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YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED

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



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One of the few places I find my emotions occupying the small overlap between excitement and fear is the bat cave at the zoo. Knowing that bats use sophisticated echolocation to build a detailed picture in complete darkness helps settle my nerves a little. Yes, they can see where they are going, and they are not going to fly into me . . . unless they want to! It has been suggested that this amazing echolocation system allows a bat to build a mental image of its surroundings that is close to the detail of the visible image from eyes of daytime animals. The bat sends out ultrasonic clicks, which reflect off surrounding objects back to the bat’s ears. When scanning for insect prey, bats may send out around ten clicks per second, and then increase this to over 100 per second when they locate an in-flight meal.

God has, however, given humble insects a range of impressive strategies to give them a fighting chance, even at the low end of the food chain. Many can detect bat sonar and react with evasive flight techniques. For example, when the hawk moth picks up the slower, scanning clicks of the bat, it will fly in the opposite direction. If it detects the faster kill clicks, and is now in big trouble, it will fly in zigzags, loops, or power dive toward the ground. The green lacewing folds its wings and freefalls in response to the slower clicks of a scanning bat. If it then picks up the rapid click rate of a bat attempting a kill, it quickly opens its wings to suddenly break the dive and confuse its predator. One of my favourite tactics used by insects is signal jamming. The tiger moth produces its own ultrasonic clicks that mix with the signals from the bat and distort them.

Recently, it was discovered that some insects have specially designed scales on their body which absorb sound waves, making them almost ‘invisible’ to bats. Researchers at the University of Bristol found that some moth wings absorb around 87% of all sound energy, making them about ten times more effective than the best technologies humans have engineered. Look out for noise-absorbing wallpaper inspired by moths, because we are thinking of copying this wonderful design. This is one of many examples of products for which our Creator ought to get the credit.

Sources

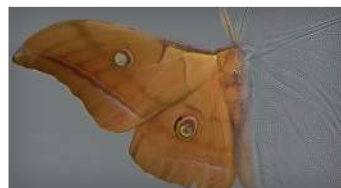
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This image shows how effectively its wings absorb sound, so it is almost invisible to bat predators



This image is a photograph of the Chinese tussar moth



Editor’s Introduction

Depending on where you live in this country, or overseas, you might get this issue before you have your summer break or holiday. This summer, my advice, for what it’s worth, is – take a break and do some serious reading.

Although technological advancement has brought many advantages, one of its dangers is that people are lured away from reading. GENE EDWARD VEIGH, in his excellent book *Reading between the lines*, says, ‘The habit of reading is absolutely critical today, particularly for Christians. As television turns our society into an increasingly image-dominated culture, Christians must continue to be people of the word. When we read, we cultivate a sustained attention span, an active imagination, a capacity for logical analysis and critical thinking, and a rich inner life. Each of these qualities, which have proven themselves essential to a free people, is under assault in our TV-dominated culture.¹ Christians, to maintain their word-centred perspective in an image-driven world, must become readers’. VEIGH’s book was written in the television era, but the same principles apply in the internet age.

I appeal to you to read widely and, in particular, the Bible. It will be your salvation as far your mind is concerned, as well as being the means of your eternal well-being and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Yours through grace,
Stephen Baker

¹GENE EDWARD VEIGH, *Reading between the lines*. Crossway Books, 1990.

Plotting your path through life – Knowing the will of God Part 2

BY PHILIP RAGGETT, PRESTWICH, MANCHESTER, ENGLAND



The prescribed will of God

This brings us to the difficult part of knowing the will of God in relation to a specific matter. It is not always easy to know God's will when it comes down to our personal decisions. What we do know, however, is that God has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide us. He has given us His word to lead us, Ps. 119. 105. We should pray for His guidance, as the psalmist did when he cried, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord', Ps. 27. 11, and ask for His help to know His will.

Remember as we do so that there are a few parameters that God has given to help us. He will never guide us into anything that is contrary to the scriptures. So, for example, if it is God's will for us to be married, then two such parameters are that we are not to marry an unbeliever, 2 Cor. 6. 14, and that we should seek to marry 'in the Lord', 1 Cor. 7. 39. That is to say that both the man and the woman should be spiritually compatible in their desires for the things of the Lord. Recognition of, and submission to, His lordship in our lives is vital when it comes to the choice of a life partner.

