

The Explorer

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Free



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Younger readers who find the questions too hard may like to do a drawing based on one of the articles and send it to the same address.

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[Unattributed articles ought not to be considered the work of the Editor.]

Skipper's tales



SKIPPER AND THE EXPLODING COOKER!

Skipper as you know is not the bravest of dogs. He will bark at strangers passing the garden but I get the feeling he is barking 'Hello'. He doesn't sound very dangerous and, really, he is always glad to see people.

You may remember the story of how he avoids the fire when there is wood on it as he is very afraid of the sparks. Well, a few Sabbaths ago he and I were in the kitchen just finishing off dinner. Dinner is always special on Sabbath; we are all very relaxed and calm. In our house when we come home from church we have coffee and chat about the service but it's not just any old coffee; our minister is Italian and he has shown us how to make Cappucino. We mostly have a Cappucino and just relax and enjoy the peace of the Lord's Day.

So, Skipper and I were quite happy just waiting for the cooker alarm to go off to tell us the food was ready. I turned round to get cutlery to set the table with Skipper standing beside me looking very interested; he could smell the chicken! All of a sudden with no warning at all there was a huge bang. I am sure Skipper jumped three feet in the air! He shot out of the back door as fast as he could. I could not think at all what had happened but I felt a bit shaky. The glass door of the cooker grill had completely shattered. We don't know what caused it as the grill was not even on but no doubt the cooker manufacturers will investigate.

No real harm was done and fortunately the dinner was in the bottom oven so we, AND SKIPPER, got our chicken after all. I set to and tidied up as much as I could and we sat down to eat. Normally, when we have chicken Skipper is sitting expectantly at the table waiting to see if he will get some for his dinner. He knows he has to wait till we are finished but he can get very impatient and nudge your knee if he thinks you are taking too long. Halfway through dinner we realised

he was not in the kitchen. We finished up and then we realised he was not even in the house!

We looked out of the dining room window and there he was sitting under the furthest tree from the house in the garden, staring at the house and looking very perplexed. You know when you are in school or a big building and the fire alarm goes off there is a special place you are told to go to stand in safety until it is decided if the building is safe. Well, it was almost as if Skipper had decided this was his safe place. He was under a tree. It was a lovely day so he wasn't sheltering from the weather; he just felt safe and secure. Eventually he was persuaded to come in and we gave him a wee bit extra chicken. He gave the cooker a wide berth and has been a bit wary of it ever since. Skipper ran off and sheltered where he felt safe and secure and away from harm.

We were reminded of Psalm 91 which says: 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' Skipper instinctively felt safe in the shadow of the tree. How much safer we are when we shelter in God and the promises in His word. Look up Psalm 91 and ask someone to help you learn some of the verses which speak of God's promises to keep us safe when we trust in him.



From The Editor

Dear Friends

Many years ago I read a story about a dog called Bob. He belonged to a famous minister called Thomas Guthrie who lived in a place called Arbirlot near Arbroath on the East coast of Scotland. Bob was greatly loved by the minister and the congregation. Every Lord's Day he would go with his master to the church and lie there until the end of the service. However one day Bob chased the neighbour's cat so badly that the poor cat died. Bob was in disgrace and Mr Guthrie had to send him away to his brother's home fifteen miles away.

Next Sabbath Bob was seen trotting away from his new home and when Mr Guthrie came to the church there was Bob lying at the gate. He lay as if he was dead. He must have known that he had been banished and had returned without permission. The minister went to him and stood silently above him. Bob didn't wag his tail or move his head. Only his eyes looked up with a pitiful, pleading look.

After a while Mr Guthrie could no longer resist the appeal and in a cheerful voice he said: "Is this yourself, Bob?" Immediately Bob sensed that he had been forgiven and was to be allowed back. He ran round in circles and almost jumped over his master for joy.

Bob can teach us an important lesson. Because we are sinners we are banished and separated from God. We don't deserve to be allowed back into God's favour and friendship. We deserve to stay, forever, banished far away. Yet because of the Lord Jesus Christ there is a way in which we can be forgiven and brought into the family and favour of the Lord. Before that can happen we have to lie, like Bob, at the master's feet, penitent and pleading. Have you ever done this? Have you heard his voice gently speaking words of forgiveness? Have you leapt, like Bob, with joy because your sins have been forgiven and you have been restored? "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

Murdo A N Macleod

WHO AM I?

I have only got a few moments to write this article. My little son Obed will soon be awake and I will have to go and attend to him.

I haven't always lived here in Bethlehem. I was born in the land of Moab. Like all the rest of my people I worshipped the gods of Moab. I didn't know any better and I didn't want to do anything different.

