



Edited by  
**ANDREW DUTTON**

**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*, PO Box 10544, Grantham, NG31 0HW, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.

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YOUNG.PRECIOUSSEED

# Editor's Introduction

Welcome to the August issue of YPS.

Now well into the summer season, perhaps you have already had the opportunity to take part in or support special outreach

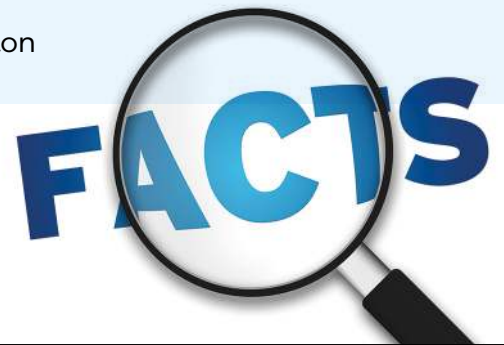
activities. It is great to use the extra time available during the holiday periods to serve the Lord or simply enjoy the company of other Christians. If you are at a 'loose end', why not find out if there are opportunities near you for Christian service?

This issue has more interesting and helpful articles and I hope you enjoy reading the magazine and trust that the articles will be a blessing to you.

Andrew Dutton

# Fascinating Facts – Evidence from nature of a Creator's touch

PHIL ARMSTRONG, LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND



## Monarch migration

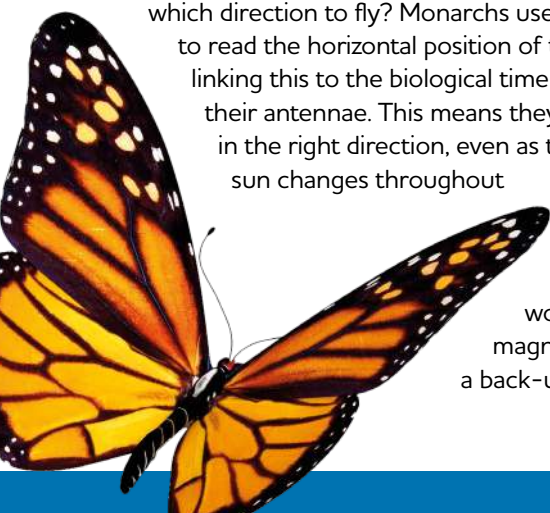
Every spring, 100-200 million Monarch butterflies begin their epic migration from Mexico, flying northwards to the United States and Canada, before returning again to Mexico for the winter. With a total distance of around 5,000 miles, the Monarch butterfly is the only type of insect that does anything like this. Their feat of endurance and navigation points to the power of our Creator God. But the most amazing thing about this journey is that the butterflies that return home for the winter are not the same ones that left Mexico in the spring. The total migration is like a relay, where several generations of butterflies complete their part of the trip in their short lifetime. The butterflies that return south to Mexico for the winter are at least the great-great-grandchildren of those that set off back in the spring. This means that the navigation information they need to complete their part of the larger journey is already programmed into their DNA. Each new generation needs to know instinctively how to continue the migration.

final generation of butterflies that complete the return journey have their compasses flipped, so that they instinctively fly in the opposite direction, back down to Mexico.

While it takes several generations to complete the journey north, a single 'super generation' of butterflies will do the whole return journey in one go. They developed from a special generation of eggs and have become very different from their parents. Their bodies make less of one special hormone chemical, which basically stops them ageing, and so they can fly all the way back to Mexico, often to the same tree that their great-great-grandparents left from! I hope you agree with me that this multi-generational migration, with amazing navigation skill, is too complex to happen by chance, but instead shows purposeful design. Our God has programmed this behaviour into the delicate Monarch butterfly. He alone deserves our recognition and our praise.

So how does each new generation of butterflies know in which direction to fly? Monarchs use a 'sun compass' to read the horizontal position of the sun, while linking this to the biological time clock built into their antennae. This means they can keep flying in the right direction, even as the position of the sun changes throughout

the day. When the sky is too cloudy for the sun compass to work, they have a magnetic compass as a back-up. Somehow, the



### Sources

Unraveling the Great Butterfly Migration Mystery. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBakLuH6kDY> Accessed 22/05/2024  
ERIC CASSELL, *Animal Algorithms*, Discovery Institute, 2021.

# Christian Basics – Daily Prayer

BY ANDREW DUTTON, NORWICH, ENGLAND

'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation', Matt. 26. 41.

In the last issue we looked at the importance of daily Bible reading, and one of the suggestions was to accompany Bible reading with prayer. The two activities are linked and are vital for every believer in the Lord Jesus. Yet prayer can be very difficult – I have not yet come across a Christian who finds prayer easy, or who claims to pray enough!

