

YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED

is a supplement of *Precious Seed*, designed for those young in the 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*, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield, S21 1HW, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine

Fascinating Facts – Evidence from nature of a Creator’s touch



PHIL ARMSTRONG, LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

Most will remember ‘The Ugly Duckling’ by HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN, the tale of the duck foster family that raised an unattractive youth, only for it to transform into a beautiful swan! In biology, this is an example of ‘brood parasitism’ and perhaps the best-known example is the common cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), the only British bird not to rear its own young. It lays its egg in the nest of another bird, such as the reed warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*), which will incubate it and eventually feed an insatiable young cuckoo. (This practice of lazy but intelligent mothers, is actually relatively uncommon in swans, unless breeding in dense colonies or crowded nesting sites, but who am I to spoil a good story?)

Amazingly, while host parents lay a wide variety of egg colours and patterns, each cuckoo has the ability to lay an egg with similar spots and squiggles, so that it looks just like the host eggs! What is particularly upsetting is that a newly hatched cuckoo chick, even while still naked and blind, will push other eggs and other newly hatched chicks right out of the nest! It can then have all the parents’ attention for itself. Lots of host parents are very good at spotting the unwelcome cuckoo egg and will push it out of the family nest, but some don’t seem to notice the freeloader.

Surely this demonstrates the truths of the early chapters of Genesis. The intelligence and ingenuity of the cuckoo shows evidence of God’s design; especially in how these behaviours are encoded in the bird’s DNA. But we also see evidence of the Fall, and the effect of sin on the wider creation, causing the use of selfish and destructive tactics in the struggle for survival. Researching the behaviour of brood parasites caused one journalist, JESSE GREENSPAN, to comment that they ‘are basically born evil’.

Allow me to finish on a happy note and introduce to you the ‘superb fairy wren’ (*Malurus cyaneus*) from Australia. They teach their embryonic chicks a password by singing to them while they are still inside the egg. When the chicks have hatched, only those that can repeat the password will be fed. Cuckoos are not able to learn the password. I hope you agree that only God could implement this.

Sources

‘The Brilliant Ways Parasitic Birds Terrorize Their Victims’ by JESSE GREENSPAN <https://www.audubon.org/news/the-brilliant-ways-parasitic-birds-terrorize-their-victims> (Accessed 14/02/2023)

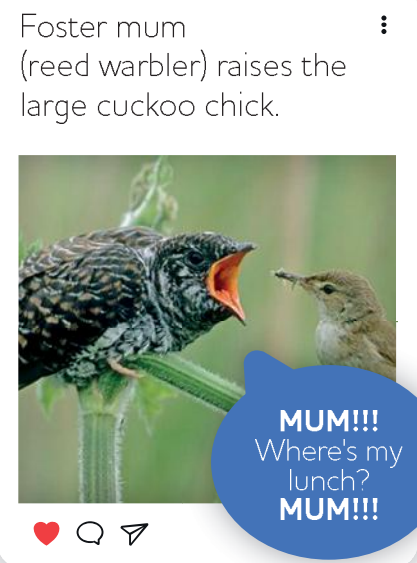
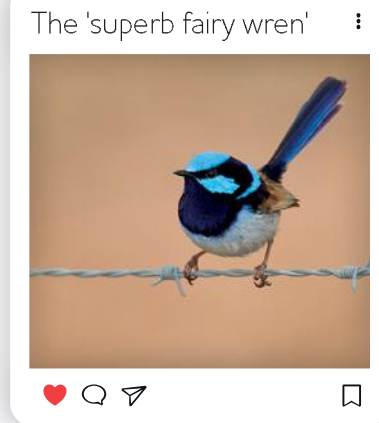
‘Fairy wren embryos found able to discern between adult calls’ by BOB YIRKA <https://phys.org/news/2014-10-fairy-wren-embryos-discern-adult.html> (Accessed 14/02/2023)

Editor’s Introduction

I love reading biographies and so I am looking forward to seeing the different people Jeremy Singer focuses on in this series of *Saints’ CVs*. The scripture calls us to imitate those who follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. There might just be one feature of their life that stands out, but what a blessing if it helps us be more like our Saviour.

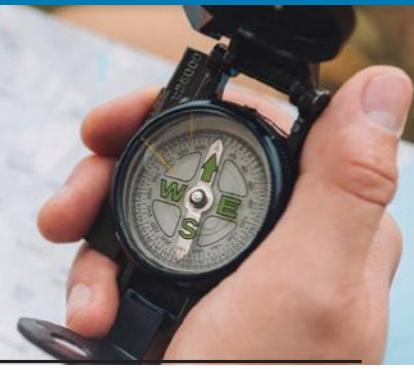
Hopefully some of you will have spotted that we are trying to promote YPS articles on social media. Many people overseas read *Precious Seed* and YPS online. If you enjoy an article why not share it with a friend? You never know, it could be a real help to them.

