

YOUNG



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PRECIOUS SEED

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YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED is a supplement of *Precious Seed International* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by *Precious Seed International*, Pitcot Farm, Pitcot Lane, Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Radstock BA3 4SX, UK, and is also available separately from the main magazine.

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Editor's Introduction

Another issue of YPS is with us. This is the last one for 2012. I wonder where the year has gone but, more to the point, I wonder if I have done anything of significance in God's eyes during this year. I am sure that Daniel in the Bible did not expect to be cruelly uprooted from his homeland to spend most of his life living in a foreign country. As a result, we have the book of Daniel. Paul McCauley gives us a brief overview of the book and then teaches us some lessons from chapter two. Jim Armstrong challenges us about how much time we spend getting to know God. Steven Buckeridge gives us an overview of God's will in our lives, and Stephen Grant has written another character study for us; this time it's on Abel.

I hope that as you read this issue you will be challenged about the will of God for your life, how to know God more intimately, and made conscious of the fact that we could be called to suffer for our faith. Watch out for the February 2013 issue – there will be some styling changes, which we hope you will like.

Happy reading!

Stephen G. Baker



CHARACTER STUDY

Abel

'He being dead still speaks', NKJV

By **STEPHEN GRANT** Bridge of Weir, Scotland

When the writer of Hebrews lists men and woman of faith from the Old Testament, Abel is the first name to appear. His name means 'breath', although he was not the first person to breathe, nor to be born; these descriptions belonging to his father Adam, and his older brother Cain. He was born outside Eden without the blessings of intimacy with the Lord that his father and mother had enjoyed and lost, and yet presented an acceptable sacrifice to God, and was declared righteous. He was also the first person to die, and to be murdered. At the beginning of history, his life was cut short demonstrating the truth expressed by James, 'For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away', Jas. 4. 14 NKJV.

'By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts', Heb. 11. 4. There are two aspects to Abel's short life which are brought to our attention: what Abel offered to God; and what God said about Abel.

Abel offered a sacrifice to God that was acceptable. There is not much detail given in Genesis chapter 4 about the circumstances of the sacrifices that were offered to God by the first family on earth. There appeared to be a place and time for sacrifice, and, evidently, both Cain and Abel were aware of what God required from them. Abel demonstrated faith by his sacrifice and, since faith comes from hearing the word of God, we can assume that Abel was obedient to what God said, and Cain was not.

Abel is a sobering example and warning about



the potential consequences of obeying God and living by faith. The first brothers on earth were divided by their attitude toward God. Hatred and envy festered within Cain, until he would rather kill his brother than listen to his voice, or tolerate his presence. They were divided in time and, sadly, remain divided in eternity. Why did Cain hate his brother? What had Abel done to provoke such extreme hostility?

It appears that Abel's acceptance by God on the basis of the better sacrifice had stirred envy and bitterness in Cain's heart. His pride and arrogance caused anger and irrational hatred against his own brother. Rather than humble himself before God,

and learn from his brother that God demanded a blood sacrifice in order to be declared righteous, Cain chose to walk a different path. If he wasn't going to be accepted by God on his terms, he would direct his bitterness toward his brother who had been accepted.

A person who comes to God on the basis of the blood sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, of which Abel's sacrifice was a pale shadow, ought to be prepared for the same hostility, perhaps even from those closest to them. Becoming a Christian is not a popular decision, and sometimes stirs anger and bitterness in the hearts of those who deny the necessity of sacrifice for sin. It is sad that to

sisters or mums and dads feeling rejected and bitter. Where once the family was everything, and relationships within the family all-important, that is no longer the case. A Christian has a different set of priorities and values which will cause friction when they lead to the new Christian saying no to sin and living in a different way in the family home. The Lord Jesus anticipated that this would be a major problem for many of His disciples and told them that they should be prepared for a backlash, and be ready to count that cost if they were truly going to follow Him. He never downplayed the price that some would be called to pay to be a disciple.

