

CHOOSING TO GET CLOSE

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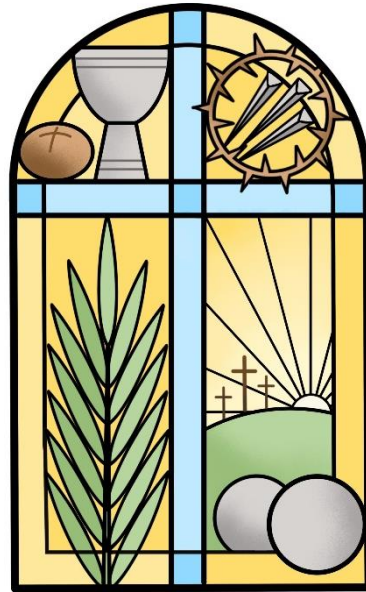
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Picture Parable



We have recently celebrated the choice God made to get close to us. In Jesus, God fully clothed himself with humanity in sheer vulnerability. The one who is the source of the whole created order, chose to be born in humble conditions away from public eyes. The King of Kings chose to come to the least and the last - poor shepherds with no influence and foreigners from the east. The one who has all authority chose to become a refugee, fleeing the oppressive regime of King Herod.

Such amazing choices! **Then at the age of thirty-three, Jesus chose to die on the cross of Calvary.**

Historically, it can be explained by the fact that Jewish leaders plotted against him and Roman soldiers

executed him, **but the reality is Jesus was "handed over by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge" Acts 2:23.**

"Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God." 1 Peter 3:18.

This implies that prior to Jesus dying, we were in fact, far away. Paul says in Romans 6:26 that **"the wages of sin is death"** Consequently, all humans stand condemned before God because our sins separate us from him - **his character is pristine holiness and perfect justice.**

Jesus chose to die in our place thus making it possible for our sin to be dealt with. Jesus paid the price for our redemption by shedding his blood, exhausting God's wrath against our sinfulness. **The truth is that it was out of love for us that God sent his Son, and the Son chose to lay down his life of his own accord.**

The death of Jesus puts beyond all doubt the fact that God loves us, **but equally the resurrection resounds in all four gospels because it is the centre of redemption.** Without it, Jesus is a dead martyr. With it, we stand in awe of the exalted Messiah, the Son of the living God, who presently reigns at God's right hand, and who will one day return in glory to restore this broken world.

Daphne Hodkinson



THE LEPROSY MISSION

IS 150 YEARS OLD!



It is heart-warming to see God's plan coming to fruition in the formation of the Leprosy Mission.

Back in 1866, Wellesley Bailey, a young Irishman, became engaged to Alice Grahame, his childhood sweetheart. Little did either of them know what God had in store for them and how their lives would be changed so dramatically.

The couple grew up in the time of the potato famine in Ireland. Wellesley felt that he wanted to go in search of a more prosperous future and so he decided to Australia and New Zealand before getting married. Alice agreed, but her one request

was that he should attend a Church service whenever he could.

Wellesley had never taken the Christian faith seriously, but just a few days into his travels, he found himself stranded in Gravesend. He was waiting for a heavy fog to lift that had left his ship stuck in port. **With little else to do Wellesley went into a nearby Church and he was ASTONISHED when he heard God speak to him!** He left the church deeply moved by his experience and on his return to the ship, he knelt by his bed and committed his life to Christ.

Some time later he went to visit his brother in India and saw the devastating effects of leprosy. He wrote to Alice:

"I almost shuddered, yet I was at the same time fascinated and felt if there was ever a Christ-like work in the world, it was to go amongst these poor sufferers and bring them the consolation of the Gospel."

Alice was deeply moved by Wellesley's letters and descriptions and in 1871 travelled to India to be with him. They were married in Bombay Cathedral and travelled to Ambala, BUT the heat did not suit Alice and they had to return home to Ireland. **Little did they know that this was part of GOD'S PLAN!**

Back in Dublin, the couple were invited to the home of the Pim sisters who were known for their socializing and charitable works. Wellesley had many opportunities to share their experiences of leprosy, and everyone was gripped with his talks. **Charlotte Pim began to fundraise and in 1874 she had raised £600 and so The Leprosy Mission was born.** Alice and Wellesley returned to India to care for the lepers in Northern India.