What about what job we should do? Or what career we should pursue? God does give us varying abilities and aptitudes for certain things, and we should be willing to recognize His wisdom and guiding hand in the details of our lives. Some of us are more caring than others. Some have a better ability to comprehend complex equations! If, for example, we have an interest in a particular field we should be open to the possibility that God has given us that interest, and it is His will for us to pursue it.

Once again, though there are parameters that will be helpful in these important decisions in relation to employment or career progression, we could ask ourselves a few questions and look to the Lord to guide us to make the right choice. Will my line of work allow me to make spiritual progress? Will it prevent me from getting to meetings on a regular basis? Will I be able to honour Him while in that type of employment?

Finally, Colossians chapter 3 verse 15 tells us we should 'let the peace of God rule' in our hearts. We should pray for His guidance, seek His mind in the scriptures, and let His peace be an umpire in the decisions that we make.

Principles relating to the will of God

In conclusion, I want to mention four general principles that relate to knowing the will of God.

1. We cannot expect God to direct us in one area of our lives if we are ignoring clear commands in another part of our lives.
2. Psalm 66 verse 18 tells us, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me'. We must endeavour to keep ourselves pure, 1 Tim. 5. 22, if we want God's guidance and direction. In His sovereignty, He can lead us despite our failures but confessing those failures to God and turning from them will better enable us to discern His will.
3. 'Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams', 1 Sam. 15. 22. Obedience is highly valued by God. 'Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed', 2. 30. God is well pleased when we obey and when we seek to honour Him in our choices.
4. Proverbs chapter 3 verse 6 says, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths'. He has promised to direct our paths, so long as we are willing to surrender to His will and put His interests first in every decision that we make.

In summary, then, God has given us a written statement of His will in the scriptures – we should seek to **obey them**.

He has given the Holy Spirit to dwell within the believer, so we should **never hinder Him**.

He delights to answer prayers for guidance, so we should **speak to Him**.



We four kings... – Lessons from some of Judah's kings

BY RICHARD SMITH, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND



'Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it',
WINSTON CHURCHILL

(1948 speech to the House of Commons)

There is no such thing as a perfect generation. Each fails in one way or another. Our choice is whether to repeat the mistakes of the past, or to learn and change. In these studies, we will explore the first four kings of Judah: Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, and Jehoshaphat, to see how they handled the challenges that resulted from the mistakes of their fathers.

Rehoboam

Rehoboam had an amazing heritage! His grandfather was David, the 'man after [God's] own heart', 1 Sam. 13. 14, and his father was Solomon, who asked for wisdom which God gave him in abundance, along with riches, honour, and previously unseen glory.

David wasn't perfect and Solomon lost his way badly, leading to God dividing the nation under his son. So, was Rehoboam's 'fate' sealed or was he responsible for his own attitude and actions? Of course he was! Rehoboam could have decided to follow the Lord, but he made the definite decision that he wouldn't. His father, Solomon, had counsellors who helped him make decisions for the good of the nation and himself. Rehoboam had access to the same advisors, but he only asked their opinion once.

After his father died, Rehoboam called the people to Shechem. They had served Solomon, but he had been a hard taskmaster. They were tired and fragile, and needed a leader who would be easier on them. The hard work of nation and temple building was done. Israel was strong and prospering and they needed a king who would make their life less harsh. They asked Rehoboam if he would ease their burden, and he asked for advice. His father's advisors gave him wise counsel: if you do what they say, they will serve you for ever. Then, he went to those he had grown up with and asked them. They had no experience, no wisdom and, like Rehoboam, didn't care; 'You ain't seen nothing yet' was their reply. 'Your father used whips; you will use scorpions', 1 Kgs. 12. 10, 11 paraphrased. Rehoboam followed their advice and the nation split into the ten northern tribes (Israel), and the two southern tribes (Judah). Rehoboam had been desperately weakened. Did he fall to his knees in repentance, seeking God's forgiveness? Not at all. Instead, he went to battle with Israel's new leader (Jeroboam) and brought about a crisis.

How could this happen?

Rehoboam lacked conviction. Many Christians use the word 'conviction' very lightly. They often apply it to archaic practices

that have no biblical foundation. Call an opinion a conviction, no one dare argue! We must be guided only by the authority of the word of God. As we continue our studies in the kings of Judah we will see that there are three areas of conviction that matter:

1. The word of God
2. The house of God
3. The people of God

How we behave within this triangle of convictions will determine our success for God. If we let one of them slip, we will fail in all of them. Rehoboam had no interest at all in anything that mattered to God. He was interested only in himself and his own amusement and therefore he was a catastrophic failure.