Abel was murdered by his brother, and, in this, we see that irrational hatred can lead to terrible consequences. Even today, there are brothers and sisters in Christ whose family hate them because they are Christians. Some have to separate themselves from their family because they will not practice sin, and, in so doing, pay a high price for their decision to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Some have known the threat and even the reality of death. They have recognized a treasure in a field and a pearl of great price and were willing to sell all they had to gain the inestimable treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven.

be a Christian in our modern world is to place yourself in the category of weird, irrational, and dangerous people.

The most painful and difficult hostility to a Christian is often felt from within the immediate family. To be a Christian can lead to brothers and

If we have never experienced such painful circumstances in our family let us be thankful to God, and remember to pray for those who do. If we have lost contact with our family, and they hate us for being a Christian, may God be gracious and hear our prayers for their salvation. Let us not forget the experience of Christ, 'They hated Me without a cause', John 15. 25 NKJV.



What can I do for God? Seek His will for your life!

By **STEVEN BUCKERIDGE** London, England

It is wonderful that God has a plan for each of our lives, and desires to guide us in the big decisions we take. It is just as remarkable that He has given the Holy Spirit to live in each Christian to constantly guide in even 'minor matters'. Every Christian should be able to say, 'I being in the way, the Lord led me', Gen. 24. 27.

God's will - what is it?

- Knowing and doing God's will in the decisions and actions I take;
- Includes accurately discerning when not to do something – Acts 16. 6;
- Being willing, if necessary, to do something initially illogical – Acts 8. 26-29.

God's will - why seek for it?

- 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord', Ps. 37. 23;
- We are following the example of the Lord Jesus who was 'led by the Spirit', Luke 4. 1, and always pleased His Father, John 8. 29;
- We are not our own as servants but 'the servants of Christ, doing the will of God', Eph. 6. 6.

God's will – How to know it – the principles?

- I have never met a Christian who said he found this easy! This is intentional on God's part; it is not to 'keep us in the dark', but to keep us dependent on Him. 'We walk by faith'. I think that the following guidelines will be helpful.
1. Be sincere; Am I really interested in God's will or in manipulating Him to approve my plans? 'In ALL thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths', Prov. 3. 6; 'Not my will', Luke 22. 42; 'If the Lord permit', 1 Cor. 16. 7;
 2. Confess my sin; I can't be truly seeking God's will if I have not repented of going my own way, Jonah 2. 9; 3. 1;
 3. Pray; how often do we just not ask for directions! Even when it seems obvious what to do we should pray, Josh. 9. 14. Keep on praying until the answer comes;
 4. Read and learn the direct commands of the scriptures. For example, 'This is the will of God that ye flee fornication'; 'In everything give

thanks for this is the will of God', 1 Thess. 4. 3; 5. 18;

5. Think about the principles of scripture: 'Do all to the glory of God', 1 Cor. 10. 31; be a good example, 1 Tim. 4. 12; be wise and remember the Lord is coming soon, Eph. 5. 16-17; consider that we will have to answer for how we have used our time and money, 1 Cor. 4. 2; behave like the Lord Jesus, 1 Pet. 2. 21;
6. Be sensitive to the indwelling Spirit of God. 'For as many as are led by the Spirit they are the sons of God', Rom. 8. 14. His leading will never be contrary to a direct command of scripture. When this direction is accurately followed there will often be a sense of being at peace about the issue.

God's Will - How to know it – the practice.

- Be careful with circumstances; they can often be interpreted more than one way, and are best reflected on some time later rather than in the situation, e.g., Jonah went against God's guidance and, at the time, found a boat going the way he wanted, Jonah 1. 3; conversely, Paul was going the right way and was initially shipwrecked, Acts 27;
- Discerning God's will correctly in one part of my life does not guarantee I have it right in all parts of my life;
- If you are 'putting out a fleece' make sure, like Gideon, you ask for something truly miraculous;
- Be patient. God will guide, but it will be in His time;
- Remember, we will not know the 'whole picture' in advance. The Israelites in the wilderness were guided each day and night for many years. See the various stages of guidance, Gen. 22. 2-4. Obey the guidance you have, and the next step will be revealed.