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DATES

General Meetings:

2024, 19th October (Jump Church)

2025, 5th March (Rushden Mission Church)

Conference:

2024, 17th – 19th June (Swanwick)

2025, 9th – 11th June (Swanwick)

WRU CONFESSION OF FAITH

(to be continued)

2. That the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, as originally given, are of divine inspiration and infallible, supreme in authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

I have many books on my shelves (and also in various piles!), some of them still unread. They cover a vast array of subjects, although most of them as you might expect are connected with the Bible or ministry. **It doesn't matter which one I pick up, none of them come close to the Bible, even in the feel of them. Holding a Bible just feels different to me to any other book.**

It is different to any other book! The second in our articles on the Confession of Faith considers this. There is not time to look in detail, but I hope that this short article will encourage you to delve deeper.

Firstly, we see that the Scriptures are holy. Holy means that it is set apart from common things, it's not just a book, it's God's book.

Secondly, our Confession speaks of both the Old and New Testaments as originally given. There are some today who discount the Old Testament, believing that with the coming of Jesus it is no longer relevant. How wrong they are! The Old Testament is about the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that we cannot properly understand the coming of Jesus, and His death, if we do not recognise the way that the Old Testament paves the way. **Augustine helpfully said, 'The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed.'** They simply cannot be separated. Of course, some of the Bible is not

easy to understand, and it takes time, especially concerning the Old Testament to discover what it means and how it should be applied today, **but it is worth it.**

Thirdly, both the Old and New Testaments are of divine inspiration and infallible. These two things are, I think, connected. 2 Timothy 3 v 16 tells us, *'All Scripture is God-breathed'*, while 2 Peter 1 v 21 records, *'prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.'* We do not call it the Word of God for no reason! It is God speaking to us. Where we claim that the Bible is infallible, we are stating that it is true, without error and absolutely trustworthy. **Simply put – can the Bible, if it is inspired by God, be anything other?**

Finally, the Scriptures are supreme in authority in all matters of faith and conduct. Is the Bible just a self-help handbook, among many others, where we can look if we aren't sure about something, hoping for some guidance? If that is how we see it, we have fallen far short of what it actually is. **It is supreme – above all other teaching, it carries authority and contains all we need to live a life worthy of our calling as Christians, in every matter of faith, and the way we conduct ourselves.** We ignore it at our peril!

Rev Phil Hearson



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

FROM THE SUBLIME

TO THE RIDICULOUS



Throughout history people across the world have given each other eggs at spring festivals to mark the seasons.

The egg became a symbol of the Resurrection. Just as Jesus rose from the tomb, the egg symbolised new life emerging from the eggshell. Early

Christians in Mesopotamia dyed eggs in the period after Easter to represent new life and rebirth.

Most of us will have enjoyed receiving and giving traditional chocolate eggs to eat over the Easter holidays.

They come in a multitude of sizes with an equal variety of fillings to tempt our palettes and are usually priced within the means of most people.

The most expensive Easter eggs produced include a series of fifty Imperial Easter eggs created for the Russian Imperial family by Faberge between 1885-1916, costing millions of pounds to buy today... far beyond the means of ordinary folk.

These creations are linked to the glory and tragic fate of the Romanov family and can be described as works of art, encrusted in precious metals and gems. Each one contains a surprise inside its shell.

We can thank two of America's most prolific inventors for a simple hinged plastic Easter egg which can be used to hide sweets, toys and other hideable objects to surprise recipients when opening their Easter gifts. Erwin and Donald Weder hold about 1,400 U.S. patents for inventions including this simple but effective plastic egg costing pence to buy.

Which to buy? The sublime or the ridiculous? The choice is ours, depending on the size of our bank balance. Isn't it good to know that Jesus is the "sublime," God's perfect creation, who came to earth to pay the price for the sins of the "ridiculous," me, you and whoever will believe in Him. As we accept our Easter treats let's remember to give thanks for His death and Resurrection, the price He paid for us.

*Marie Nickols
(Staincross WR Church)*



WHAT AN EXPERIENCE!



Whilst enjoying a Christmas and New Year break staying with my son and his wife and family, I unfortunately took a bad fall which resulted in some serious head injuries with lots of bleeding.