1. The word of God

Rehoboam had complete disregard for God's word. 'He abandoned the law of the Lord', 2 Chr. 12. 1, ESV.

How we treat the Bible reflects on how we view God. If we refuse to read it, we are saying that we don't want to hear God's voice. Having read it, if we then decide not to obey it, we are saying that God has no authority over us. We must treat God's word with the seriousness it deserves.

2. The house of God

When Shishak, king of Egypt, plundered the temple and took the gold treasures, Rehoboam replaced them with bronze. He had no love for the temple at all, vv. 9-11.

We no longer have a temple to worship in, and the church we are associated with is not a building but a group of people. Paul calls the church the 'house of God', 1 Tim. 3. 15. Our treatment of church truth and our acceptance of God's order reveals our attitude to God.

3. The people of God

Israel pleaded with Rehoboam to make their lives easier, promising him their loyal obedience if he went along with their suggestions. In his arrogance, he treated them very badly.

If I love someone, I will love what they love. God loves His people. If I don't love my fellow-Christians, can I say that I love God, 1 John 3. 17? John's first Epistle clearly says that I can't. How I treat the people that God loves demonstrates what I think of God, 4. 21.

Rehoboam was a failure because he lacked conviction. 'He did not set his heart to seek the Lord', 2 Chr. 12. 14, ESV.

What about us?

Saints' CVs: Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

MARTIN LUTHER 1483-1546

As a young man, Luther abandoned his legal studies after being caught in a dramatic thunderstorm, during which he vowed to become a monk if he survived. He entered a monastery and devoted his life to the formal, religious routines of the Catholic church. These included frequent confessions to more senior clerics and physical penance to attempt to pay for his sins. When visiting Rome, he climbed up a stone staircase – the Scala Sancta – on his knees saying prayers on each of the twenty-eight steps. When he got to the top, he wondered whether there was any genuine spiritual benefit, asking, 'Who knows whether this is true?' LUTHER summarized his time in the monastery like this: 'If ever a monk could get to heaven by his monkery, it was I'.

Eventually, he realized the futility of his own activity, which was unable to save him. Luther was appointed a lecturer in theology at the local university, where he started teaching from the Bible. As he worked his way through Romans, he encountered the truth of justification by faith – diametrically opposed to the doctrine of the Catholic church. When Luther recognized that justification was accomplished by Christ and received through individual faith, Rom. 5. 1, he said, 'Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates'.

On 31 October 1517, Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. This was a set of assertions about the biblical truth of salvation, refuting the errors of the contemporary church. The document started, 'When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said "Repent", he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance'.

At that pivotal moment, Luther undermined the authority of the pope and the teaching of the Catholic church. From then on, he faced a lifetime of controversy and persecution as he taught and understood more of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone (Eph. 2. 8), with the Bible as sole authority.

One of the key driving forces of the Reformation was the technology of the printing press, harnessed to mass-produce copies of Luther's writings and, most importantly, his new translation of the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek into the widely spoken German language. There is a first edition of Luther's Bible from 1534 in the British Library in London.¹

Luther wrote many hymns, of which the most famous (in English) is probably, 'A mighty fortress is our God'. My favourite lines are,

'Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the Right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing'.

Luther knew the 'Right Man' was on his side, despite the tremendously powerful opposition he encountered.

Several interesting biographies are available if you want to know more about Martin Luther. BAINTON² has a detailed account of Luther's life; HENDRIX³ gives a much shorter introduction.



KATHARINA VON BORA 1499-1552

Enrolled as a nun at an early age, Katharina spent her youth in a monastery. She developed an interest in Reformation teaching, and – along with several other nuns – begged Luther to assist her. The nuns escaped by hiding in a wagon full of barrels of fish. Luther organized employment and marriages for the former nuns – all except Katharina, who eventually married Luther himself, on 13 June 1525. Luther thought his marriage would 'please his father, rile the pope, cause the angels to laugh, and the devils to weep'.

Katharina became a homemaker and administrator for Luther's business affairs, as well as a mother to six children.

Speaking from personal experience, MARTIN LUTHER stated, 'There is no more lovely, friendly, and charming relationship, communion, or company than a good marriage'.



Lessons from the Luthers:

- Get back to the Bible – read it for yourself.
- Use technology to spread the scriptures.
- Trust God to keep you in trying circumstances.
- Recognize that Christian marriage is a precious gift from God.

¹<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/luther-bible> ²ROLAND BAINTON, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, Abingdon Press, 1978.

³SCOTT H. HENDRIX, *Martin Luther: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2010.