Spending Time with GOD

By **JIM ARMSTRONG** Stevenston, Scotland

Let me begin this study with a question which only you can answer honestly within yourself. How often do you spend time with God alone?

We live in a world, particularly in the West, which is dominated by what we see and look like. My closeness to God is measured by most others, as how vocal and active I am in my fellowship and locality! Do I look and sound the part? Tragically, many will stop there, and take their relationship with God no further.

Thankfully, God is not like that. My Father in heaven is much more interested in what I'm like when I spend time with Him. Much more motivated by what I say in prayer. He seeks out individuals who are like this.

My Lord Jesus said – 'But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him', John 4. 23 ESV.

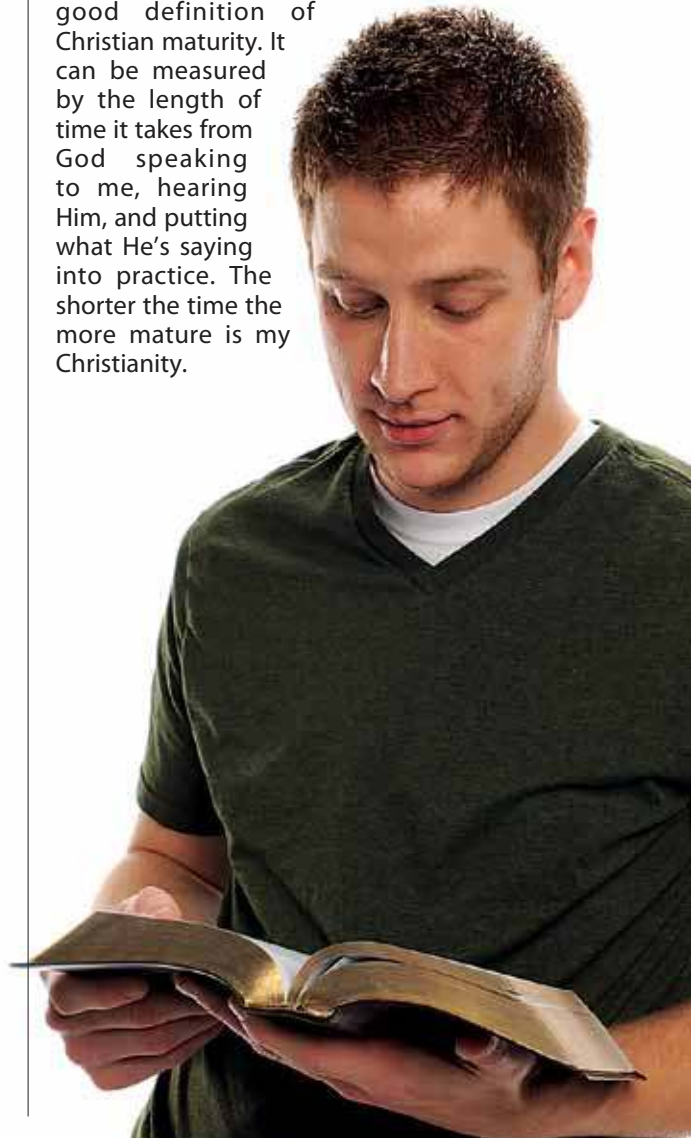
There are times in my life, even times this year, when I would struggle not to be embarrassed in answering my own question? I'm sure I'm not the only Christian who struggles with time; trying to juggle everything I have to deal with in business, study, family, and friends.

When I was a teenager a very kind believer in my fellowship bought me an alarm clock. Her intention was for me to use it, and ensure I spent time with God alone. As I look back over my life, it was one of the best gifts I've ever received.

