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SEVEN WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT OVER



At Easter, we remember the 'Passion of Christ.' We see something of the price to put away sin. Yet we also experience a time of supreme joy because on the third day, God raised Him from the dead.

The 'Passion of Christ' was the greatest act of love ever expressed towards mankind. To confirm our faith, Jesus sent us seven words of encouragement:

1. **"Father, forgive them ..."** (Luke 23:34). Jesus prayed for His persecutors. He practiced what He preached!

2. **"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"** (Luke 23:43). This verse has given so much hope to so many. It really is possible to have a deathbed confession. The repentant thief was saved because faith in Jesus is enough!

3. **"Woman behold thy son"** (John 19:26-27). This shows the filial loving care of Jesus. Tenderly, Jesus commends Mary into the loving care of John. Mary's son, according to the flesh, died on that cross and in His death He became her Saviour.

4. **"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"** (Mark 15:34). Now we learn something of the deeper cost. Jesus became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God. For a while, the eternal fellowship between the Father and the Son was broken.



5. **"I thirst"** (John 19:28). After 6 hours of torture Jesus asked for something to drink. In His perfect humanity, being one of us, He understood thirst.

6. **"It is finished"** (John 19:30). Jesus gloriously finished the great work of His Father. The work of atonement was completed there on the cross. Through the finished work of Christ we can be fully reconciled to God.

7. **"Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!"** (Luke 23:46). Jesus not only lived like no other man but He also died like no other man. Death had no claim on Him.

God did not spare Jesus when He bore our sin. He died that you might live. If you have never truly believed, how can you escape God's judgement? May you repent of your sin and seek the remedy in Christ alone.

*James Fenton
(Minister at Muff Field WR Church)*

PADDINGTON

BEAR

It was just at the beginning of the year that I noticed a group of people gathered in the W.I. garden at the top of Market Street in Ashby de la Zouch. Naturally curious, I walked over to see what was happening and there on a wooden bench sat a large model of Paddington Bear. It seems that his appearance was connected to the latest film "Paddington in Peru" and in fact there are 23 bears in all, scattered across the country from John O'Groats to Land's End.

Every time I drive past that bench there-are often children and adults having their photograph taken, sitting next to Paddington, especially when the sun is shining. However, when it is raining or a cold wind is blowing, he just sits there looking incredibly lonely, looking wistfully up the road, still holding his marmalade sandwich. It is then that I feel so sad and I think of all the people, young and old, who feel that loneliness and are waiting for the phone to ring or someone to call.

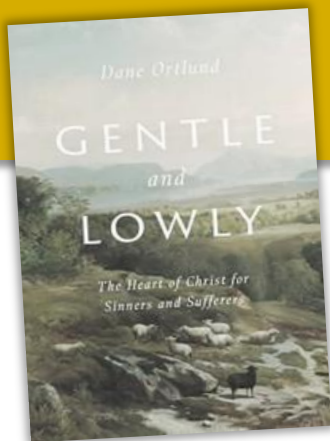
The world is full of "ifs". The world says, "Yes, I will



be your friend if you are good-looking, intelligent and wealthy. I will be your friend if you have good connections. The world's love is always conditional and full of "ifs". Whereas the love of God is entirely unconditional, and we should be praying that the Lord will lead us to the house-bound or those who sit, waiting for someone to call because as Christians, we have a message of hope and joy, that God loves us to the uttermost.

Daphne Hodgkinson

BOOK RECOMMENDATION



What do you know about the heart of Jesus? The four Gospels tell us where He was born, lived and died. They recorded His teaching, prayers, miracles. They tell us of his family, friends and followers. But what about His heart? C.H. Spurgeon pointed out that only one verse tells us about his heart, and what does it tell us, that His heart was "austere and demanding", "exalted and dignified" or even "joyful and generous in heart"? No, the verse quotes Jesus himself telling people...