However, my experience was so positive in so many ways.

I fall outside the house next to my son's. Immediately a workman who is

working opposite comes to offer assistance - he has first aid training.

Other neighbours come to assist, and my son is told (he is also first aid trained).

My head is bandaged but the bleeding continues; 999 is dialled. I am not concussed.

There is a long wait for an ambulance.

"It was like being invited to have lunch with Lazarus in person!"

One of our missionaries, **Lesley Notghi**, is back in Madagascar until March and she recently sent this amazing news.

"Edmet is the radiographer and ECG technician at the Good News Hospital, an important role. One year ago, his wife Honorine gave birth to their third child. Two weeks later, Honorine collapsed with heart failure and in the hospital, she had a cardiac arrest. The most experienced doctors were all on hand to attempt resuscitation, but with no pulse or heartbeat for eight minutes, Honorine was technically dead, and the medical likelihood of a good outcome was rapidly dwindling to zero. The team were praying as they worked and the

great cloud of witnesses already gathered at the windows were praying too. Against all the scientific odds, the heartbeat returned, but Honorine was still not breathing. At the Good News Hospital, sustained, mechanical ventilation is not possible, but as it happened there was one machine and the person who knew exactly how to use it woke up to answer his phone in Malaysia and from there guided the team through setting it up.

For the next few hours Honorine was unconscious and unable to breathe for herself. The fear, and the statistical probability was that she would remain in that state indefinitely. Prayer continued and gathered force as news spread and



more pray-ers were recruited.

Within twenty-four hours, **she was off the machine and asking for her baby"**!

Sometime later at a party where Lesley was present, Honorine described the whole experience and how she found herself in a place of glorious light and was flooded with peace and joy, freed from all concerns or longings for the family and the world left behind; she did not want to return from that place.

Praise God for answered prayer!

WHAT AN EXPERIENCE! (Continued from page 4)

A nurse coming off duty agrees that I need to go to hospital.

My granddaughter drives me to the hospital accompanied by my son. In the meantime, her husband rings the hospital and so I immediately go to Triage on arrival.

I wait to see the doctor. I have a scan.

The doctor (was he really old enough?) and nurse cannot stem the blood. I am referred to 'plastics'.

In 'plastics' I am looked after by a Cypriot bank nurse who is very caring. When the 'plastics' doctor comes he decides that it will have to be stapled. He is kind and efficient and well supported by the nurse who has to keep fetching extra supplies.

Eventually I am told - 'That isn't blood it's saline solution to refresh'.

I have to wait for an available bed on a ward where again I am lovingly cared for and where my Cypriot nurse

advises the staff that I am most definitely not confused.

Early on Saturday the plastics consultant comes to see me and is very pleased with the stapling and advises me that they need to be removed on January 8th at my own surgery as I will be home by then. (He also says that I can shower and have my hair washed and that will help).

I stay in hospital for another night and am discharged on Sunday morning.

My youngest granddaughter saw me on Saturday before going away to celebrate the New Year. When she arrived home on Monday her first words to me were 'Grandma, I can't believe how much better you look, your bruising is fading round your eyes'.

Beyond any doubt I met 'angels in disguise' lovingly sent by God who continues to answer the prayers of his people.

Muriel Stonehewer

DAYS OF MARCH

Did you have week days that were marked in a special way as you were growing up? What about particular tea times (or 'dinner' if you are from some areas in the UK – 5pm). We always had chips and left over Sunday Dinner meat on a Monday, Tuesday was Meat and Potato Pie, Wednesday – some form of stew – Thursday was the best night of the week! 'Choosing night! We actually got to choose what we wanted, and we all had something different, and Fridays – fish and chips!

Perhaps if family turned up to your house on a particular day, they would still know what to expect for their evening meal – do you like a routine? Every day meant something different.

March is a month that begins with St David's Day and ends on the 31st with Easter Sunday.

For Christians, March is a beautiful journey through Lent where we wrestle with the scriptures and try to walk in the footsteps of our Lord through our imagination and through our daily pilgrimage through this mystery, we call life. But did you know that there are so many other days during March that can be recognised, should you wish to? Pretty much every day means you can celebrate something different!