I suppose the changes first began when I met my first husband. He was a foreigner from the land of Israel. He and his brother - they were called Mahlon and Chilion - had moved to Moab with their parents during a time of famine in Israel. Their father Elimelech had decided that a move to Moab was the best way to save their lives. Sadly it didn't work out like that. Elimelech died and so did my husband and his brother. I felt so sorry for my mother-in-law. She was a stranger amongst our people and she had to bury all three members of her family.

Hearing that the famine in Israel had ended she decided to go back. Orpah, her other daughter-in-law, and I accompanied her on the first stage of her journey. By that time I was on another journey: a spiritual journey from the idols of Moab to the one living and true God. Orpah was not on that journey and she turned back having bid Naomi a tearful farewell. Naomi urged me to.

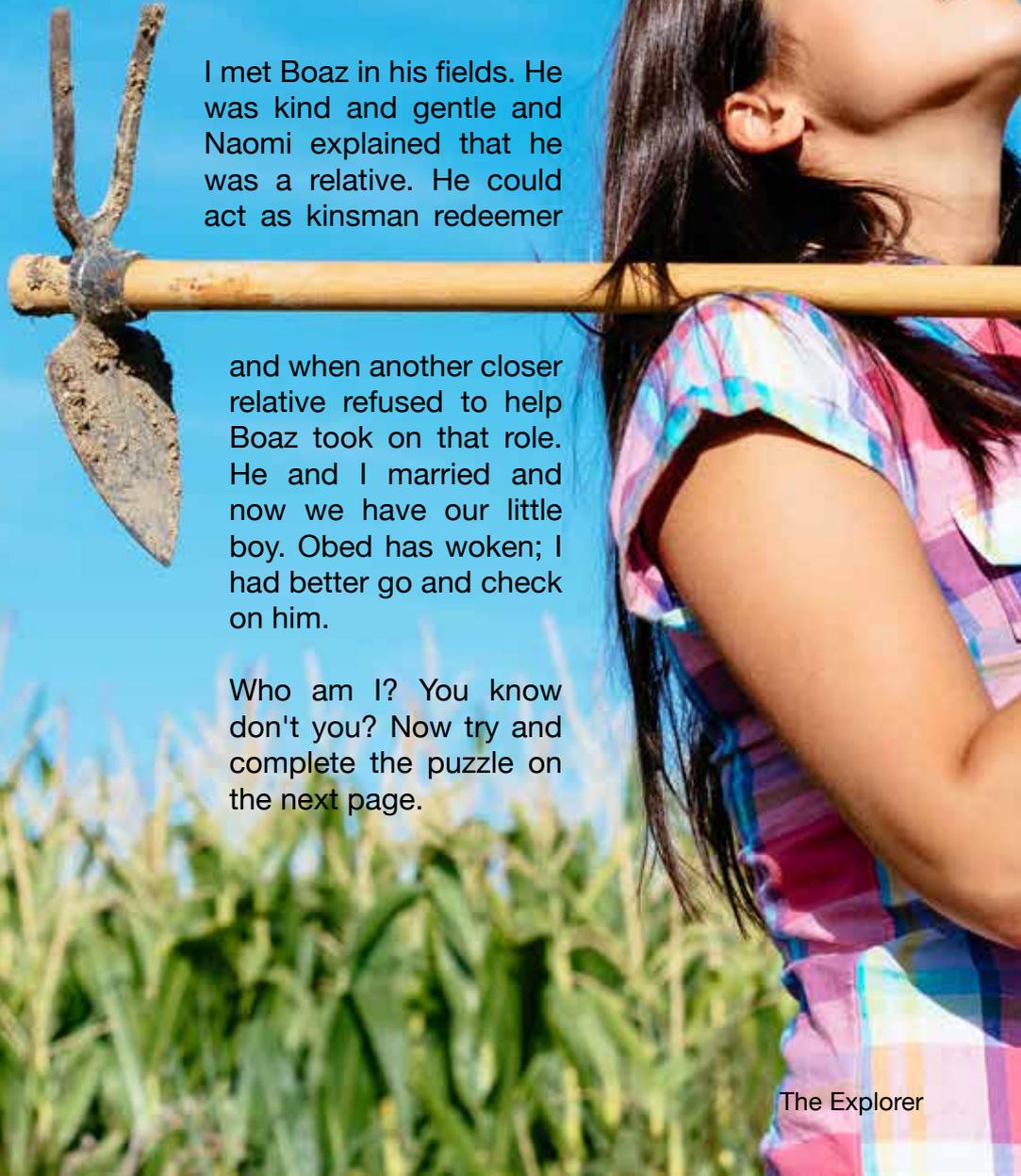
follow Orpah but I couldn't go back. I can still remember every word I said. "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

Of course words are easy and I can't say we didn't have difficulties. Arriving back in Bethlehem reminded Naomi of all that she had lost and she was very sad. I was determined to do my best and in it all the Lord was preparing our future.

