

The Explorer

June 2015



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Puzzles

Young folk are encouraged to complete the various puzzles in the magazine and send them in to:

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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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Skipper's tales



SKIPPER IS NAUGHTY

Skipper is not always very good at remembering to do what he is told! He has a very bad habit of jumping up on the settee and lying on the top of the back cushions when we are out of the living room and he thinks no one can see him! He likes to look out of the window and see who is passing. We have put an old footstool at the window and when we are in the room he is very good at jumping up on that but as soon as we leave the room up he jumps onto the settee.

This is not good for the cushions as they get flat and lose their shape. They are also not so nice for humans as Skipper leaves his hair on them. It is also not good that Skipper is being disobedient, so this week we bought him a new bed for downstairs and when we go out or are working away in another part of the house we can leave him in the kitchen with somewhere nice and comfy to lie. So far he is not too sure of the new bed at all and sniffs around it and looks at us as if to ask if it is really for him, but I am sure he will soon get the idea.

Skipper thinks if we can't see him he can disobey and we never actually see him lying on the cushions because he jumps down as soon as he hears us! He doesn't realise that all the signs are there and we know what he has been doing because the cushions are all rumpled and squashed. You see he can't resist the temptation to jump on the cushions because they are a better height to see out of the window and of course they are very comfortable BUT he is disobeying us every time he does it!

Now Skipper is just a dog; he doesn't understand too much about right and wrong and obeying and disobeying but he must know a little because he is always very careful to try and kid us that he has been sitting on his stool all the time.

Do you know something about being tempted to do the wrong thing? Maybe one of your friends wants you to do something you know you shouldn't; that is temptation. If you do what you shouldn't that is called sin. All of us are sinners and we may

want to be good but too often we fail. I'm sure you can think of many times in which you failed just like Skipper. Isn't it often the case that just when your parents say 'I want you to be good today' that is the very day you do something you know you shouldn't and then wish you had been good because you don't want your parents to be angry or sad?

We try and try to be good all the time but of course we can't because we have sin in our hearts. So what can we do? We can ask God to help us and to give us clean hearts. He wants us to be good and he wants us to be happy and the only way we can be really happy is if we love him because if we love him we will try to keep his commandments and obey him. Asking God for something is called prayer, and the Bible has a verse about asking for help and asking God to give us a clean heart. It is in the Psalms and is an easy verse to learn.

If you go to your Bible you will find it in Psalm 51 and verse 10 where David prays "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Ask someone to help you to learn this verse. Even more importantly make this your own prayer to the Lord and when you are tempted to do the wrong thing, pray to God for his help.



From The Editor

Dear Friends

Today I have been trying to persuade one of our sheep to adopt another lamb. Her own lamb sadly died and the new lamb's own mother is unable to care for him. It would be good for all of them if the motherless lamb and the lambless sheep could pair up. If it goes well she will feed and guard the little one until he grows up. However this is easier said than done and the mother sheep has to be persuaded, in different ways, to adopt the little one. Sometimes this process is successful and other times it is impossible. Time will tell how I get on with this pair.

Did you know that God also adopts? Yes, that's right; he adopts every Christian into his own family. He then gives them all the blessings that come from being a part of that great family. He becomes their heavenly father and the Lord Jesus Christ becomes their elder brother. The Apostle John reminds us of the wonder of this when he writes "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). Paul tells us more about this. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ". (Romans 8:17)

Unlike my reluctant sheep the Lord doesn't have to be persuaded to adopt his people. A sheep will never, ordinarily, adopt another lamb without the shepherd stepping in and persuading (or even tricking) her! When the Lord adopts a sinner into his family there is no-one outside of himself trying to persuade him or 'pulling the strings'. And unlike my sheep the Lord never refuses the soul that cries to him for help and mercy. The little lamb is in a pen beside the sheep and he cries out to her but, at least to begin with, she just ignores these cries. She is not interested. The Bible has many promises that the Lord will hear all who cry to him. In Psalm 102 for instance we are told that "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer". (Verse 17)

The best I can hope for is that this adoption works. Supposing there were dozens of other orphan lambs in Skye there is no way in which the sheep could ever care for them. How different that is to the Lord. Though he has adopted into his family a number that no-one can ever add up yet there is still room. Room for you to come and shelter. Room for you to be adopted. Why wait another day?

Murdo A N Macleod

WHO AM I ?

“Behold the lamb of God”, he said, “which taketh away the sin of the world”. John the Baptist was pointing out the one they were calling Jesus. There and then I and another of John’s disciples decided that we would go after him and so we did just that; we went straight after him. He quickly spotted us and asked us what we wanted. We told him we wanted to know where he lived. You see we wanted to spend some time with him, to see and hear for ourselves what he would tell us. If this really was the one we had been waiting for, the promised one of God, we needed to know. Do you know, I still remember it all like it happened yesterday. I even remember the time we arrived at the house; we were so captivated and enthralled that we spent the rest of the day with him.