Daily prayer is essential for Christians – it is our communication with God. There are many examples of how people pray in the Bible, and I have recently enjoyed looking through the prayers of the Apostle Paul. One example is in Ephesians chapter 3 verses 14 to 19. As he prays for the Ephesian believers, we can notice how he prays and what he prays for:

- 'I bow my knees', v. 14. There is an attitude of reverence and worship, as Paul speaks to the 'Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'.
- In his prayer, Paul appreciates 'the riches of his glory', v.16.
- Paul asks for the Christians:
  - to 'be strengthened with might' (power), v. 16.
  - 'that Christ may dwell in . . . [their] hearts by faith', v. 17.
  - to 'be able to comprehend', v. 18, the immeasurable fullness of God.
  - to 'know the love of Christ', v. 19.

These are great themes that we can incorporate into our prayers for ourselves and others.

Whilst personal prayer is essential for Christian living, there are pressures on time that make this difficult. Some pressures are genuine priorities, but there may be other calls on time that could be adjusted to accommodate or increase daily prayer.

If a daily prayer time is not part of your schedule, or you want to pray more, the following hints may help (there are a few similar points to our last article on daily Bible reading!):

- Commit to God to be serious about daily prayer and ask for His help in making changes to your life to accommodate this.
- Find a time that works for you, ideally when you are least likely to be distracted. A routine is good because it helps you carry on with a prayer time even if you do not feel like it.

- Consciously remove distractions; it might help to leave your phone or tablet in another room!
- Allocate realistic amounts of time at first; it might be easier to start with shorter prayer times that can be gradually increased.
- Always start with thanking God and finding some aspect of the Lord Jesus that you can appreciate in your prayer. If you have just read a portion of the Bible, there may be something fresh or new to bring to God.
- It is important to be open with God and confess sin.
- Bring requests to God. This could include a variety of things, from asking for help ahead of a difficult day, praying for the needs of sick believers and friends, to asking for the salvation of people you know.
- Remember when praying for other Christians that subjects can go beyond practical and health needs! Paul prayed for the Philippian believers that their 'love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that . . . [they] may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ', Phil. 1. 9, 10. We need to pray more for each other's spiritual wellbeing.
- Consider using a prayer list or writing items down; some Christians find it helpful to keep a prayer diary and note how God answers prayers.
- In addition to specially set aside prayer times, recognize that we can speak to God at any time or in any place!



# Soul-Searching Scriptures

BY ADRIAN FERGUSON, PERTH, SCOTLAND

'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end', Jer. 29. 11

A few years ago, this text from Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11 seemed to be quoted everywhere! It had almost become a cliché as it was so widely referenced! Yet long before this verse was popularized in cards and posters, it had been a verse that had spoken to my soul – and has remained a comfort in the most trying times of life.

In 1994, I had the joy of marrying my childhood sweetheart, Audrey. Like many newlyweds, we had exciting plans and endless energy. We loved the Lord, and loved the local assembly, and all of its activities. We enjoyed holidays, making new friends, and welcoming people into our home for fellowship. But in January 1997, suddenly and unexpectedly, we entered into a deep trial which has left its own refining mark on our lives.

Almost overnight Audrey went from being fit and healthy to being critically ill. This sudden decline coincided exactly with the news that she was pregnant with our first child. Various medical tests were taken, and the devastating news came back that Audrey had a 'one-in-a-million' disease. This disease was incurable, and it had a life expectancy of only five years! After further surgical procedures, Audrey went into premature labour and Anna, our only child, was born. Anna only lived eight days – we were devastated. Yet the scriptures came with clarity and comfort, including Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11. God still had a work to do in us and through us. With God's help we were able to get going again in service for the Lord. Remarkably, even during our grief, the Lord opened a new door of opportunity to serve amongst children and teenagers, particularly in regular camps. It became a very fruitful and happy mission field for nearly twenty years.

In 2008, Audrey's health had deteriorated to such a level that her only hope of survival was to receive a lung transplant. During the period of waiting for the transplant, we received eight false alarms, yet, every time, we read it, or someone passed on the scripture to us: Jer. 29. 11. Eventually, in August 2008, Audrey received the transplant, but immediately it began to fail. In the most remarkable night of prayer that I have ever experienced, a dear servant of the Lord, Jim McMaster, brought Audrey before the Lord. When the surgeon looked for an answer in the gloom, God was already guiding his hand, and wonderfully Audrey lived! That evening Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11 was again confirmed.

