unable to pray, just weep. All I could do in the middle of the anguish was to utter these words, *'Whom have I in heaven but You? There is nothing on earth I desire besides You'* (Psalm 73:25).

It was through a book recommended to me that the light began to break through. This beautifully written book *Gentle and Lowly* by Dane Ortlund, looks at the truth of Matthew 11:28-30, *'Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'* Slowly the flicker of a candle flame grew stronger as my deeply troubled soul received the oil of God's truth poured all over it.

I began to review with the Lord where He had been in those dark times. "You promised to never leave me or forsake me. Where were you?" In my flawed perspective, I imagined Jesus standing to one side waiting until the right time to get

involved, but what He said to me was amazing, "I was sitting on the bed crying with you." As I reflected, I soon realised. The Man of Sorrows was so acquainted with grief that He took the time to sit and shed His own tears with me. He was more than qualified. No one else could walk that path with me, yet Jesus, driven by what lies at the core of His heart, fully acknowledged my pain and suffering, sat down beside me and wept.

I had the most incredible response to chemo. The tumour had shrunk to just under a half of its previous size. I was declared fit for surgery. Facing major surgery is daunting. I asked the Lord for a scripture to take with me. He gave me Psalm 27:13-14. Every time I was tempted to fear I spoke this word out loud in faith, *'I believe I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord, be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord!'* By the time the surgery came around, that truth had become so embedded in me that I was utterly convinced all would be well. I was so calm on the morning of the surgery that even the anaesthetist commented on how normal my pulse and blood pressure were! Such is the power of the spoken Word of God!

Surgery went smoothly, and I was home one week to the day of my operation. No-one seemed able to understand how I had recovered so quickly. The consultant stood at the bottom of the bed and just shook his head in disbelief. I had great joy in telling him that only the Lord can heal like that.

I received four more cycles of chemo at that point and was then declared cancer free. I believed the Lord had healed me. It was an awful shock to hear that my six months post op scan was far from normal. By the time I agreed to go back to 'maintenance' chemo, I had developed a liver secondary and so the disease had progressed to stage 4. And yet, still we prayed, still we trusted.

I managed fifty cycles of chemo over one and a half years. The liver secondary disappeared! I continued until my kidneys and bone marrow

started to struggle. I ended up in critical care in January 2024 with acute kidney failure and high blood pressure. Chemo had reached its end. It was deemed too dangerous to give me any further treatment. After such a long time in treatment it felt like a real blessing to stop. God was still in charge of my life, just as He had been when I was diagnosed. But He had my whole healing in mind, not just my body. As I had been given the grace to yield to Him no matter what the circumstances, I was now walking in a much closer relationship with Him. The closer He drew me to Himself, the more convinced I was that I would be healed, such was the gift of faith I was receiving.

My very last scan result was given to me on 30th April 2024. The oncologist was confused. He said the result didn't say much. He double checked my history, "I don't understand this. It is so strange and unusual," he said. I asked him outright if there was any mention on the result of cancer being present. "Ehm, no," he replied. And just like that, the journey was over. That trusted for, prayed for, believed for healing had happened. God waited until medicine reached its limits, and then He stepped in. All the glory goes to Him!

Through every dark circumstance there was an opportunity for God to shape and mould me closer to the person He wanted me to be. He gave me the grace to yield and let Him do the work that He wanted to do. The result is astonishing and transformational. God had my whole being on His heart for healing. And there is so much more to come!

'The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but I came that they may have life in all its abundance.' (John 10:10) •

Jenny and Niall, both retired GPs, live in Stranraer on the west coast of Scotland. They have 3 children and 5 grandchildren. For Jenny's full story go to www.abundantlifestrategy.co.uk



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BIBLE ALIVE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

BY CAROL CUMMINGS

'Bible Alive' is a Scripture Union (SU) Scotland programme that is aimed at the upper primary age kids, which literally brings the Bible stories alive in their own classroom. I've been doing 'Bible Alive' for some years now, and have been to (almost) every primary school in the Lochaber area, from Fort William itself to Invergarry and Ardnamurchan. 'Bible Alive' is a very interactive series of lessons that introduce the children to the main stories and messages of the Bible in a fun and engaging way.

SU Scotland offers an intensive, week-long, residential or non-residential training course that prepares and equips you to present 'Bible Alive' in the schools. It gives you a foundational

'skeleton' of a programme that you are then able to make your own by using your particular gifts and strengths. In my presentation of 'Bible Alive' I use drama, either the kids or myself getting dressed up and acting out parts. I even have a whole-class drama which is quite something! I include songs, flashcards, flannelgraph, video clips and even puppets. There is also a BSL (British Sign Language) poem that is taught at each lesson. At the end of 'Bible Alive' the kids will then be able to sign the whole of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It's really wonderful to see the kids enthusiastically take part in this aspect of the lessons. I am able to cover four to six Bible stories in each lesson, and they are quick paced and energetic, which the kids seem to love.

