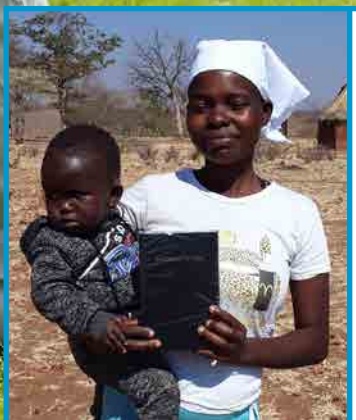
The EXPLORER

FREE

SEPTEMBER 2025



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EDITORIAL

Dear Fellow Explorers

What are you wearing as you read this?

Perhaps you are reading the Explorer as you travel home from church and are still wearing your 'Sunday best'. If you have had a busy day, and it is almost time for bed, you may be wearing your pyjamas. I imagine that, like many people, you have clothes for different occasions. Smart outfits and everyday clothes, light summer wear and warm winter clothes. Depending upon your favourite sports you may have swimwear, shorts, sports tops and trainers. There may be rules about what you wear at school, or in the workplace. If you are helping with work in the garden, or painting the house, then you will either wear old clothes, or some special overalls.

But no matter what it is that you are wearing, you are still you. You may feel more comfortable when wearing some clothes, than others. You may feel more confident in certain outfits, and people who don't know you well, may treat you differently, depending upon how you are dressed.

Isn't it strange, that a set of clothes that can be bought for only a few pounds, can make such a difference – even though the clothes we wear don't really change us at all. It is a well-known saying that 'you shouldn't judge a book by its cover'. The same applies to people.

Too many people rejected the Lord Jesus because he was not dressed in the splendid rich apparel of kings. Too many dismissed him because he received the multitudes of common people that flocked to hear him preach. The scribes and the pharisees thought they could tell at a glance who were common, unimportant, and unworthy people – simply by looking at their clothing.

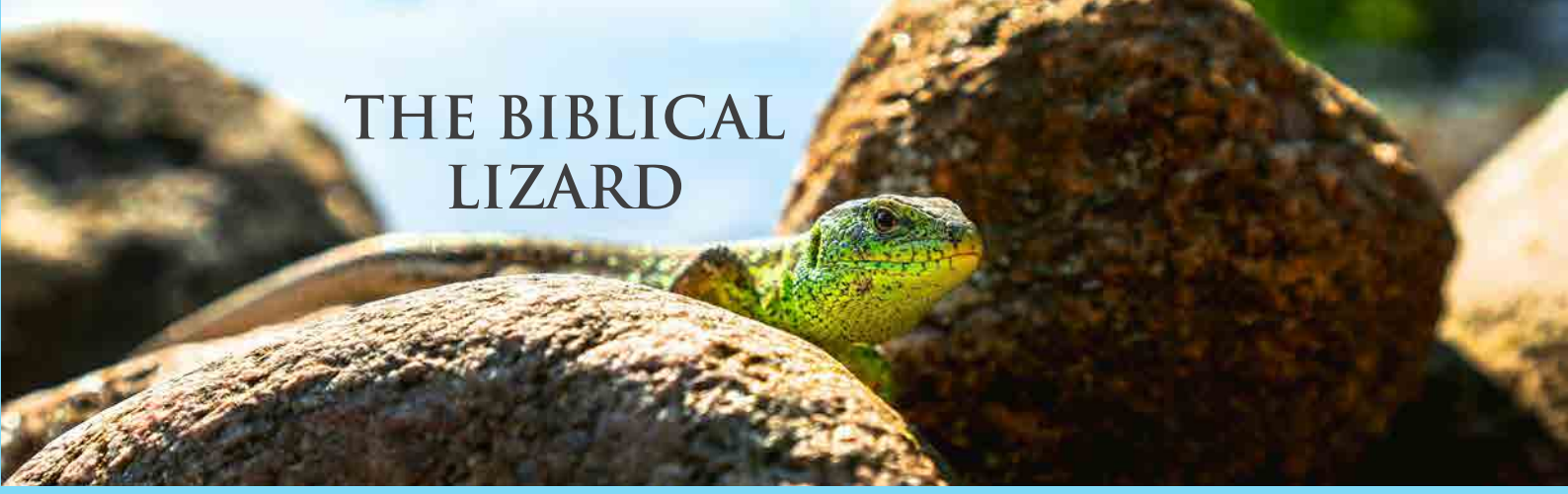
But the Lord doesn't judge a person in such a superficial way, 1 Samuel 16:7 "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

