

DEVOTIONAL DAVID THE HUMBLE SHEPHERD AND THE OBEDIENT SON

(1 Samuel 16, 17)

We have seen, in our last two Issues of Mini Mag, two main features or qualities already displayed in David's youthful years, qualities which he would display throughout the remainder of his life.

- He **SERVED** both **GOD** and **MAN** with a loving heart and a humble spirit.

- HE **TRUSTED** **GOD** for strength to overcome opposition and attacks from animals and giants.

We saw that the Bible calls him a "man after God's own heart". We concluded that we should be like him. Are we? Do we serve God and man? Do we really trust God in difficult situations?

As we examine his early years in more detail, we see two more important qualities which he displayed during those youthful years. These qualities would also be evident in the years of his life which followed and should be equally present in our lives.

HUMILITY He displayed this humility in three ways.

→ Firstly, as the eighth son, he would always have been looked down upon by his seven brothers. He was the one to do all the menial work including looking after his father's sheep. (1 Samuel 16:11).

→ Secondly, he was destined by his age to be the shepherd who lived alone on the hills with the sheep, and he had to look after them. Shepherds were seen as the lowest class. (1 Samuel 17:28). The implication was that he was no good for anything else. He was the one who "is keeping the sheep." (1 Samuel 16:11). But there were no complaints from him at any time.

→ Thirdly, after he was anointed by Samuel to be king, he went back voluntarily to his sheep. (1 Samuel 17:15)

OBEDIENCE We can see his obedience in the way he always reacted obediently to his father's instructions, even though they were not always pleasant.

→ His father told him to look after the sheep and he did it without any evidence of complaint or objection. (1 Samuel 16:11).

→ Saul told Jesse, his father, to send David to him to play his harp to him. David may have felt nervous about such a visit, but he obeyed his father immediately. (1 Samuel 16:19, 20).



→ His father told him to take food and provisions to his brothers in the army and, despite the possible danger, he did so. (1 Samuel 17:17,20).

→ Several years later, we see his concern for the safety of his father and mother, and he was the one who took them to a place of safety in the land of Moab. (1 Samuel 22:3).

These four qualities, (service, trust, humility and obedience) which we have now identified, characterised David throughout his life. He was not perfect, but he always wanted to **SERVE** God and man, he **TRUSTED** God in every situation, he remained **HUMBLE** even as king, and it was his goal in life to **OBEY** God. But all these qualities found their birth when he was young.

They began, and were developed, during his youthful years. David did not realise that these years were years of preparation for the glorious future which God had planned for him. God, in His wisdom, used David's youthful years as a time of preparation for that future. These years were also years when God tested David, and, when he came through them victoriously, he showed that he was ready for the next step. The biggest step in his life so far.

? Are you going through a time of God's preparation and testing just now? Be thankful for it, learn from it, and keep going and growing.

Do you realise the great potential of your children and teenagers? You might have a David or a Ruth among them. Pray for them and encourage them. They need all the help you can give them. Page 250

YOUR GREATEST NEED



WORSHIP GOD IN SPIRIT IN YOUR QUIET TIME

We saw last month how vital it is for our spiritual lives, and for our ministry to children, to set apart a special time each day to be alone with God, and to devote that Quiet Time to Bible reading, worship and prayer. It is good to follow a plan during your Quiet Time. You could for example follow these five steps:

- 1) **READ** and meditate on a Bible verse or a short Bible passage. God speaks to us as we do so.
- 2) **WORSHIP** God for who He is and what He is like.
- 3) **CONFESS** any sin of which you have been convicted.
- 4) **THANK** God for any blessing you have experienced.
- 5) **PRAY** and ask God to supply a need or help a person or bless a project.

The length of time spent on each of these will depend on the time you make

available. **The most important of these five steps is WORSHIP.**

We read the words of the Lord Jesus in John 4:23 “that the Father is seeking (searching for) those who will worship Him **IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH**,” and He calls them “**TRUE WORSHIPPERS**.” Worship is what God wants from us more than anything else. And He specifically wants us to worship Him **IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH**. “I want to be one of those worshippers, Heavenly Father, and I want to worship You every morning in my Quiet Time.”

What does it mean to worship God?

The Samaritan woman in John 4 questioned the Lord Jesus about worship. She seemed to be thinking of worship as a religious exercise or ceremony and wondered where the best place for it would be Jerusalem or Samaria. (John 4:20). The Lord Jesus explained to her that worship was a personal matter between man and his Heavenly Father. It was not restricted to any one place, and it did not consist of elaborate religious exercises. The Lord Jesus told her (and us) in John 4:23 that the true worshipper worships God “in spirit and in truth”,

and that He is looking for those who will do so.