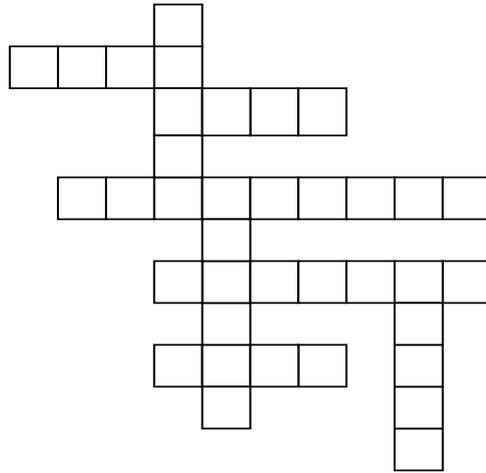
I met Boaz in his fields. He was kind and gentle and Naomi explained that he was a relative. He could act as kinsman redeemer

and when another closer relative refused to help Boaz took on that role. He and I married and now we have our little boy. Obed has woken; I had better go and check on him.

Who am I? You know don't you? Now try and complete the puzzle on the next page.



PUZZLE PAGE



These people are all mentioned in the story. Can you fit them into the grid?

Naomi/Mara
Boaz
Elimelech
Mahlon
Chilion
Orpah
Obed

I had two husbands. Can you name them? _____ & _____

Whither
thou goest
I will go

February & March entries

1st Prize:- Emily Hutton, Duthil-Dores

Runners Up:-

Duthil-Dores: Jonathan Brooks

Partick: Kenny MacKinnon, Mairi MacKinnon

Snizort: Archie Buchan, Gracie Buchan

Stornoway: Lily Craig, Thomas Craig, Sarah Craig, Lydia MacDonald, Susanna MacDonald

Name _____

Age _____
Congregation _____

Address _____

At last -- it will happen today! James and Ruth will go on a school trip! No, not with a bus full of school children... Just the two of them and of course the teacher. That's their whole school! Where will they go? The teacher has not revealed anything yet...

Delighted, James and Ruth are walking early in the morning to the teacher's house. 'Teacher, where are we going? We need to know, now, don't we?' James looks hopefully at the teacher. She only laughs mysteriously. 'To a playground?' tries Ruth. 'Of course not!' says James, 'That is something you do'n't have here.' Ruth looks a bit crestfallen and guesses again. 'But we do have a swimming pool in Zambia!' 'Yes', says James, 'but to get there you must first drive for 2 hours.' 'For such a long drive one day would be a little too short, don't you think?' asks the teacher. 'I think we're going to a zoo.' James and Ruth burst into laughter. There is no zoo in the area. Now the teacher must be joking! James shouts immediately: 'Seeing monkeys in a zoo, that's not special! I even saw a monkey who came to look at us once, right here at the mission!'

The teacher is also laughing: 'When you've slept in a tent while zebras, elephants and hippos were roaming the camp site, well, then a zoo is indeed nothing special any more! No, we're going to do something that kids have never done in Scotland. Come with me!' 'Walking?' James lifts his eyebrows.

'Yes!' The teacher tightens a bag on her back. 'But that isn't a school trip.' Ruth lifts her nose in the air. 'I think it is!' says the teacher. 'In the past people were always walking. Think of the Bible stories.'

Now James and Ruth have nothing to say...

A few moments later they leave the mission. The teacher walks inbetween them. When they have only gone a short distance, the teacher suddenly stops. 'What did I hear?' she whispers. 'Come on! Run! We are being spied upon. Maybe there are robbers hiding in the tall grass.' Off the teacher goes, like a rocket!

James and Ruth look at each other in horror and then run as fast as they can after the teacher. She jumps into a dry riverbed and waits for James and Ruth. She puts a finger to her lips: 'Shhh! Come with me.' Carefully they sneak behind each other. 'Watch out for snakes...' The teacher takes a stick and pokes in the dried leaves in front of her feet.

James and Ruth freeze like statues.

'Well, do we have an adventurous school trip or not?' the teacher laughs suddenly. Ruth widens her eyes. 'Is this just a joke?'

'Of course it is! That's what I knew right from the beginning', boasts James. He

will certainly not say how his heart is still pounding in his throat. They walk a long way through the dry riverbed. 'Let's go up here.' The teacher helps Ruth to climb up the side.

They cross a burned and blackened field. Then they arrive in a small village. There it is very quiet. In the mid-morning there is no one to see. 'Where is everybody?' James wants to know. 'Busy in their fields, I guess', answers the teacher.