You know how it is when you have some really exciting news and you can’t wait to tell someone. Well, that was me. I had found the Messiah. I had the most amazing news and I just had to find my brother and tell him. “Come and see” I pled with him, for I knew that this would be as life-changing for him as it had been for me, but he had to come for himself; just hearing it from me would not be enough.

Well, I witnessed Jesus do many hundreds of miracles. However there is one miracle I remember particularly well. Exactly how many people were there that day I ‘m not sure, but I do know there were over 5000 men; then there were women and children as well so there must have been up to 15,000 and perhaps more. They had followed us out into the wilderness and Jesus had spent the day teaching and healing and now it was beginning to get late. We were tired and hungry and we knew the people must be too. So we suggested to the Master that he send the people away so that they might find somewhere to sleep and something to eat. His response was to turn to Philip to ask him where we could get food to feed all the people. Philip, you see, was from that area. Well, Philip was shocked by the question. Even supposing there had been somewhere and supposing that it had had enough to feed so many, how in the world could we possibly pay for the quantity required? While Philip did the maths I scanned the people looking vainly for someone with some loaves, for strangely enough the Master had asked if anyone present had any. I obeyed although unclear as to what use that would be. A young lad was standing near me who appeared to have heard our discussion. He

generously offered me his small basket of food, five small loaves and 2 fish that he had taken with him. It was such a kind gesture but what use was that amongst so many? I would mention it to the Master anyway; he might have a solution - perhaps the most needy could get it. To this day I do not know what happened next; only that he told us to ask the people to sit in groups. Then he gave God thanks. I have to be honest here; I marvelled at giving thanks for so little amongst so many. Next he called us over and began to hand out the loaves and then the fish to us. Now I don’t know how and I can’t explain it but as he kept handing out, the basket remained full.

We kept filling our arms with loaves and then with fishes. We just kept on handing them out and it did not matter how much we took there was still more in the basket. It was so exciting, so amazing and yet kind of scary. The first few times I returned expecting there to be none left and wondered what I would say to those that were going to be without. Do you know what was really amazing? We had twelve baskets of leftovers! Everyone had eaten till they were fully satisfied and we still had far more than we had started with. I learned so much that day about the Master. Do you know, by the end I realised that we could have fed any number that day. His power was not limited but infinite. This really was the Son of God.



LET'S MEET.....

Mr Donald Robertson works as a Resident Lay Agent. He is well known throughout the church as a very busy man and the editor is very grateful to him for agreeing to be interviewed for the Explorer.

Welcome to the Explorer Donald, can you tell our readers about your childhood?

I was born a long time ago and I had the privilege of a loving and secure childhood. When I was young we lived in Fife and I attended Ladybank primary school and went to St Andrews for my secondary schooling. Both my parents were teachers and our home life was strict and sometimes, like many other boys, I had to be punished. When I was I thoroughly deserved it, sore as it was!

Did you go to church as a child?

Yes I did. My parents had been brought up in the Free Church and both my grandfathers were elders in the church. We worshipped in Kennoway Free Church. It was a small congregation with many of the people having a mining background. I remember them fondly. There were lovely Christians there who dearly loved the Lord.

I know that you have had a variety of different jobs. What did you do when you first left school?

Well, I have sold Harris Tweed in Uist and worked in a bank in Harris. I managed a china shop in Dundee. I have also been a bookshop manager and a bakery van driver but not all at the same time! I enjoyed these different experiences but I was restless. Though I had continued to attend church I was rebelling against the Lord.

When did you become a Christian?

Though I had always believed in God I spent many years ignorant and far from the Lord. I knew that Christians were different from other people and I knew that they had something which I didn't have.

On one occasion while visiting family in Skye I picked up a copy of the Bulwark magazine. On the front cover was the text "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." (Titus 3:5-6)



I began to think seriously about that text and through that I came to understand that salvation was entirely based on the undeserved kindness and grace of God. I realised that all my attempts at being respectable and feeling proud because of my church attendance would never save me. I saw that I could not put my trust in anything or anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord brought me to a place where in utter desperation I cried to him for mercy. Like the psalmist in Psalm 40 he took me from "a horrible pit...and set my feet upon a rock". This was in 1979 and from that day to this the Lord has been leading and guiding me in a way that is so different to the plan I had for my life.

What difference did this make to your working life?

Well, I now see that the Lord was preparing me for the work which was awaiting me in the church in later years. Initially I worked in a voluntary capacity with dementia sufferers and eventually qualified as a psychiatric nurse working in hospitals and in the community.