GENTLE AND LOWLY

The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers by Dane Ortland

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, 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."* Matthew 11:28,29

For those of us in the West, the heart symbolises our emotions and feelings, but for Hebrew and Greek readers 2,000 years ago, the heart represented everything you are. The very centre of your values, emotions, thoughts, mind and character. So, when Jesus reveals to us His heart, He says "**I am gentle and lowly.**"

This book by Dane Ortland, "Gentle and Lowly", explores this subject in depth. Using scripture, particularly the Prophets, but also the writings of the Puritans, such as Bunion, Owen, Edwards and Spurgeon.

It is quite frankly, one of the most beautiful and thought-provoking books I have ever read. So much so, I have started to read it again this year in my quiet times.

Many churches have used the discussion material that accompanies the book in their discipleship and home groups.

By Andy Wilcock

WRU CONFESSION OF FAITH

(to be continued)

8. In the priesthood of all believers, and that we being members one of another, are one body in Christ Jesus having equality of spiritual opportunities as the sacred right of all.

It is hard to quantify the impact of the reformation and the effect it has had on the world at large. What is clear is the cataclysmic effect it had on the church of the 16th Century that Protestants are the beneficiaries of today. The watchword cry of the reformers was, "Sola Scriptura", as they believed that the scriptures alone are the sole authority for all Christian belief and practice, and not the Vatican. The protest of those who sought reform did not seek to start a new religion but rather, a return to biblical Christianity.

One of the core doctrines that arose out of the reformation was the priesthood of all believers; which emphasises that Christ Jesus alone is the high priest (Hebrews4:14,9:11-12) and that through His sacrifice, all believers have access to God (Ephesians2:18,Hebrews10:19-20), and do not need an earthly priest as mediator (1Timothy2:5,Hebrews9:15,12:24). Though different passages of scripture speak of a priesthood (Isaiah, Hebrews,1Peter and Revelation), it is derived from Exodus 19:5-6, where God says to Israel, "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation ..."

When discussing this doctrine, emphasis is often laid on the privilege of all believers being priests, and rightfully so, as this should be emphasised. However, the focus on the responsibility of being a priest is

at times neglected. When reading the scriptures we see that the priests in the Old Testament, were set apart to live differently to the other tribes. There were certain restrictions placed upon them (Leviticus21-22). The same was true for Israel as a nation compared to other nations (Leviticus18:3, Joshua23:6-8). They were set apart to be holy (Leviticus20:26, Deuteronomy7:6). The same is true for believers today. Israel was to be a witness to the nations (Deuteronomy4:6, Isaiah43:10). Similarly, believers are to be witnesses in the nations where they are, and to all the nations of the world (Act1:8), thus fulfilling the great commission (Matthew28:18-20).

This privilege and responsibility is given to every believer in Christ Jesus. As priests we should therefore conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel (Ephesians4:1, Colossians1:10, Philippians 1:27,2:12, 1Thessalonians 2:12), go on to maturity in the faith (Hebrews 6:1-12, 2Peter 1:5-11) and wholly devote ourselves to God by offering ourselves to be living sacrifices which is our reasonable act of service (Romans12:1). Hence the title should spur us on to fulfil its requirements according to the scriptures. We should not be satisfied with the title but take very seriously the position of a priest and give our all to serve our Lord and Saviour, for it is God who has called us and commissioned us to be a kingdom of priests, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Rev. David Bracken

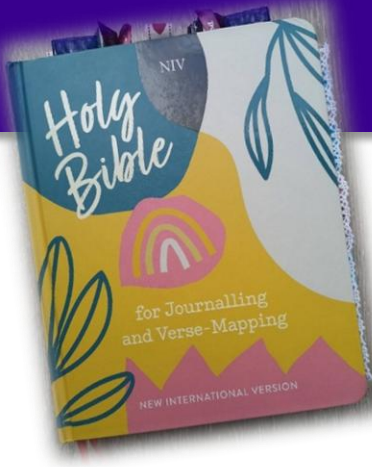


THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

BIBLE JOURNALING

or STUDYING YOUR BIBLE

CREATIVELY



Andy: Alina, how and why did you get into Bible Journaling?

Alina: I've always found it hard to read my Bible and not get distracted. I can read a whole page and not remember what I've read. I've also found reading schemes stressful, not keeping up, left me feeling guilty.