Ever since, I have tried to rise up early, and spend the first part of the day with God. There are times when I have failed woefully. There are parts of my life when the only time I was in God's presence was when I met with the church. I suspect many

are living their Christian lives like this, and they take it no further.

A few years ago, I heard what I think was a really good definition of Christian maturity. It can be measured by the length of time it takes from God speaking to me, hearing Him, and putting what He's saying into practice. The shorter the time the more mature is my Christianity.



I know from experience that God speaks through His word. I can think of many examples in my own life. 'Coincidentally' these experiences take place when I'm closer to God and putting Him first. I have a close relationship with God. He is my Father. Just like any relationship, the closer I get the more I find out about the people, the more I get to know what they like, and dislike. It's exactly like this with my Father in Heaven! Let me just pause there and consider how amazing this last section is. I have a relationship with God who spoke and brought the universe into place. The God who upholds the worlds is interested in what I have to say to Him. Wow!!!!

... and yet at times I choose to gratify self over spending time with Him.

Jesus said – 'Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me', Mark 8. 34 NKJV. When we read this, or, rather, when I read this, I sometimes think about denying self in relation to things and possessions. Even worse, sometimes I don't think about it at all. It's just one of those verses that you can look clever with by posting it on Facebook, or preaching on it.

As I get older I'm realizing I can't get through the day without denying self and spending time with God – in order to be in any way effective for God. The more time I spend with Him the better my

witness is, the more opportunities I have to speak for Him, the much richer my Christian experience is.

Let me finish with two things as a challenge: firstly, to myself and to any who have stuck with reading this piece all the way through.

1. God uses busy people. Joseph was working for his father, a slave, and running a country during the times he was used by God. Daniel was a ruler in Babylon appointed by the King. Peter was helping to run the family business – just three examples of the many busy people God used. Incidentally, when David wasn't busy, when he should have been, he got into all sorts of moral difficulties, 2 Sam. 11.

2. If you are finding Christianity a bit routine and uninteresting – how much are you living to please self? How much time are you spending getting to know God by reading His word and speaking to Him? In my very brief experience, the more I really emphasize self, the more I am ultimately dissatisfied with my circumstances.

Secondly, rather than finish with what I think let me finish with what the psalmist says – 'Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with their whole heart', Ps. 119. 1, 2 ESV.



DANIEL 2

Back to the Future

By **PAUL McCAULEY** Belfast, N. Ireland

A casual reading of the book of Daniel will show that it is divided into two parts. The first six chapters make up the first part (the well-known part). These are chapters of narrative – exciting stories that have kept Sunday School children enthralled for generations. The last six chapters make up the second part. These chapters are full of visions and prophecy, and make much harder reading (not so easy for Sunday School!)

It has been pointed out that the first six chapters are 'prophetic history' while the last six chapters are 'historic prophecy'. What people mean by that is this – in the first six chapters we have given to us in the narrative pictures of future events, such as the faithful Jewish remnant being preserved in tribulation days, but in the last six chapters we have prophecies that were future to Daniel but are historic to us – lots of what was revealed to Daniel in chapters 7-12 has already been fulfilled.

Is there any real importance to this? Yes! Huge importance actually. We can look at those last six chapters and see how the prophecies relating to world empires, the rise and fall of leaders, the coming of the Messiah, and the year of His death, the destruction of the Temple, etc. have been accurately fulfilled, and that then gives us confidence to know that the prophecies that relate to *our* future will be fulfilled just as literally and accurately. Daniel is a wonderful book to inspire confidence that the Bible is indeed the word of God