“ *I have found that nearly all the kids I’ve taught are very interested in faith and God and the big questions. I feel it an honour to be able to take God literally into their classrooms and present His truths to them in an exciting and real way.* ”

I present ‘Bible Alive’ as ten, forty-five minute lessons, five in the Old Testament and five in the New Testament. I prefer to start the lessons in term two, which means I end with the story of Jesus’ birth. This ties in wonderfully with the schools’ own Christmas preparations and enables me to remind the kids (and staff) of the actual reason we have this celebration. Also, with the New Testament lessons being then taught in term three, I end with the death and resurrection of Jesus just as the school programme is looking at Easter so again, I can remind everyone of the real reason behind this holiday.

The best part of every lesson I present in the classroom (or gym hall) is the ‘Question Time’ at the end. I leave a ‘Question Box’ in every class I go to so during the week between lessons, the kids can put into that box any question they have, either to do with the stories I’ve covered or the Christian faith and God in general. I must say, this is my favourite part. At the beginning of each subsequent lesson, I first look at the questions in the box and try my best to answer them. I love the fact that I’ve no idea at all what the questions will be. It has helped me enormously in my own personal faith in learning how to explain sometimes complicated ideas, in figuring out exactly what it is I believe and in discovering how best to

bring the truth of God’s Word to these young, intelligent, inquisitive kids.

I have found that nearly all the kids I’ve taught are very interested in faith and God and the big questions. I feel it an honour to be able to take God literally into their classrooms and present His truths to them in an exciting and real way. I love the freedom I have (at the moment) to be honest with them about the Christian faith and what the Bible stories are actually trying to tell us. I am so encouraged by the great desire in many of these young people to know the truth and find out for themselves who they are and why they are here.

Please pray that the doors will remain open to the primary schools, and that God’s Word and His message can continue to be brought right into the classroom. Pray that I will continue to be able to answer their questions, and please pray that God would continue to move in the lives of these young people and the school staff who also sit through all the lessons. It has been a wonderful opportunity and experience, and I hope it continues. •

Carol and Justin Cummings work with The Faith Mission in Fort William in the Highlands of Scotland. For further information please visit suscotland.org.uk/biblealive

WHAT HAS GOD CALLED YOU TO DO?

BY CALVIN PARK

What has God called you to do with your life? This is a question we ask as Christians and a question we place too much emphasis on. The most important thing I have learnt of recent is that our calling as Christians is to glorify God and love others, wherever God has placed us. Whether you are in the workplace, in a church, mission organisation, school, sports team, our calling as a Christian is to become more like Jesus. We show His love to others by the way we live our lives and by sharing the good news of Jesus.

Since joining the Faith Mission back in 2021, my aim has been to reach people with the good news of Jesus through sport and in particular, through football. Before I share about the work that is being done in Suffolk, I want to say that the most important aspects of these projects is not strategy or fancy advertising, it's about relationships. It is sharing your life with people and showing them the difference that Jesus has made in your life.



I've found that the profound words which have echoed down from generations are true: "Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind. Always."¹ Whether it's been a child in one of the schools I have worked in, or one of the older lads who attend the football outreach, no one is exempt from facing a battle due to the sin of this world.

With all this in mind, strategy, advertising and organising events and projects are important in the work that I have been doing in the Faith Mission. Since I started working for the Mission, I have set up three distinct projects using sport and social media to reach children, young people

and adults with the good news of the Christian faith.

One of these projects is called FM Football. Inspired by Tim Slater's work for SportsReach, James Brown and I set up football outreach open to adults and young people. This involves sharing an encouraging and/or challenging message from the Bible a couple of minutes before we play an hour of football. We have thoroughly enjoyed doing this, not only because we enjoy football but also because of the relationships we have built with the people who have been attending over the three years. Furthermore, we have had great Christian conversations with many people who have

attended, mainly due to the podcast I started to facilitate people's interest in the Christian faith.

The *Life Uncovered* podcast has been a great tool to open up more conversations with the lads who attend FM Football. This podcast consists of interviews with individuals on how encountering Jesus has changed their lives, from people who have been freed from addiction to young men opening up about their mental health, and a woman who talks about her experience of God's peace in the midst of chaos. Not only has this been effective in sharing the good news of Jesus with people who attend FM Football, but it has also reached a lot of people who would have no contact with Christians or church at all. In an age where people have become more insular and reluctant to engage with people they don't know, online content like podcasts have become a great tool to share the good news of the Christian faith as they can listen and watch in the

comfort of their home. If you are interested in listening or watching the podcast, details are included at the end of this article.