Then one day I came across "Bible Journaling," on YouTube. They were using a Wide Margined Bible to artistically record thoughts and ideas about the passage. Now I can't really draw, and I'm not fond of my own handwriting. But I was intrigued.

Andy: So, did you buy yourself a Wide Margined Bible? And could you get one in the version you prefer?

Alina: There are Journaling Bible's in nearly all of the common versions. Yes, they have wide margins, but they can also include pre-drawn

artwork for you to colour in and blank pages for extra notes. Some come with questions about the passage or devotional thoughts.

Andy: How has this approach, impacted the way you read your Bible?

Alina: I've found myself becoming immersed in the passage. There is no pressure to move on, but to really understand the text on the page. I enjoy the journey of discovery and seeking to hear God speak to me through his word. The process frequently causes me to read other passages relating to the one I'm studying. Maybe it mentions Abraham, and I then go to Genesis to refresh my memory and discover new things I've possibly overlooked in the past.

Andy: Do you only use it during your quiet time?

Alina: I sometimes use this to prepare myself for the teaching at Church on a Sunday morning, (*Andy and Alina attend the same Church*) and we are going through 1 John, so I looked at the passage for this Sunday.

Andy: Do you still use other aids such as Commentaries when looking at a passage.

Alina: Yes, they encourage you to pray asking the Holy Spirit to guide you, to compare different versions of the Bible, read commentaries, and I also have the ESV Study Bible to hand.

(Alina held up her copy of the ESV Study Bible, which is excellent, but very bulky. I explained that I have it on my Kindle, which is a lot lighter.)

I suppose it can be seen as a way of meditating, pondering, revisiting, considering and exploring the scripture. Many-a-time I've ended up with questions and found things I had not seen before.

There is also Verse Mapping, which gives you six steps to studying a verse. You can download templates to help you.

Step 1: Preparation

Step 2: Context is Key

Step 3: Draw Connections in Scripture

Step 4: Make the Map your own

Step 5: Paraphrase

Step 6: Put it into Action

Search for Bible Journaling at 10ofthose.co.uk or eden.co.uk or doodlingfaith.co.uk



“I tried to put myself into the Apostles shoes - what rollercoaster of emotions.”

ASCENSION

I tried to put myself into the Apostles shoes - what rollercoaster of emotions. They had suffered the devastating pain of Jesus' death, followed by the excitement of His resurrection, and excitement is not really a strong enough word. It was mind blowing. Then Jesus continued to come in and out of their lives, they just never know when and where He's going to appear, but all the time He's teaching them. His final instruction in Acts 1 - don't leave Jerusalem until you receive the gift of the Father.

Sounds exciting, I love a surprise gift (and the Holy Spirit continually surprises us). Then as they are listening to Him, suddenly He starts ascending - just imagine their surprise, amazement, to complete

that two men in white suddenly join them. They confirm His words - but add that He will come back in the same way He's just gone.

Don't you wish you could have been part of that group walking back to Jerusalem - questions, questions, questions and no further answers. When they got back they went to that upper room and United in prayer. What were they praying for, how long would they have to wait.

We, of course, know because we've read the rest of the story - they had to wait ten days from Ascension Day to Pentecost. I wonder, did it seem like a long time.

So how can we celebrate the feast of the Ascension- in fact it often passes without us even appreciating that it's a special day in the church calendar.

In my youth I attended a Church of England primary school and we had to go to school for registration then walk to the church for prayers and a special service, then the rest of the day was a holiday - 'a holy day'.

So how can we make this year different. I went to a website for

'Thy Kingdom Come', where they ask us to 'light up the world in prayer' from the 9th - 19th May, Ascension day to Pentecost. They are happy to provide a Novena booklet and a prayer journal and ask that you write the names of five people in your journal, praying continually for them for these ten days. These resources are available from CPO - Christian Resources Organisation, you only have to pay for the postage. What better way to celebrate the feast of the Ascension than to pray that our family and friends come to know Jesus and receive the promise of His Holy Spirit

Beryl Green (Syresham Church)

Contact magazine is changing style to a **News Letter**

It will stay bi-monthly, as before. We welcome inspirational stories, devotional and encouraging articles, news and events from the churches and anything that would keep us in touch.