Months later, after another experience of God's goodness, we did not hear our verse of confirmation. We were puzzled, why is God silent? I was tidying my filing cabinet and a long-forgotten card from my mother fell out. Enclosed in the card was the text, Jer. 29. 11. The confirmation came again – God always keeps His promises! In the goodness of God, Audrey has lived a further sixteen years, and we have been able to continue to serve the Lord together. God has blessed us in so many ways.

God's thoughts and plans are not always exactly as we want them, but they are exactly as we need them! Our God keeps the planets in orbit and our breath in His hand. He knows exactly what plans are right for us. The hymn writer penned his understanding of God's plans,

'I know who holds the future, and He'll guide me with His hand.

With God things don't just happen; everything by Him is planned.

So as I face tomorrow, with its problems large and small, I'll trust the God of miracles, give to Him my all'.<sup>1</sup>

God is always in full control.

<sup>1</sup> Hymn written by Alfred B. Smith and Eugene Clarke.



# Saints' CVs: John Bunyan

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

## JOHN BUNYAN 1628-1688

One Saturday evening shortly after I had passed my driving test, I set out in my car heading to Peterborough to attend a Bible study. Sadly, I got completely disorientated and arrived in Bedford, some forty miles away from my intended destination. But all was not lost! I spent a pleasant evening looking around and discovering several landmarks celebrating Bedford's most famous son, John Bunyan.

Bunyan was a massively influential Christian author from the 17th century, whose works include *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Holy War*, and his autobiographical *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. For 350 years, his books have been best-sellers. In particular, *The Pilgrim's Progress* has never been out of print.<sup>1</sup> Remarkably, Bunyan was self-taught. He was a tinker by trade, repairing pots and pans in villages around Bedfordshire. At a time when religious scholars invariably attended Oxford or Cambridge Universities, Bunyan received little formal education.

Bunyan relates his conversion experience in his autobiography.<sup>2</sup> He describes meeting 'three or four poor women sitting at a door, in the sun, talking about the things of God . . . their talk was about a new birth, the work of God on their hearts . . . how God had visited their souls with His love in the Lord Jesus'. He explains how their joy and understanding of scripture led him to conviction. He remembers the expression from the parable, 'Yet there is room', Luke 14. 22, as 'Sweet words to me; for truly I thought that by them I saw there was place enough in heaven for me; and moreover, that when the Lord Jesus did speak these words, He then did think of me'.

Bunyan's salvation story echoes that of his fictional pilgrim who walked to Calvary to have his weight of guilt removed. These are the most famous of Bunyan's poetic lines,<sup>3</sup>

'Thus far did I come laden with my sin;  
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,  
Till I came hither: what a place is this!  
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?  
Must here the burden fall from off my back?  
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack?  
Blest cross! blest sepulchre! blest rather be  
The Man that was there put to shame for me!'

His unorthodox style and outspoken manner earned him a lifetime of persecution from the authorities. He was



several years in Bedford prison. From this dismal location, he gained inspiration for some of his most beautiful allegorical writing.

At the age of fifty-nine, Bunyan died. He anticipated his entrance to glory, again via the fictional experience of two of his pilgrim characters, Christian and Hopeful, as they reached the celestial city.<sup>4</sup>

'Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate: and lo, as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There was also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them – the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord"'.<sup>5</sup>

John Bunyan left a rich legacy of illustrative truth. *The Holy War* refers to eye gate and ear gate as entrances to the city of Mansoul; you may still hear preachers talking about these portals today. Bunyan's most famous work is *The Pilgrim's Progress*, particularly the first part that narrates the journey of Christian from the city of destruction to the celestial city. Many adaptations have been undertaken by modern writers including Enid Blyton<sup>6</sup> and C. S. Lewis.<sup>7</sup>

A bronze statue of John Bunyan was placed in Bedford in 1874. At the statue's unveiling, the Dean of Westminster declared,<sup>7</sup> 'Every one of you who has not read *The Pilgrim's Progress*, if there be any such person, read it without delay: those who have read it a hundred times, read it for the hundred and first time. Follow out in your lives the lesson which *The Pilgrim's Progress* teaches, and then you will all of you be even better monuments of John Bunyan than this magnificent statue'.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/sep/23/100-best-novels-pilgrims-progress>.

<sup>2</sup> JOHN BUNYAN, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. Found here: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/654>.

<sup>3</sup> JOHN BUNYAN, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Found here: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/131>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> ENID BLYTON, *The Land of Far Beyond*, Methuen, 1942.

<sup>6</sup> C. S. LEWIS, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Dent, 1933.

<sup>7</sup> *The Book of the Bunyan Festival*, 1874. Reprinted. ISBN 978-3-38250-653-7