Here they are:

1st Mar - St. David's Day
1st Mar to 2nd Mar - National Day of Unplugging
3rd Mar - World Wildlife Day
4th Mar to 10th Mar - Food Waste Action Week
7th Mar - World Book Day
8th Mar - International Women's Day
8th Mar to 17th Mar - British Science Week
9th Mar - Barbie Day

10th Mar - Mother's Day (UK)
10th Mar - Mario Day
14th Mar - Pi Day
15th Mar - Red Nose Day
17th Mar - St. Patrick's Day
18th Mar - Global Recycling Day
18th Mar to 24th Mar - Shakespeare Week
19th Mar - World Sleep Day
20th Mar - Spring Equinox (Northern Hemisphere)
20th Mar - World Frog Day
21st Mar - World Poetry Day
21st Mar - Early Music Day
21st Mar - International Day of Forests
21st Mar - Nowruz
22nd Mar - International Day of Action for the Seals
22nd Mar - World Water Day
25th Mar - Tolkien Day
27th Mar - World Theatre Day
28th Mar - Piano Day
28th Mar - Wear A Hat Day
29th Mar - Good Friday
31st Mar - Easter Day

I am not too keen on a Barbie Day, but the National Day of Unplugging certainly seems like something that we could all do with!

Nowruz Day is the Persian/Iranian New Year – and it started as a Zoroastrian celebration – who were thought to be Zoroastrians? – The Magi!



Tolkien Day also looks interesting. Tolkien, once wrote to someone who wished to know the purpose of life, that it was "to increase according to our capacity our knowledge of God by all the means we have, and to be moved by it to praise and thanks."

He also had a high appreciation of Holy Communion and wrote, "in the Blessed Sacrament... you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity, and the true way of all your loves upon earth, and more than that".

I will ponder through some of these 'special days' – (definitely not Barbie) – and might even wear a hat, if necessary, on the 28th of March – which incidentally (and perhaps is not seen as important as Wear a Hat Day!!!!) is Maundy Thursday.

https://www.eparenting.co.uk/celebrations/celebrations_and_events_in_march.php

Have a Blessed March – whatever you choose to do ☺

Jo x
(Hampden View – Sheffield)

WOMEN OF ACTION

AGM & more

Saturday 27th April
Hampden View WRU Church
Sheffield S6 2TQ
10:30 - 3:30
(10am coffee)

All ladies are welcome to attend the day, please come and join us and be a part of what God is doing through the Women of Action in our Union of churches

Lunch is provided so please call 07981413291 or email sandrafall@live.co.uk with numbers attending

ALL LADIES WELCOME

Wesleyan Reform Union Women of Action

Invite you to

*A morning of teaching, reflection,
discussion & prayer
On the theme*

Solid Foundation

Matt 7:24-27

Saturday 9th March

Dorrington Wesleyan Reform Chapel
125 Main Street LN4 3QA

To book your free places call

Joyce: 01526 832334

Doors open 10 am Start 10.30 am

Refreshments and lunch provided

OBITUARY



BRIAN KAY
(Mayfield WR Church)

Brian went to the Sunday School at Sharrow Vale Wesleyan Reform Church from the age of 2. He became a Sunday School helper and then a teacher and, at one point in later years, was the Boys Brigade Captain.

Brian later moved to Mayfield Chapel and worked alongside Keith Slater. He felt it was much nearer to home and the right place to be.

He served as church secretary and also as Sheffield Circuit secretary and was always fully committed to anything and everything he was called to do - welcoming preachers, planning speakers for supper club and so much more.

He was only fifteen when he made the decision to follow the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ and later, he felt called to study to become an accredited Lay Preacher. He continued in this capacity until he was almost 80 years of age, and he could no longer stand. He flatly refused to preach sitting down.

Brian was also a member of the Young People's Department and made many lifelong friends throughout the Union. As he became more and more involved in the Union he loved going to the Conferences, initially in churches within the Union and later at Swanwick. He became a member of the General Committee and served in many sections over the years and had

the honour of becoming President in 1999.

Throughout his life, Brian's faith steadfastly looked up to God. Now, Death's cold, sullen stream has rolled over him. But, in our hearts we believe that his darkness has turned today and that, as a ransomed soul, he has now been borne safely above to his rich, heavenly reward.