What you are wearing has some importance. Many activities are made easier by dressing appropriately. You wouldn't want to wear your swimming costume when cutting bushes in the garden. You would feel overdressed at a bonfire wearing a new outfit for a wedding. It would be difficult to sit attentively in church while wrapped up for a winter storm.

What you are wearing has some importance, but who you are, is far more important. That is what God sees, and it can't be hidden or disguised by any clothing style. That may make you feel uncomfortable – knowing that he knows all about you. Using clothes to fix this feeling of shame is what Adam and Eve did in the garden. But they knew that it wasn't enough, and so, hid from the presence of the Lord. Of course, that didn't work either. The only answer was clothing that the Lord provided. These coats of skin (Genesis 3:21) came from a sacrifice. This sacrifice looked forward to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary. Unlike other clothes, these coats did more than cover up. As a result of this sacrifice Adam's heart was changed, by faith he believed the Gospel.

By trusting in Jesus Christ, you too will be clothed – with the life changing perfect righteousness of the Saviour.

God bless you all,
James MacInnes



THE BIBLICAL LIZARD

That initial cry of excitement, "Look what I've found," changed within an instant to a cry of concern – "Dad, help, I've killed it! Dad, come now! It won't stop wriggling!"
My sister, my brother and I had been playing at the river. It was such a hot day, that Dad had promised, if we worked hard at our schoolwork, to take us swimming. Our favourite place at the river is a plunge pool in a series of waterfalls. Because of the baking sun, all around the rocks were hot, but the water was lovely and cool. We were jumping into one pool and then allowing the water pressure to push us over the ledge into the next pool, then clambering back over the warm rock to do the same again. We were having great fun together, when my sister shouted out.

We all rushed over and tried to make sense of what it was that she held in her hand. It was wriggling frantically. "I've killed it," cried my sister, "I didn't mean to, I just tried to pick it up, but I've pulled it in half. It's dead, but it won't stop moving. It's horrible."

Before we could really see what it was, she shook it from her hand and jumped back. I was interested, but not very keen to pick it up. Thankfully Dad did. It continued to squirm and twist, knotting and unknotting itself upon his open palm. "Was it a newt?" asked my sister, "I didn't want to hurt it, I was about to show it to you, I didn't squeeze it. I don't know what happened."

"I think it is okay," replied Dad, "I don't think it is dead. Maybe surprised and sore, but not dead. This is only a tail, and somewhere around here must be a lizard without a tail. If a lizard wants to get away, it drops its tail. I don't think it will be easy to find, but if you searched carefully, you might find it, a tail-less lizard with a tender rump." We didn't look for the lizard, but we continued to watch the twisting writhing tail. After a couple of minutes, it stopped moving. It was then easier to examine the delicate colour and see the sheen of the scales that covered it. The break appeared very neat, there was no torn skin or blood. It was very fascinating.

My brother always has lots of questions. "What type of lizard was it, Dad?"