Yours through grace,
Stephen Baker



Plotting your path through life – Knowing the will of God Part 1

BY PHILIP RAGGETT, PRESTWICH, MANCHESTER, ENGLAND



How a Christian can know the will of God is both an easy and a difficult question to answer! The easy part is that God's will is clearly stated on a number of occasions in scripture without ambiguity. The difficult part is when it comes to making specific choices in life in relation to big decisions we have to make, like where we should live, what career we should pursue or who we should marry.

To try and give some guidance on this subject we will look at it under three headings: the prescribed will of God; His permissive will (Part 1); and His particular will for my life. The final heading and some principles in relation to knowing the will of God will be dealt with in Part 2.

The Prescribed Will of God

To know God's will, we should start by seeing what the scriptures say. Within His word God has given us clear commands or precepts, leaving us in no doubt about what He wants us to do. If you search the Bible for 'the will of God', you will find verses like these: 'this is the will of God, even your sanctification', 1 Thess. 4. 3; 'in every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you', 1 Thess. 5. 18. We also have commands such as 'be ye holy', 1 Pet. 1. 16; 'be not conformed to this world', Rom. 12. 2; 'be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another', Eph. 4. 32. Then there are commands that the Lord gave to His disciples that apply to us today; for example, in John chapter 13 verse 34 the Lord commanded them to 'love one another'. In the great commission they were told to make disciples and baptize them, Matt. 28. 19. From these verses we know that God's will for believers is for them to be baptized, to live holy and sanctified lives, to be kind and loving to other believers and to have a forgiving spirit. These commands are non-negotiable, and it should be our aim to have the spirit of Mary in John chapter 2 verse 5, 'whatsoever he saith unto you, do it'.

In addition to the clear commands, God has given principles in His word that can help us to decide what His will is. There are scriptures that clearly teach that we should: serve God with 'reverence and godly fear', Heb. 12. 28; honour God in our lives, 1 Sam. 2. 30; seek to please Him in what we do, 1 John 3. 22; be modest in our appearance, 1 Tim. 2. 9; 'abstain from all appearance of evil', 1 Thess. 5. 22; not forsake the gatherings of the Lord's people, Heb. 10. 25; our assembly gatherings should be marked by decency and order, 1 Cor. 14. 40. These are just a few examples where God has given us principles to guide us in the decisions that we make. Although they are more general, and thus are more subjective, they can still help us know what God's will would be in a particular situation. In light of these scriptures, we should challenge ourselves by asking some simple questions to help us decide what we should do:

Will it bring honour to God? Will it please Him? Is what I am wanting to wear modest? Will my decision prevent me from getting to the meeting? Does it have the appearance of something wrong?

We have also been given examples or patterns of behaviour in the scriptures which show us what believers did. These can help us to know how God wants us to respond if we are faced with similar circumstances. God has left these examples on record for us to seek to emulate, 1 Cor. 11. 1. For example, Paul in Acts chapter 20 verse 6 arranged his travel plans so as not to miss gathering with the Lord's people on the first day of the week. This is a pattern that we would do well to imitate in our lives.

The Permissive Will of God

The second aspect of the will of God is in relation to circumstances that God permits in our lives. At times we are called to go through trials to test our faith, 1 Pet. 1. 7, or to develop Christian character, Rom. 5. 3. These are often situations we would not choose for ourselves, however, God in His wisdom allows them for our eternal good. It is not always easy to cope with trials but remember that it is always safe to trust Him.

We should seek to learn from the experiences we are called to pass through, and we should be willing to listen to, and take advice from, godly saints who God has entrusted with our care, Heb. 13. 17.

To be continued



Soul Searching Scriptures

BY STUART SCAMMELL, CARDIFF, WALES

The Bible is unlike any other book, it is God's inspired word and is dynamic. A verse that we may have read many times before can suddenly hit us and cut us to the heart, cause our lives to change or suddenly give us the supernatural peace that only comes from God. At other times a verse can be used in a more slow-burning way. Some of my earliest memories are of the Gospel Hall in Cwmbran where I grew up. Above the platform, arching across nearly the whole wall, was Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8, 'By grace are ye saved through faith'. Many times, when I should have been listening, I was distracted. I would count the letters, then the vowels, work out which letter was the centre one, and sometimes I would just appear to be listening, while I was actually far away, lost in my imagination. But the verse was always there, in giant writing on the wall, so very hard to ignore. God didn't let me ignore it; I grew to understand it, and along with this knowledge the realisation that I was a sinner who needed the Saviour, whom I didn't deserve, but God by His grace had given His Son Jesus Christ.