But what has this to do with chapter 2? Quite a bit! Could Nebuchadnezzar really not remember his dream? To be honest, I think he had no difficulty at all recalling his dream, but I think his real difficulty was in trusting his magicians and enchanters. Like the fortune teller at the fair, it would be pretty

easy for the King's advisors to invent some kind of bland interpretation, and conjure up a future prediction, but what confidence could Nebuchadnezzar have in its trustworthiness? For this reason Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know if his advisors really did have any special revelation or supernatural insight, so he asks them to give evidence that he can actually verify. If they were able to tell him what happened last night in his dream it would be pretty good evidence they were able to tell him what that dream meant. I heard an American preacher tell about a time he was in a shopping centre and a woman was sitting at a stall and said to him, 'I'll tell your future for \$5'. He said, 'No thanks, I know my future, but I'll give you \$10 if you can tell

me what I did yesterday'. She admitted she didn't have that gift, and he told her that he had no reason therefore to believe she had *any* gift. How different is the Bible! It can be trusted for the future because it has been tested in the past. We can look back and see prophecies that have been fulfilled – there is no way that Daniel, or the other prophets, could have known naturally, or guessed luckily, the events they recorded. The prophets tell us how Christ would die (before the invention of crucifixion), why He would



die, and even when He would die. These astounding prophecies were all accurately and absolutely fulfilled. There is no natural or atheistic answer to this, the only answer that accounts for the facts is the one that the Bible itself gives – ‘holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit’, 2 Pet. 1. 21. Looking back at the fulfilment of these past prophecies gives us complete confidence in the fulfilment of the future prophecies.

But let’s have a look at the chapter and see if there are any lessons we can learn for our own lives. Try and imagine how you would respond if you found yourself in Daniel’s situation – you are told that you are going to lose your life because the king’s wise men can’t tell the king what he dreamt. How would you react? Perhaps you would react with panic; perhaps you would react with protests. How did Daniel react? Verse 14 tells us he reacted ‘with counsel and wisdom’. In a different (but applicable) context, the Bible says that ‘he that believeth shall not make haste’, Isa. 28. 16. The person, like Daniel, who has a living faith in the God of scripture will not get in a flap the moment a problem arises. Daniel had proved God in the past, and that gave him confidence for the present trial.

The next port of call was to see the king, v. 16. Again, we see this delightful combination of courtesy and courage on the part of Daniel. He respectfully asked for time, but he didn’t pathetically grovel for mercy! He told the king he would get him the answer.

His next step was to speak to his friends in order that they would all speak to God about it. Daniel had learnt that prayer has a cumulative effect. How it works will forever be a mystery, but the Bible teaches, and personal experience confirms it, that there is increased effectiveness in collective prayer. For that reason I implore you not to have a casual attitude to the assembly prayer meeting. Please don’t think it doesn’t matter if you pray with the assembly just because you can pray by yourself;

God expects us to be engaged in personal, and collective prayer.

They then made the matter known to God. I imagine if your life was on the line it would probably get you praying, but can I ask you this, does it take a life-threatening crisis to get you praying? Sometimes we feel the little things of life aren’t worth taking to God in prayer. The Bible encourages us to cast all our care on the Lord, 1 Pet. 5. 7. Mary and Martha presented the need to the Lord when their brother was dying, John 11, but Mary, the Lord’s mother, presented the need to the Lord when the wine had run out, John 2! No matter how big or small the problem, take it to the Lord in prayer.



Daniel then had what I think is one of the greatest thrills of life – the joy of answered prayer! I did something a while ago that was very encouraging, yet at the same time very humbling. I wrote on a sheet of paper all the occasions in which I had received a definite answer to a specific prayer. It was wonderful to review those divine answers, and rejoice in God’s goodness, but it was also humbling that I could fit them all on the one sheet of paper with

space left for more! What about you? Have you proved God in your own life? Have you got a first-hand faith? Daniel said, ‘I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might’. He seems to be saying that he had known God as the God of his fathers – the God who had personally dealt with them, but now Daniel has encountered and experienced the nearness of that God for himself.

Can I encourage you, the God of the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, the God of the missionaries, the preachers, and the elders, the God of George Mueller, Hudson Taylor, and Harry Ironside, is your God, to be known, proved, experienced and enjoyed in your life. Don’t live on second-hand reports on what God can do. Let Him into every aspect of your life, and see what He can do in, and through, you too.