"A biblical lizard," Dad answered.
My brother thought for a moment or two, but being unable to work it out, he asked, "Is that its real name, or are you just making that up?"
"I think it is a good name," said Dad, "But it is not the official name. The official name is boring – the common lizard, a very dull, plain, name for such an interesting creature."
"But why would you call it a biblical lizard?" pressed my brother, "Is it mentioned in the Bible?"
"No, I don't think this lizard is mentioned in the Bible – though perhaps some of its relatives are. It is a biblical lizard because it behaves biblically." I think Dad knew that he had us all confused, so we waited for him to explain himself. "Don't you remember what Jesus taught? He said that it was better to pluck out your eye, or to cut off your hand, or foot, and so escape, rather than retaining eye, hand and foot and be destroyed."
"I don't want to cut my hand off," said my brother.
"Of course not," reassured Dad, "But if you were caught in a trap, with no way out, it would make more sense to lose your hand, than to remain trapped and lose your life. That is what the lizard did. God made lizards with this special ability. Mr Lizard maybe thought your sister was going to eat him, and so he dropped his tail, and saved his life."
"Yuck," said my sister while pulling a face, "Who'd eat a lizard?" She shuddered at the thought.
"How do you know it's not Mrs Lizard?" I asked.
"Might I really have to cut my hand off?" demanded my brother.
"Not literally, I hope," Dad answered my brother, "But you must act decisively to deliver yourself from temptation. That is what the Saviour is teaching in the Scripture. It is far better to miss out on something and keep what is more important. It is a terrible thing to lose your soul."
Dad bend to put the tail down on the rock. "I think we best just leave this here. Mr, or Mrs," here he looked at me, "Lizard doesn't need it, and neither do we. When we get home, we can read these verses in the Bible. I am sure these are in Matthew chapter 5, and that there is a similar passage in Mark's gospel also. But before we go, do you all want one last jump into the river? Then we can leave Mr, or Mrs, Lizard in peace to concentrate on regrowing a new tail."

-------- SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY PICNIC --------

On Saturday 21st June our church families from the Southern Presbytery gathered for an adventurous day out at Eglinton Park Farm, Irvine. We started off the sunny day by enjoying lunch and fellowship in the Visitors Centre with those who came. Before leaving the Centre, we gathered to take the annual group photo.

Secondly, we relaxed in the sun in the open field and participated in many inclusive activities which were very engaging, and everyone had a great time. Some of us ventured on a forest walk. Our time of activities on the field finished with a welcome treat, lovely cooling ice-cream lollies for all!

To conclude we all gathered for worship led by Mr Craig, Ayr, capturing a blessed day which will be remembered by all. Everyone enjoyed the day out and we are excited to see what next year brings.

Chloe Calderhead & Michelle Calderhead

BEAULY PICNIC

We were blessed to have the whole Suarez family staying while Mr Suarez was preaching, so, we decided to have a picnic. On the days leading up to it, the weather forecast was not looking good, and we were all wondering what we would do. But our prayers for good weather were answered, and it was a lovely day. We first played some Bible story games in the manse. Mr Suarez's children speak Spanish, but we got over the language barrier by using pictures. We then had a great feast, followed by tug of war in the garden. Afterward, we walked to the park to work off all the calories by playing rounders and football. A great time of fellowship was had by all.

ADVENTURES IN AFRICA 10

Mrs Marion Fraser writes...

The first thing we did in our new parish was to learn the names of all the church people at each of the preaching stations.

After each Sabbath service at Ngcingwane my husband would speak with the Office Bearers and other men, while I sat on the grass outside the church with Samuel and little Alexander. The women would sit down with me and chat. We had happy fellowship – and as we learnt about each other, we were often laughing together.

Some of the names were familiar English names like Elizabeth, Victoria, and Rose, and there were other names less familiar to me, like Theodora, Tryphena, Beauty, and Vina. Some of the more common Xhosa surnames were Sangqu, Tikayo, and Tembane. What fascinated me most were the names of some of the married women, like NoManage, NoLast, NoBansie, NoEngland, NoEvening, and NoTomato. Recalling their names now reminds me of their lovely bright faces, it fills my heart with a warmth of affection for these precious friends.

Strange names you might say. Odd as it is to our ears, the prefix 'No' means 'mother', and these names were given as a mark of respect. One day, while sitting together with the women in the warm grass, it was announced that I too must also have a Xhosa name! There was a pause in conversation, then Tryphena, a tall, superior looking lady, said I must be named NoBandla. All the others nodded, smiling in approval. "You are our mother," they said. NoBandla means the mother of the congregation. I was 26 years old at the time, and felt very young – but I was honoured and touched by the title.