They go further. They leave the village behind and follow a very narrow path. On both sides the grass is so high that they can't see over it. Suddenly they hear in the distance a funny sound.

'What do I hear? It is as if a tap is running somewhere.' Ruth cups her hand around her ear.

'That's impossible! In the villages no one has a tap with running water,' states James.

'Let's just see', says the teacher. 'We are almost there!' The path goes up. And then suddenly they see it: a river! Still full of water and with very large stones in it! There is even a waterfall!

'Wow! I have never been here before. Can we go into the water?' Ruth jumps up and down from excitement. 'Look at that!' James points to long roots of the trees on the bank just above the water. The teacher smiles. 'Like swings. Who wanted to go to a playground or to a swimming pool? Here we are!' She takes the bag off her back and kneels down. 'But before you start playing we will first look in my bag.'



Curiously James and Ruth watch the teacher as she takes out for each of them a bottle of Coke and a bag of crisps. That is a very special treat!! It becomes a wonderful day! Splashing in the water and clambering over the rocks. A picnic at the waterfall.

In the afternoon the local children from the village arrive at the river to wash themselves and their clothes. Together they have a lot of fun till they are too tired to play any longer. One after another they look for a place to sit on a rock, with their legs still in the water.

'Before we go home we can still have story time!' The teacher takes a book from her bag. 'Yes!' the children shout.

Soon everyone is listening very silently. Too soon the story ends...

'But look at the sun! We need to go home!' The teacher puts her book in her bag and stands up. 'Come on!' It is almost dark when James, Ruth and the teacher arrive at the mission again. 'Teacher', Ruth sighs happily, 'I have never had such a nice school trip before!'

And this time James totally agrees with his sister!

THE SCHOOL TRIP

In Zambia the rivers can be so full of water during the rainy season, but they can almost run dry during the hot season. Also the village wells can run dry. Then life becomes so difficult... How can you wash your clothes? The dishes? Yourself? How do you cook your food? And when there is nothing to drink?? Without water, life is impossible.

Jesus speaks in John 4:10 about living water. Also in Revelation 21:6 and 22:17 you can read about living water. Do you know what this means? Ask someone to explain it to you.

Always remember: without water there is no life, without Jesus you also can't live!!

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES - CHAPTER 5

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

In the previous chapter opposition and trouble came from outside the church. Sometimes trouble comes from within the church and that's what we find at the beginning of chapter 5.



HYPOCRISY (Verses 1-11)

Ananias and Sapphira gave the appearance of generosity but the Holy Spirit revealed it as hypocrisy. No-one forced them to sell their land but sadly they were moved by pride and wanted to attract attention and praise for themselves. If they had not been found out they might have risen to important places in the church but the Holy Spirit uncovered their dishonesty. We have to be very careful of doing things in order to win praise from those around us. We have to remember that God knows what our hearts are really like. We should also learn from this couple of the danger of keeping anything back from the Lord.

IMPRISONMENT (Verses 12-32)

The increasing number of believers and the miracles which the Apostles performed led to growing alarm amongst the authorities and some of them were put into prison. The highest courts in the land opposed Christ's claims to truth and sovereignty and this is still the case today. However the authorities discover that silencing the Lord is impossible. The Lord sent angels to help his church, something that happens to this day. The apostles face hostile questions and they boldly assert that they had only one master (v29). It cost them to obey God but they looked for help to their exalted Saviour, their great "Prince" (v31).

GAMALIEL: MR FACING BOTH-WAYS (Verses 33-39)

Amongst the authorities who were questioning and attacking the apostles was a man called Gamaliel. The character Mr Facing both-ways in the book Pilgrim's Progress fits Gamaliel. He was a respected religious leader who knew that if he was to maintain his own position he would have to handle this new situation with the apostles very carefully. Gamaliel judged something by its results, not whether it was right or wrong. He wanted to wait and see if the movement in which the apostles were involved was successful before he would commit himself. He had the same Scriptures as the apostles but wanted to compromise rather than assert from the Word of God whether what they said was true or not. It is a mercy when the Lord preserves the church from men like Gamaliel.

AFFLICTION LEADS TO GROWTH (Verses 40-42)

As a result of these different trials the church grew stronger in character. The apostles rejoiced that God's power enabled them to continue faithful despite threats. Their motive was not primarily to oppose the government but to act out of obedience to Christ. We notice in verse 42 that preaching and teaching are inseparable. Christ has, as prophet of the Church, appointed a ministry to teach and preach. Without this men and women would never learn about Christ or grow spiritually. To progress spiritually we need food (God's Word) and we need more than the basics which the Bible compares to milk which is fine for a baby but not for an adult. This chapter shows us the way in which God can use disappointments and difficulties to help his people and advance his work. What a glorious God he is!