Some rules to remember:

- Articles must arrive on or just before the deadline
- If possible, a picture or a photograph should accompany the article
- Make sure that pictures/articles you send have no copyrights, or you have permission to use them
- Word count per article should not exceed 750.

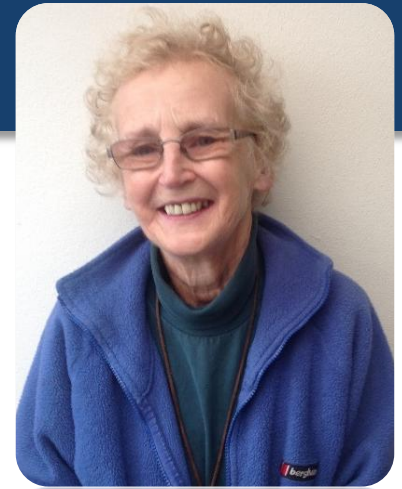
Deadlines:

- 15th Dec - for **Jan-Feb** issue
- 15th Feb - for **Mar-Apr** issue
- 15th Apr - for **May-Jun** issue
- 15th Jun - for **Jul-Aug** issue
- 15th Aug - for **Sep-Oct** issue
- 15th Oct - for **Nov-Dec** issue

EASTER

ST ANDREW

PATRON SAINT OF SCOTLAND PART THREE



We said last time that there are two places in the gospels where we meet Andrew on his own, and last time we saw the first.

The second occasion of Andrew acting alone is at the feeding of the five thousand. A very significant event, because it is the only miracle other than the resurrection which is found in all four gospels (the four thousand are not) and occurs not long after the disciples return from their first apprenticeship mission ('Jesus sends out the twelve'). Andrew is mentioned by name only in the gospel of John, who again was undoubtedly present at the discussions about dinner and so should know. In John's account, Jesus first asks Philip what to do ("where shall we buy bread?"). My commentary notes that, since Philip came from Bethsaida close to the picnic site, it was appropriate for Jesus to ask him. But then so did Simon, Andrew, and Nathaneal. Philip gave the common sense answer of impossibility, but then Andrew ("Simon Peter's brother" as usual) spoke up – he was not directly asked, and he may have had to screw up his courage to venture a tentative half-suggestion, which he then immediately undermines with doubt: "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?". This tells us three things about Andrew. Firstly, he is approachable – hanging back in the second row behind the exuberant Rock and the scary Sons of Thunder, he's the one to whom a young boy could offer his snap-can without being laughed at. Secondly, he is

practical. He doesn't just scoff at Jesus suggestion "you feed them" as at a poor joke, he comes up with the beginnings of a plan – because compassion needs action, even if the first step is ridiculously small. Lastly, it seems that he is beginning to have a real glimmering of what the Kingdom of Heaven is all about. Like the other disciples he is fresh from the astonishing successes of their mission round, and he senses that in the Kingdom something can be made out of little even when common sense says never - that this sandwich box in the hands of the Master may just be illimitable. Then he immediately let's doubt creep in and undermines his own suggestion, self-deprecating as always: "but how far will they go among so many?". He is soon to find out: as far as need be. (John 6: 5-11)

So, modest, humble, approachable, a follower not a leader, a hanger-back, a man of practical action in small steps but with kingdom vision, compassionate, a fisherman, a hard worker ('we have toiled all night') and a whole-hearted seeker after the Kingdom of God.

In the years after Jesus' ascension, he travelled far as a missionary for Jesus Christ and was martyred for his success.

How proud must Scotland be to have the apostle Andrew as her Patron Saint! And how appropriate was the choice!

After-notes:

Incidentally it is said that he was elected patron in 1320, a very important year for the Kingdom of Scotland. In that year the Declaration of Arbroath was sent

by the Barons of Scotland to Pope John XXII who had excommunicated their leader and future king, Robert the Bruce. The letter is both a declaration of Scotland's independence from England, and a commitment to Christ. The dramatic history of the Scottish church after the reformation and her later missionary efforts have surely gone some way to honour this commitment.