While our varied responsibilities in the district made living in the central town a practical necessity, we wanted to be amongst the people as much as possible. It was agreed that we would stay for a few days in Broadway village near Ngcingwane church. The village was composed of a number of rondavels, round houses, build from mud blocks, dried in the sun. Each hut was one room, and most families had three or four huts clustered together. There would be a principal hut for daytime living, others for sleeping at night. Those who were poorest, would only have one. The roof of many homes was constructed with layers of dried grass; other homes had more modern roofing sheets.

There was no electricity in the whole district, so when required, homes were illuminated by candle or oil lamps. Water was drawn from a village well. Carrying it home was considered women's work, and even young girls would be involved. With straight backs, and a well poised step, a pail of water balanced upon the head could be carried with ease. I was amazed never to see the water spill.

Albina Mfiki and baby Alexander

Cooking was done outside over an open fire, in iron three-legged pots. These poor people amazed us with their generous hospitality. The whole congregation would contribute to provide us with the best they had available. We savoured a tremendous meal of tasty roast chicken with rice and potatoes. The bread made in the cast iron pot over the open fire became a favourite with our family. We were given a margarine, called Rama, to butter it.

We were welcomed into the home of Vina Sangqu, 'The Vice of the women', as humorous Mr Mfaxa called her. She was the vice-president of the Women's Christian Association. Vina's oblong house was made of concrete blocks with a tin roof, and so was considered more European, and perhaps easier for us. There were three rooms, the entrance door opened into the central living space, furnished with a table and chairs. On either side was a bedroom, one of which we stayed in. We brought Vina a brightly coloured tablecloth as a thank you gift for her hospitality.

In this district there weren't many young men staying in the villages, most had gone to work in the gold mines. Hard, dangerous work, but a way to make money.

Visiting around the whole village my husband conducted worship and preached in each of the 14 homes. He began in the first with Psalm 16, then in the second home he preached from Psalm 17. He continued with the next Psalm, in every subsequent home, finishing with Psalm 29.

In each home, he wasn't only speaking to the family. The village women followed us from one home to the other, singing and dancing as they went along. Samuel and Alexander thoroughly enjoyed the activity and were easily absorbed into the community. The Xhosa people were fond of children and always took an interest in them. There wasn't room for everyone inside each home, but people happily sat, or stood, around the doorway, listening intently.

The final home, where Mr Fraser preached from Psalm 29, was that of Rose Sangqu. By the time we reached Rose's door, darkness had fallen. Rose's husband, Dower Sangqu, taught in the local school and was not yet home. Without causing any disturbance, during the short address, we noticed Dower slip quietly in and join the meeting. We were thankful to see him there; he did not attend church with Rose and was said to have a drink problem. It was not possible to see everyone in that poorly lit crowded hut, but Dower appeared to be listening intently.

What a tremendous encouragement it was, the following Sabbath, to see the teacher in church. He continued to attend, becoming increasingly involved in the congregation. Then the day came when he professed faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. There was a marked change in Dower, he was no longer a slave to alcohol, but a servant of the Lord. He now worked diligently, not only within the school, but now also, within the church. What a testimony it was to the transforming grace of God in the gospel. What a delight, some years later, to see Dower ordained an elder at Ngcingwane Church.

We had no doubt that prayer was being made for our work, on the mission, by the church back home. We were serving on the mission, but we were not alone. The Lord's people were asking for the Lord's blessing, and the Lord was answering in wonderful ways. This vitally important work, praying for God's blessing, is something that each of us is to be involved in. I hope you share in it.

The Difference One Bible Can Make

Imagine what it is like to not have a Bible of your own. Then imagine what it is like to teach a Sunday School class, about the Bible, without even having your own Bible! It must feel like an impossible task. This was what it was like for Chanel, a twenty-one-year-old woman from Zimbabwe.

Chanel lives in a small village around 20 miles from Victoria Falls. In the village is a small church. It wasn't a church building like that you might be used to. Instead, it met under a tarpaulin held up by sticks.