My wife Betty first met me while I was working in a drop-in-centre for the confused elderly. At first she was a bit unsure whether I was a nurse or one of the patients! We married and set up home in



Skye in order to be near my elderly father. I found work in an eventide home with the Mental Health Association. I now see that all of this was the Lord's preparation for future work.

How did you become involved in the Lord's work?

Well, over the years I discovered that I was being invited to take services in different congregations. I was then asked to consider working full-time with the church in Skye and Wester Ross. At first I felt I was not really fit for this work but eventually I came to see that the Lord was leading me into the work and so I accepted the post. Besides taking services I was also expected to visit homes in the area and I came more and more to enjoy this part of the work too. This involved a lot of travelling as I preached

in different places every Lord's Day. While I had enjoyed my previous work in different areas there was a special joy in working in the things of the Lord and a special privilege in being able to help people, in some small way, with spiritual matters.

Can you tell us a bit about the work which you do as a Resident Lay Agent?

For the past eight years I have been working as a Resident Lay Agent with our own church. This is a bit different to my earlier work as I am now stationed in one or two places for which I have particular responsibility. It normally involves working in congregations which do not have a minister of their own. I conduct the Sabbath services and the mid-week prayer meetings. I also visit the homes of the congregation. This includes visiting those who are sick or elderly, a very special group who need special care.

At present my time is divided between the congregations of Poolewe & Aultbea on the west coast of Ross-shire and up north in Assynt & Scourie on the west coast of Sutherland. This work means that I am frequently away from home and Betty has to remain behind. Thankfully her daughter Elaine lives nearby and they are both believers who are able to encourage one another in the Lord. I see the Lord's hand in that provision. His ways are so wonderful.

Do you have a final word for our readers?

You may be reading this and wondering what life has in store for you. Whatever life might bring the most vital matter for all of us is to be born again. And we should not lose any time because now is the best time to seek the Lord. I would urge any reader who is still unsaved to ask the Lord for pardon and grace so that you too will have that personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. A relationship in which you know that he is your Saviour. If you do this I can assure you that you will never, ever regret it. My very final word is a quotation from Isaiah chapter 43: "I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour."

Well, thank you Donald for sharing these things with us. I'm sure the readers of the Explorer will join me in wishing you the Lord's blessing in your work and family.

MERF



Last Month we told you how the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) began, and the four main kinds of work they do. This month we will tell you about some of the places that MERF help to spread the Gospel.

Although MERF began with the aim of working in the Middle Eastern Arab countries, God has opened doors of service in Muslim lands further east. One of these countries is Indonesia, a collection of thousands of little islands to the north of Australia and to the south of China and the Philippines. Surprisingly, Indonesia has the highest Muslim population of any country in the world. Out of its 252 million people, 203 million follow Islam. MERF supports Churches in Java and Sulawesi, two of the main islands of Indonesia.



Diocesan Program: Dragon Fruit & Pig Farming to help Pastors

Java

Java has a very strong Muslim majority and Christians suffer persecution. It is hard to establish churches and Bible colleges so MERF helps by producing Christian radio broadcasts with Bible teaching and arguments against many tribal superstitions that people in the countryside still believe. The broadcasts are no use if people don't have radios to listen to, so MERF gives radios to little churches and scattered groups of Christians who meet in places throughout Java to hear God's word. Then people are sent round to visit these listener groups to see how they are progressing.

Sulawesi

There is not as much persecution of Christians on the island of Sulawesi. MERF has its own training centre here in Makassar and also supports an established Bible College in the town of Jaffray. In the MERF training centre people come to train to be pastors, others come for more basic training to help them understand the Bible better and do Christian work, and others come to learn how to produce the very important Christian radio programmes we talked about earlier.

In more recent times MERF has been able to help Jaffray Theological Seminary which teaches 600 Bible students. That is more than all the evangelical Bible college students in Scotland put together, and maybe in England too! Here MERF helps to pay for students who cannot afford to come to the college, lecturers are sent out from the UK to teach and books are provided for the library. In the last few years the Principal of this college has learned about John Knox and the Covenanters in Scotland and is passionately teaching the students about the Scottish Reformation!



Help for Pastors

When the students finish their training many of them return to poor country areas to be pastors. The people cannot afford to pay them so MERF helps by providing a way for the pastors to support themselves. They teach them to farm and harvest and provide seed to grow fruit and pigs to raise animals. This means the people in rural Indonesia can hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Points for Prayer

- That these nations with so many Muslims would receive the light of the Gospel of Christ.
- That many would tune their radios to hear the Christian messages broadcast.
- That the Bible colleges would produce faithful pastors and that they would be able to provide for themselves through the farming techniques they learn.