It was indeed a sad day as we said our goodbyes to Brian, but we celebrated his life and rejoiced in the assurance of his abiding faith and his wide circle of friends - so many people will always be immensely grateful for the effect he had on their lives.

It is our sincere prayer that Brian's immortal soul may indeed now rest safely and securely in God's Heavenly Love and His eternal peace.

The tale of the Tower Builder



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ON ONE OCCASION JESUS EXPLAINED HOW IT WOULDN'T ALWAYS BE EASY TO FOLLOW HIM.



JESUS BEGAN, 'IF ONE OF YOU PLANS TO BUILD A TOWER....

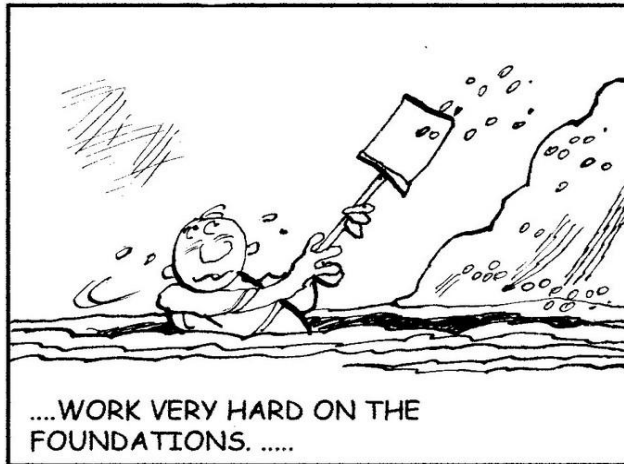
...YOU'LL FIRST NEED TO WORK HOW MUCH IT WILL COST.



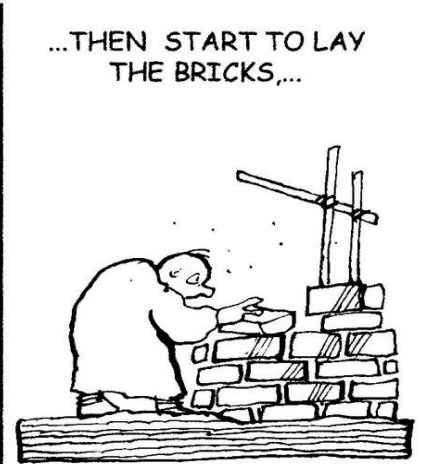
IF YOU DON'T DO THE SUMS....



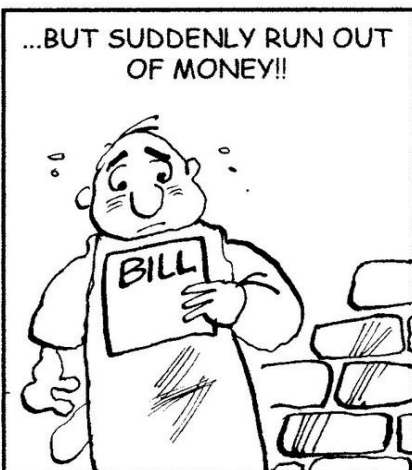
...YOU MIGHT MAKE A START,



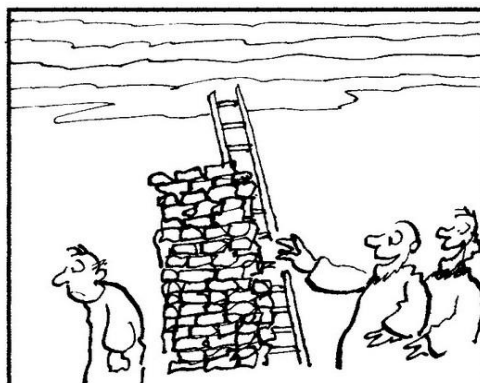
....WORK VERY HARD ON THE FOUNDATIONS.



...THEN START TO LAY THE BRICKS,...



...BUT SUDDENLY RUN OUT OF MONEY!!



THEN PEOPLE WILL LAUGH AT YOU!"



WE NEED TO REALISE THAT ALTHOUGH FOLLOWING JESUS IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, IT'S ALSO A GREAT CHALLENGE.