Chanel had attended a local school, and had wanted to train to be a cook, so that she could work in one of the hotels, at nearby Victoria Falls. She speaks five local languages, and is able to read Shona, Ndebele and English. However, she has two small children, so couldn't travel to Victoria Falls to do the training required.

One day, the church leader came to see Chanel. He asked her if she would look after the small children during the church meetings – which sometimes last for four hours. Chanel agreed to do this, although it was going to be a difficult task. She had no Bible, and very few resources. All she had were a few, very old and dog-eared, leaflets. However, Chanel took on the task and started the first children's Bible lessons for the village, under a stick lean-to shelter. By the fourth week, she had thirty-two children in her class, and they were already able to recite verses from memory and sing together.

Some missionaries visited Chanel's village in 2023, not long after she had started these classes. She was overjoyed to be given a Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS) Shona Bible, which the TBS had made available for the missionaries to distribute. This means that she now has the whole Word of God from which to teach the children! You can see how pleased she looks holding the Bible. You can begin to understand what a difference just one Bible can make!

How many Bibles do you have in your home? If you don't have your own copy then please contact the editor of the Explorer, he will be very pleased to send you one. If you have more than one, how thankful you should be!

A person receiving a new TBS Bible in Africa told how his family had only one Bible which was wearing out. That Bible would be passed around the family in turn so that they could each use it. Another lady said that she didn't have her own Bible so had to keep borrowing one, but she wasn't always allowed to read it if the owner wanted to use it. There are even preachers who don't have their own Bible!

It is a great blessing to be able to have the Bible readily available in our own language, in a good translation. It is a blessing which we should never take for granted.

The TBS tries to distribute as many free Bibles as possible. Can you guess how many Bibles and scripture items were distributed in 2024? Can you guess the number of different languages? Also, can guess how many different countries received these?
(You will find the answers at the end of this article. It may sound like a huge number, but there are many, many, more people still without God's Word.)

It is only possible to distribute Bibles in a nation if there is a translation in that language, or in another language that the people can also read. There are more than seven-thousand languages in the world, and over six-thousand do not yet have a full Bible translation.

Think how sad this is, and what a need there is, so that people can read the Word of God in their own language! Please pray for the work of the TBS, and the ongoing translation projects. Some progress has been made, however, there 'remaineth yet very much land to be possessed' (Joshua 13:1).

[in 2024: 3.6 million scriptural items, in 39 different languages, were distributed in a total of 97 countries]

PRAYING

"Grandad, do you know when the minister is going to ask you to pray?"

Grandad, who had been reading, put down his book. "Do you mean, in the prayer meeting?"

"Yes, does the minister tell you the day before so that you can get ready?"

"No darling, the minister has never done that. I know he will ask me to lead in prayer sometimes, but I never know when – until I hear my name called in the meeting."

"Do you not get nervous about standing up to pray in church? What if you have nothing to say? Has that ever happened?"

"Oh yes, I get nervous I suppose, but maybe not knowing that for sure that he will call upon me helps with that. Once my name is called there's no time to worry. I just have to stand and pray."

"How do you know what to say, do you have a prayer ready?"

"No, not exactly. But sometimes there may be some burden in my soul I want to express before God, and I try to find a way to use that. Maybe also an expression from a Psalm we have just sung, or the passage that we have read will stand out, and thinking about that helps me. But I don't have a prayer ready. While I am standing up, I am often uttering a silent prayer to the Lord asking for help to pray. I think that is perhaps the most important thing, when you need to pray, ask the Lord to help you to pray. That is what the disciples did when the Saviour taught them the Lord's Prayer."

"Have you never been stuck for anything to say?"

"Well, I don't find it easy, and sometimes I don't pray for long. But I've always been given some words."

"Grandad, have you ever heard anyone who was stuck for words?"