Much earlier – AD 832 to be precise - the ancestors of the Scots (the Picts) under Angus II owed their victory over the ancestors of the English (the Saxons) under Athelstan to the intervention of St Andrew who inspired the Picts by a saltire-shaped cloud formation on the morning of battle.

Andrew is also patron saint of both Russia and Ukraine, among other countries, so he may be finding it very hard at present to deal fairly with all intercessions from his client nations.

For Scots reallocated to England please note, he is also the patron saint of fishermen, miners, butchers, farm workers, textile workers, singers, spinsters (among others) and receives prayers for protection against sore throats, fits, fever, gout and whooping cough.

*Lesley Notghi
(Griffydham Church)*

OBITUARY



SAMUEL EMLYN BOWN

was born on Christmas Day 1940 at Moor Hall Farm, Derbyshire, in the front room.

He was not academic; his favourite subject was football. Having not started until he was 6, he left Ashover school a few days before his 15th birthday commencing work on 2nd of January as a farm labourer.

While living at Moor Hall Farm his mother Lilian took her sons to special services at Stonedge chapel like the Harvest Thanksgiving by pushing the pram with John in it and Sam sat on the top, approx 2 miles each way! After the Bown family had moved to Walton Lees Farm they became regular attenders at Stonedge Chapel as it was now nearer to walk, attending the Sunday School in the morning and the service in the evening, even though their mother was now bringing them up alone with a farm to run. Brother Ernest sometimes provided transport on his motorbike, with Sam on the back and John on the front, until they realised John had

turned blue as he couldn't get his breath! Ernest would then leave the brothers at the chapel while he went back to fetch their mother.

It was when they were teenagers at Stonedge, that the Gospel Singers were formed, in large part to give the young folk something to keep them involved. Sam always said the strong women of the chapel "were the best men we'd get!"

It was at a meeting at Stanton in the Peak, when the Gospel Singers were providing the singing items for a visiting evangelist the Rev Harold Hawkins, at the age of 17 on the 1st Dec 1958 that Sam and his brother John along with others were converted. This was a time of revival at the small chapel at Stonedge and these teenagers were encouraged straight away to be involved in Christian service and soon embarked on Beach Missions at Lowestoft. Many years before, as they watched their mother chop sticks, she suddenly stopped and said, "It's my earnest desire that one of you two becomes a local preacher" Sam remembered thinking "I hope it's him", meaning his brother John! Her prayer was answered and in fact both sons went on to become preachers.

Preaching in the Bakewell Wesleyan Reform Circuit, and in countless other churches around the country demonstrated Sams strong calling to serve his Lord in this way. The cards, emails and letters from so many churches, chapels and fellow preachers around the country are testament to

how the Lord has used him. This country lad who, in his own words, "left school with only 1 qualification; and that was football", was enabled to open up scripture in a captivating unique way that congregations appreciated and loved. As one person put it since his passing:

"He had a divinely inspired insight into the word of God denied to so many of us who are preachers and theologians much better educated than he was".

In 1996 Sam became the Wesleyan Reform Union President, which was a real honour for him. For a year he toured the country with wife Sylvia, dressed in his fancy ganzy!

His heart was always at Stonedge Chapel, and it was fitting that his final day at home included a Bible Study Group sharing fellowship with him. Only 2 hours after closing the meeting with prayer he suffered a massive stroke.

On March 8th more than 100 people supported the family at Sams grave with over 300 attending the service of thanksgiving and celebration later that afternoon where Philip White preached on Acts 4:13 "when they perceived that they were uneducated, common men they were astonished. And they recognised that they had been with Jesus"

His daughters echo the words of their grandmother who say they're "not proud, just thankful" for a life of devoted service to the LORD Jesus with whom he now resides.

DATES

General Meetings:

2025, 18th October (Jump Church)

2026, 14th March (Rushden Mission Church)

Conference:

2025, 9th – 11th June (Swanwick), Guest speaker **Tristan Stevenson-Coulshaw** from "Flame International".