As I read the verse, I became distinctly aware of a question that could be formed by extracting three words from the verse, 'are ye saved'. I realized that I wasn't and that I really needed to be. At the age of just seven, I put my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repenting of my sin and trusting what the Lord Jesus Christ did at Calvary. It was a life-changing moment and, in fact, eternity changing too.

As I went through my teenage years, many verses challenged and encouraged me about baptism, living for God and being consistent in my Christian life. I was a painfully shy teenager and struggled to tell others the great news that had changed me. How could I fulfil the great commission and be effective in taking the gospel far and wide? The more I contemplated this, the more challenged I became because the verse I was contemplating, Mark 16: 15, started with 'Go'. Yet with a few inspiring exceptions, I could see that the pattern generally that was being followed was 'stay in your halls and preach the gospel to all the families that already know it'. The lack of effectiveness was being perpetuated by the style of outreach

that reached out to few and didn't really challenge me to overcome my shyness and to become bold in telling out the gospel. I did try to tell my closest friends, but often I would not be as bold as I should have been and found myself making excuses for why we didn't do certain things. Having asked God for help and opportunities to preach the gospel to the people that I knew, I let my 'fear of men' get the better of me and my desire to fit in seemed much more important than my desire to tell out the gospel. Yet afterwards I would feel so ashamed, just like Peter whose eyes met the Lord's after he had denied ever knowing Him. I don't think he ever forgot that moment and it influenced the rest of his life. Peter went from that moment of cowardice to being the lead preacher in Acts 2 before massive crowds and was used wonderfully by God to bring thousands to salvation.

What about me? What was going to turn me from cowardice? I read Acts chapter 5 verse 41 where the apostles rejoiced that, 'they were counted worthy to suffer for [Christ's] name'. Suddenly it struck me, the Lord Jesus was not immune from the pain and the hurt of the rejection of those around Him. Yet He went through all that because He wanted to see people saved from their sin and be able to be with Him eternally. The pain that He went through on the cross to enable our salvation was infinitely greater than any rejection I would know. I needed to change my attitude and be more like the apostles and although I would know rejection, I should look at it positively. Instead of being far away from Jesus Christ, I was now suffering like Him, albeit in a small way, because I belonged to Him. He is my Saviour and Lord. The more I thought that I was associated with the name of the Lord Jesus and all the blessings that were being heaped upon me, the more I wanted to tell others. I still failed, I still let cowardice overwhelm me at times, yet over the years I have, through His strength, become bolder and now spend my life telling out His wonderful message of salvation.



Saints' CVs: Introduction

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

We'll consider more recent believers in future *Saints' CVs*, but for this initial article we will look back at three individuals from the Middle Ages.

The problem with medieval times is the difficulty of separating fact from fiction. Any surviving records are unreliable. We have utmost confidence in inspired biblical authors, but we should be much more cautious when we read about church history.

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX 1090-1153 | Nationality: French

We sing translations of some of Bernard's Latin hymns today – songs like 'Jesus the very thought of Thee' and 'Jesus Thou joy of loving hearts'. He relinquished a huge family fortune to become a monk. Despite rampant church corruption in the Middle Ages, Bernard preached fervently about the love of God. He wrote a commentary on the Song of Solomon. Martin Luther cited Bernard of Clairvaux as an early influence on reformation thinking.

Bernard's teaching is controversial in places, such as his view of Mary the mother of the Lord, and his support for military campaigns like the second crusade. However, Bernard's obvious love for the Lord comes across in his writings that survive today.



FAMOUS QUOTE:
Bernard said,

'It is better to drink from the source itself than from the many streams'. The source to which he refers is the Lord Jesus: 'Thou fount of life, Thou life of men . . . We turn unfilled to Thee again'.

JULIAN OF NORWICH 1343-1416? | Nationality: English

With a name like Julian of Norwich, readers of Enid's Blyton's *Famous Five* series might mistakenly think this believer was a man; actually, Julian was a female Christian who lived a solitary existence. While she was seriously ill, Julian had a powerful experience of the nearness of God. She wrote a book called *Revelations of Divine Love*, which is probably the earliest work of English literature by a female author.

Again, we might disagree with Julian in much of her mystic theology. However, her love for the Lord Jesus is the key theme that pervades her writing.



FAMOUS QUOTE:
Julian said,

'All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well'. Like Paul, Rom. 8. 28, Julian had supreme confidence in divine sovereignty.

RICHARD OF CHICHESTER 1197-1253 | Nationality: English

Orphaned as a child, Richard was educated at Oxford University, where eventually he became the university chancellor. Later he was appointed as a bishop. Richard was keen to root out corruption in the church. His tomb was destroyed in the English reformation on the orders of Thomas Cromwell.



FAMOUS QUOTE:
Richard said,

Richard's well-known prayer, perhaps uttered on his deathbed, was: 'May I know Thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly, and follow Thee more nearly'. This would be an excellent sentiment in our prayers, every day of our lives.