"You're full of questions today. Stuck for words? Well yes, I remember one man from my village when I was young. I suppose you could say he was stuck for words. But he could still pray though. There was something very special about him, because he couldn't speak. But he was a Christian and he could express himself in a fashion. Not with words, but with a sound suggestive of words. He could hear all right, and he could understand as well as anyone else. But he couldn't speak. He would attend the prayer meeting, and from time to time the minister would ask him to pray. Up he would stand, and for a little time he would lead the congregation in prayer. We couldn't know exactly what he was saying – but we were familiar with him and his ways and could understand the reverential tones in which he called upon God. He was a godly man, and we were glad to know that he prayed for and with us."

"I think the other men who took a turn in prayer were also encouraged by his example. If he wasn't ashamed of what others might have thought about his prayer, why should anyone else be. What matters is that God hears and understands. Never be scared to pray, never be scared to tell God that you can't find the right words. Never be scared to let anyone else hear you pray."

ABEL

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Hebrews 11:4

The essential teaching of the Old Testament sacrifices is that, as a sinner, you can not approach God without blood. The offering of a sacrifice is God's appointed way for forgiveness and acceptance. All these sacrifices point to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. It is through his death, the innocent for the guilty, that we have life.

Abel followed God's Word. His father, Adam, would have taught him about the first sacrifice, recorded in Genesis 3:21. Abel trusted in what God had revealed, he worshipped God in God's way.

It is not enough to simply perform the ritual, the offering (of the lamb) had to be by faith. God will not accept any offering without faith (Hebrews 11:6).

Abel's brother Cain refused to believe God, he thought that he could worship in any way he pleased. Cain's worship was neither approved nor accepted by God.

Abel's faith was in God, because of this he was obedient to what God had revealed. God recognised Abel's faith, and He accepted his offering (Genesis 4:4).

Without faith nothing we can do will please God. God has revealed in the Bible how we are to worship Him and He looks on the heart when it is done. To approach God without faith is to adopt the failed worship style of Cain.

By faith we are to trust in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

When you worship God, are you like Abel or Cain? Cain went his own way, to hell, but Abel was the first man to enter heaven. He did so, by faith.

PUZZLES

Can you interpret these Bible Phrases?

In the New Testament there are a few words and phrases which have been retained in the original language. Where this occurs, the Bible text provides the translation.

Are you able to translate them? Draw a line to the correct meaning.

Alpha	**a stone**
Cephas	**first**
Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?	**Damsel, I say unto thee, arise**
Emmanuel	**last**
Golgotha	**the Christ**
Messias	**Master**
Omega	**the place of a skull**
Rabbi	**God with us**
Talitha Cumi	**My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?**

Brothers & Sisters

A	B	E	L	E	A	H	E
B	M	A	R	Y	D	A	L
S	J	O	H	N	T	M	I
A	E	S	A	U	K	I	A
L	J	A	P	E	T	H	B
O	I	S	H	M	A	E	L
M	I	R	I	A	M	Y	H
C	H	I	L	I	O	N	S
B	E	N	J	A	M	I	N

PLEASE FIND THE BROTHER OR SISTER BELONGING TO:

CAIN	JOSEPH (his youngest brother)	MARTHA
MAHLON	SOLOMON (his wicked brother)	JAMES
JACOB	SHEM (both his brothers)	MOSES
ISAAC	DAVID (his eldest brother)	RACHEL

Prize Puzzlers

1st prize: Lauren Cormack *(Inverness)*

Runners up: Kenny Mackinnon, Chloe Calderhead - Partick
Rachel Flynn - Stockton on Tees
Josiah Dennison - Gilford FP, N Ireland
Euan Grant - North Kessock Free Church
Abigail Keddie - Dores
Abigail Blaney, Benjamin Blaney, Bethany Blaney - Ballyclare & Doagh
Catherine MacInnes, Coinneach MacInnes, Seumas MacInnes - Lochalsh & Strath
Abigail Suarez Diaz - Pau
Benjamin Ross - Portree
Carys Sheilds, Ross Sheilds - Back Free Church

Name: .....

Age: .....

Congregation: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

PUZZLES & DRAWINGS

Please send a scan or photograph of completed puzzles to: **Miss Anne Macaulay**
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(Unattributed articles ought not to be considered the work of the Editor)

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