The Doctor and the Patient



JESUS HAD MANY FRIENDS



BUT SOME WERE EXTRA SPECIAL. THESE WERE HIS 'DISCIPLES'.

JESUS ONCE ASKED A TAX-COLLECTOR CALLED 'MATTHEW' TO BE ONE OF HIS TEAM

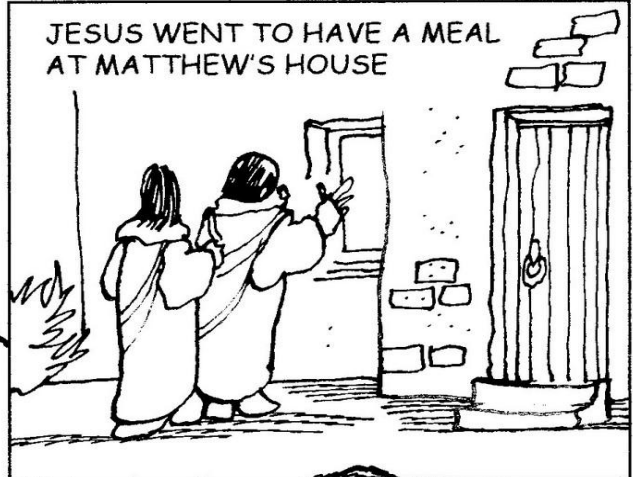


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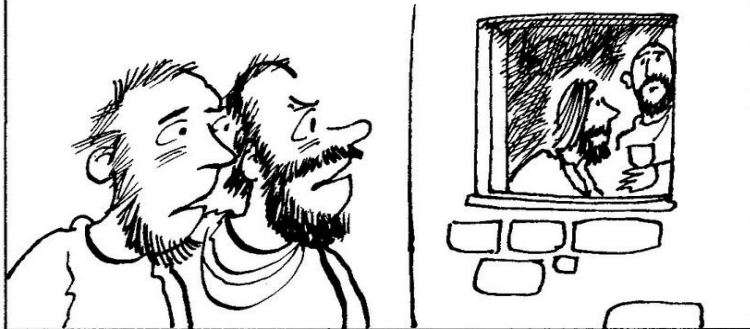


MATTHEW AGREED TO FOLLOW JESUS

JESUS WENT TO HAVE A MEAL AT MATTHEW'S HOUSE

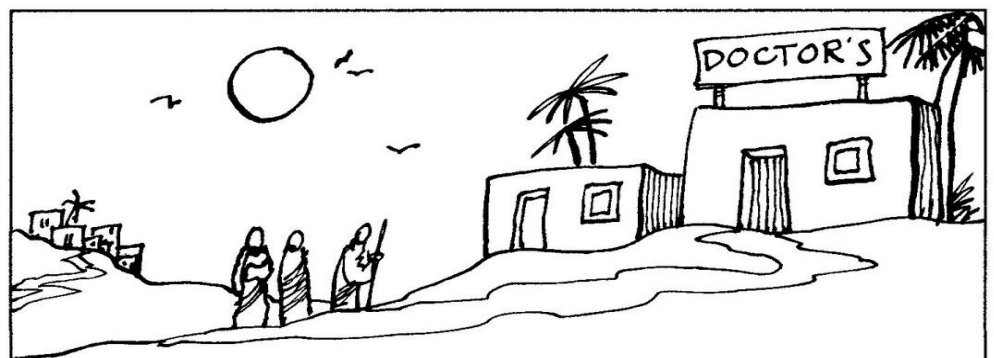


BUT MANY PEOPLE COMPLAINED ABOUT THIS. THEY THOUGHT MATTHEW WAS A BAD MAN - AND JESUS SHOULD IGNORE HIM.



JESUS' REPLY WAS VERY STRAIGHT FORWARD.

HE EXPLAINED THAT MATTHEW NEEDED HELP, NOT CRITICISM,



"IT'S NOT THE WELL THAT NEED A DOCTOR - BUT THE SICK!"
see Luke 5:27-32