The words “worship God” mean to give or ascribe or express worth, value or greatness **TO GOD**. The words “worth” and “worthy” are closely related (worth ship) and they imply the thought of **VALUE**. We worship God when we tell Him how great and how worthy He is, and when we tell Him that we honour and glorify Him as the Creator and the Controller of everything. We should do that “in our spirit and in (on the basis of) His truth.”

What does it mean to worship God **IN SPIRIT?**

God does not so much want outward demonstrations of worship such as loud repeated singing, and physical acts like prostration. True worship takes place in our spirits, when we think of, and meditate on, His greatness as the Creator and Controller of everything, and in our hearts and spirits we tell Him how much we love, honour and value Him.

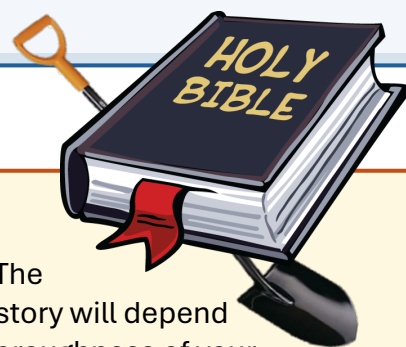
What then does it mean to worship God **IN TRUTH?** We will answer that question in detail next month.

DIGGING DEEPER

HOW TO TEACH BIBLE LESSONS (AND HOW NOT TO TEACH THEM)

The children’s evangelist needs to be a good storyteller. A Bible story, well told, can be an attractive introduction to the understanding of the Bible truths, which God can use to save children and help them to grow spiritually. This principle is wonderfully displayed in the teaching ministry of the Lord Jesus. But the story must be well told, or it

will have little effect. The effectiveness of your story will depend on two factors: the thoroughness of your preparation and the attractiveness of your presentation. The first thing to do in your preparation is to read your Bible passage (for example Luke 19:1-10) five or six times and read any other materials or



information you have on that passage and have a quick glance at what precedes it and follows it. You need to be familiar with the passage before you start to prepare the four-stages of your teaching plan.

The next thing to do is to start making a written plan of what you will say, a plan which you could follow and help you tell your story. We saw last month that this plan should consist of four parts or stages.

Part 1) A brief interesting introduction leading your listeners into the story.

Part 2) A sequence of all the events in the passage or story listed vertically one after the other.

Part 3) Your climax when the children's attention is most focussed, and they want to see the result.

Part 4) A brief concluding paragraph which draws the story to a close and gives a personal challenge.

PREPARE YOUR INTRODUCTION

Your first part is your introduction. Many story tellers do not realise the importance of a good introduction as the entrance and gate way to your story. If you do not get the children's interest at the start you may not get it later. Your introduction should be a short paragraph which will immediately catch their interest or arouse their curiosity, and it should lead into, and be linked with, the narrative which follows.

→ Wrong ways to begin your introduction.

Here are some sentences to avoid in your introduction for obvious reasons.

- 1) "Now sit still while I tell you a story", or
- 2) "Have you heard the story about Zaccheus?" (What do you do if they say "Yes"?) or
- 3) "Would you like to hear the story of Zaccheus? (What would you do if they say "No"?) or
- 4) "Now, sit up. Fold your arms. Be quiet. I am going to tell you a story."

→ Right ways to begin your introduction.

You could start off with some action from the story.

- 1) "I never saw a man climb a tree as quickly as he did. Why is he hiding behind the leaves? Is he hiding from someone?" or
- 2) "If the Queen was to visit our city, town or village and there were crowds of people everywhere, how could a small boy see her if he was standing behind a crowd?"

Or you could use a simple illustration like "What should I do when I lose my car keys? What would a shepherd do if he lost a sheep? I know a shepherd who lost one of his sheep. What did he do?"

It is most important that when you decide on your introduction, you learn it off by heart so that you can start your story without hesitation or stumbling. **Next month we will progress to the second part of your plan.**

VITAL TRUTHS TO DISCOVER

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR TEACHER

In our last two issues we discovered two great truths about the Holy Spirit. We learned first WHO HE IS. We understand that He is a PERSON, and, secondly, we are thankful that HE IS GOD. He is both a PERSON and GOD. We will now study **WHAT HE DOES** in our world, in our lives and in our ministry.

1) THE HOLY SPIRIT INSPIRED THE SCRIPTURES

It was He Who showed the writers of the Scriptures what to write and enabled them to give us the Bible which is the book which tells us how to live and what to believe. We read in the Bible that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." (2 Timothy 3:16). God the Holy Spirit revealed all the truths we need to know to prophets and holy men of God and they "were moved by the Holy Spirit," (2 Peter 1:21) to speak and to write the Scriptures as we have them today. The Bible is therefore the "Handbook" which the Holy Spirit has provided for us to guide us and help us in our lives and ministries.

2) THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES us the SCRIPTURES and helps us and the children to understand what He, as the author, has written in that "handbook." We read in John 16:12-15 that He is the Spirit of truth and that He will guide us into all truth. Everything written in the Bible is true. He is our PARAKLETOS, a Greek word usually translated as "Helper or Comforter." (John 14:26). God the Father sent Him to the disciples (and to us) to TEACH us all things and to bring to remembrance all things I said to you." (us) The Bible tells us that He teaches us, and He enables us to "know the things which have been freely given to us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:12), and it is through Him and what He has written that "we can understand all things." (1 John 2:20). He is our teacher, and we are His pupils. He helps us to understand what He has written about our salvation and our spiritual growth. He helps us to understand the Scripture passages on which our Bible lessons to

the children are based. He helps the children to understand what we are teaching. Above all, He will, through His teaching and its results, achieve the main part of His ministry TO GLORIFY CHRIST. (John 16:14,15)

3) THE HOLY SPIRIT BLESSES US AND USES US TO TEACH THE SCRIPTURES TO THE CHILDREN

The Holy Spirit is the source of all effective teaching. He is not only the Author and Explainer of the Scriptures, but He also shows us what to teach and how to teach it. He can give power to our teaching, and use our teaching to convict, to regenerate, and to change lives.

He won't do the work that we can do; but we can't do the work that He can do. We pray that our message to the children will come "not only in word, but in power and **in the Holy Spirit** with much assurance." (1 Thessalonians 1:5) We long to see "a demonstration of the spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4) as we teach the children, that He will work in their hearts and save them.

4) THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS THE CHILDREN TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS TAUGHT and works in their hearts.

**WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR THE
WONDERFUL MINISTRIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
OUR TEACHER**

A NEW CHALLENGE

DON'T FORGET THE TEENS AND INBETWEENS

Last month we saw that the greatest problem for many Good News Club teachers and Sunday School teachers is that they lose many of their older children when they come to a certain age. They no longer enjoy many of the Club's activities in which they had participated for years. There are several ways by which we could retain these teenagers and minister to them.

→ We could change our teaching methods to suit them, by having more discussions, fewer visual aids and less singing; but we could then lose the attention of the younger children who are our main target.

→ We could try to find a programme which would be interesting and attractive for both younger and older children, but this would be difficult for many of us.

→ We could invite older children to share in the leadership of the Club with some responsibilities. This could help but it would be very limited.

→ We could divide our club into two clubs, one for the younger, and one for the older children. That would seem to be the best solution; but we would either need to teach both clubs ourselves, or we would need to find someone else to teach the other club.

There is another possibility which seems to be the best solution – especially because it has been used and has proved to be very successful. Child Evangelism Fellowship of Ireland have adopted a special "three level layer plan" for their ministry to children and teenagers.

1) **Good News Clubs, the first layer**, continue to be directed towards the 5-11s as they are at present.

2) **The second layer** is a kind of "Senior Good News Club" and is called "**Junior Youth Challenge**." Its programmes are directed towards the 12-16 age group, with more discussions, questions and answers and involvement. When the children reach eleven or twelve in Good News Club, they are encouraged to move into this Youth Challenge. Several Good News Clubs will direct their older children into one Youth Challenge. It may not be practical for every Good News Club to have their own Youth Challenge. It has been found that it is better for these Youth Challenges to meet every two weeks, and not every week like Good News Clubs. We will deal with Youth Challenges in later issues.

3) **The third level** is to organise "**Senior Youth Challenges**" – for the 17-year-olds to the early twenties. They would meet monthly and those in Junior Youth Challenges would move into Senior Youth Challenges as they get older. We will return to this subject next month. But in case you have doubts about such a system I will share with you the situation in CEF of Ireland at present.

There are 350 Good News Clubs in this rather small country of around **2 million** people. If there is an average of 20 children in each club, there would be 7000 children in those clubs.

There are **50 Junior** Youth Challenges.

There are **20 Senior** Youth Challenges.

There are **800 young** people attending one of these two types of CEF Youth Challenge.

Could a programme like this be developed where you live and work? Nothing is impossible.

The Mini-Mag is published and written by Sam Doherty

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All of them have occupied leadership positions for many years in the worldwide ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship®. The contents of each Mini-Mag are based upon the author's 75 years of experience working with Child Evangelism Fellowship, successively as national director of Irish CEF, as European CEF regional director and as founder of the CEF Specialised Book Ministry.

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