In addition to these projects, I have set up a project called FM Sport, a sports based service provided to schools to allow children to play sport, but also to improve their mental health using the Christian message. One burden of mine is the issue of fatherlessness and the effects this has on young people. In the UK, 2.7 million children, or almost one in five dependent children, have no father figure at home. Britain has the highest proportion of fatherless families in Europe. Why is this an issue you might ask? Research indicates that fatherless children and young people are more likely to drop out of school, have more trouble academically, more likely to be excluded, more likely to be engaged with crime and tragically, more likely to commit suicide. There is no coincidence that as fatherlessness has increased (amongst other complicating factors), so has the rise in children being referred to mental health teams, counselling and pastoral support. This is a sad reality of the world that we live in. I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to go into schools and use sport and the

Bible to share with children the importance of caring for their mental health. The Bible is full of good news and practical techniques that children can use to better their mental health and sense of self-worth. In spite of our sinful nature, God looks at us as precious and honoured. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, we are valuable and He longs for us to become one of His beloved children. If we can teach children, young people and adults of the love of God, that His love and forgiveness is so abundant then our external and internal troubles will pale in comparison.

So, I ask again, what has God called you to do with your life? He has called all of us, who call ourselves followers of Jesus, to share the good news with the people He has put into our lives and given us a burden for. So, what are you waiting for? You don't need to join a mission organisation, or become an elder in the church, or go to a Bible college. If you are reading this as a Christian, you, yourself, have a great story to tell of how Jesus has transformed your life and made you His child. •

Calvin is married to Hannah and works with The Faith Mission in Suffolk. You can listen to Calvin's Podcast 'Life Uncovered' on YouTube, Spotify or Apple Podcasts.

References:

¹ *Attrib. Ian Maclaren*





DISTRICT CONTACT DETAILS

SCOTLAND

SOUTH SCOTTISH DISTRICT

Gordon & Janice Thomson (*Superintendent*)
9 Westerton Farm Lane,
Bearsden, Glasgow, G61 1NF
0141 942 0841
hq.scotland@faithmission.org

HIGHLAND DISTRICT

Jeff & Sarah Townend (*Superintendent*)
Mountain View, Springfield, Balblair,
Dingwall IV7 8LE
07738 289071
highland.scottish@faithmission.org

EAST SCOTTISH DISTRICT

Paul & Elizabeth Crowe (*Superintendent*)
43 Great Southern Road, Aberdeen,
AB11 7XY
01224 587112
east.scottish@faithmission.org

SCOTTISH BORDER DISTRICT

c/o **Gordon & Janice Thomson**
9 Westerton Farm Lane, Bearsden,
Glasgow, G61 1NF
0141 942 0841
anglo.scottish@faithmission.org

ENGLAND

ENGLISH HEADQUARTERS SUFFOLK

Stephen & Cynthia Walker
Red House Farm, Fen Lane, Earl Stonham,
Stowmarket, IP14 5EG
01449 711877
hq.english@faithmission.org

ASSISTANT TO ENGLISH DIRECTOR

Alistair & Yvette Park
Glebe Farm, Langar Lane, Harby,
Melton Mowbray, LE14 4BL
01949 860313
central.english@faithmission.org

IRELAND

CENTRAL IRISH DISTRICT

Garry & Alison Tutty (*Superintendent*)
62 Glenavy Road, Lisburn, BT28 3UT
028 9262 8286
hq.ireland@faithmission.org

IRISH BORDER DISTRICT

Simon & Rebecca Walsh (*Superintendent*)
131 Mahon Road, Portadown, Craigavon,
BT62 3SF
028 3833 2806
border.irish@faithmission.org

NORTH IRISH DISTRICT

Andrew & Jenny McCullough (*Superintendent*)
3 Grange Avenue, Ballymena, BT42 2DX
028 2565 6494
north.irish@faithmission.org

WEST IRISH DISTRICT

Anne Brown (*in charge*)
15 Derry Road, Omagh, BT78 5DY
028 8224 2286
west.irish@faithmission.org

NORTH WEST IRISH DISTRICT

William & Carolyn Harrison
(*Superintendent*)
Sheephill House, 74 Tully Road,
Limavady, BT49 9HW
028 7776 8871
northwest.irish@faithmission.org

IRISH MIDLANDS DISTRICT

Mervyn & Rachel Tomb (*Superintendent*)
Knocknagrally, Durrow, Portlaoise,
Co. Laois, R32 HX23. 057 874 0770
midlands.irish@faithmission.org

SOUTH WEST IRISH DISTRICT

Johnathan & Janet Slater (*Superintendent*)
Carhue, Bandon, Co. Cork, P72 YW67
023 884 4153
southwest.irish@faithmission.org

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BANGOR

Convention
EASTER 2025

**Good Friday 18 April -
Easter Tuesday 22 April**



**Christian
Ministry**



**Worship &
Fellowship**



**Encounter
Youth Event**



SPEAKERS



John
Bennett



John
MacLeod



Russell
Newton



Angus
Moyes



David
Burke

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