

## DEVOTIONAL

(Read 1 Samuel 16, 17 first)

**David** is first introduced to us (and to Samuel) as "a ruddy (red-cheeked) good-looking boy with bright eyes." (1 Samuel 16:12). He was the eighth and youngest son of Jesse, a farmer and shepherd, near Bethlehem in Judea, Israel. We know nothing about his birth or his earlier years. I am sure that in his typical Israelite home, he was exposed to the reading and teaching of the Word of God. When he first appears in chapters 16 and 17, he is called A YOUTH three times: by Samuel, by Saul and by Goliath. The Hebrew word for "youth" used here and elsewhere is NEURIM. It is usually translated "youth" but in 1 Samuel 12:2 the word is translated as (Samuel's) "childhood." Some Bible scholars see David in these two chapters as a mid or late teenager. Others see him as younger. One even suggests that during the significant events of these two chapters he was between the age of 12 and 16. This was the YOUTHFUL STAGE of his life, and we will see to-day that ONE WORD dominated all his youthful experiences, which you can read about in the early chapters of 1 Samuel.

### David's activities and experiences during these youthful years.

God used all these youthful activities and experiences to prepare David for his wonderful ministry.

- We see him, first of all, as a humble obedient boy, looking after his father's sheep. (1 Samuel 16:11).

As he led and looked after the sheep, he began to learn the basic principles of leadership. (2 Samuel 7:8 and 1 Chronicles 17:7). These verses indicate a similarity between the "ministry" of a shepherd and the ministry of a great leader. What David learned, in his youth, as a shepherd, would stand him in good stead when, in later years, many men followed him, and he needed to lead them and care for them. Psalm 78:70-72 tells us that God chose David and took him from the sheepfolds and brought him to His people to shepherd them (1 Chronicles 17:7). We read in these verses in Psalm 78 that "he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." His leadership ministry of people was based upon his leadership and care of his sheep during those early years.

## DAVID THE TRUSTFUL TEENAGER



- When lions and bears attacked his sheep, he killed them. (1 Samuel 17: 34-37). What a responsibility for a teen-age boy. But he emphasises, in these verses, that it was God Who enabled him to do this, (17:37) and prepare him soon

to face and overcome a much" bigger attacker."

- We see him learning, in his solitude, to become a capable musician and harpist as later described in 1 Samuel 16:18, 23. This ability was to open the door into a royal and different environment.

- It was during these teen-age years that he received the greatest blessing and honour of his life, when he was anointed by Samuel to be the King of Israel. (1 Samuel 16:13).

- And it was during these youthful years, that he had the greatest victory of his life, when he defeated and killed the giant Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:51).

How was all this possible for a teenage boy? The secret lies in one word which was to be the key factor in David's youth and life. We can see this word clearly in Psalm 71. The name of the author of this psalm is not given, but it is traditionally recognised that David is the author. Several Bible scholars attribute it to David because of its similarity to those psalms which he is known to have written. Compare, for example, Psalm 71:1-3 with Psalm 31:1-3. And there are more such similarities. In this Psalm we read two clear statements from David.

"Lord God You are MY TRUST from my youth." (verse 5) Perhaps that trust started earlier as a child. "Oh God, You have TAUGHT ME from my youth, and to this day I declare your wondrous works." (verse 17). The reason



David could kill the animals which attacked his sheep, the reason he accepted his anointing as king, the reason he could defeat and kill Goliath, was because, as a youth, HE TRUSTED GOD.

It was God Who gave him the strength, the skill, the peace and the ability to do what he did.

This trust in God which started in his youth became the BASIS OF HIS WHOLE LIFE and he refers to it in many of the psalms which he wrote.



### Two questions for us to ask ourselves:

“Am I willing to TRUST God to enable me to do what He wants me to do??”

“Do I believe, from David’s experiences, that God can save, bless and use teenagers who TRUST Him?”

## YOUR GREATEST NEED

## A QUESTION TIME ABOUT A QUIET TIME



Last month we saw how important it is for us, as children’s workers, to set apart a portion of each day, in which we can BE STILL in God’s presence. We agreed that God’s blessing in our lives and on our ministry depend upon us taking time to be with Him, to worship Him, to confess our sin to Him, to thank Him and to pray for ourselves (and for others). Yet is it not true to say that while most of us firmly believe in the importance of a daily Quiet Time, many of us struggle to have such a Quiet Time consistently? May we all resolve and make a commitment to have a good and well-planned Quiet Time every day. Let us start off by asking and answering simple questions about a Quiet Time.

**WHAT is a Quiet Time?** It is a period of time set apart by a believer each day for, and devoted to, Bible reading, worship and prayer.

**WHEN is the best time for my Quiet Time?** It varies according to the details of your daily schedule.

→ It should be at the same time every day if possible. Regularity makes it easier to fit in your other activities.

→ The morning is the best time. It is a good way to start the day, (Psalm 5:3) when

the mind is clear and fresh. Some have it before breakfast; others afterwards. Some have a simple principle “No B, No B.” (No Bible; No breakfast.)

→ Having your Quiet Time in the evening is also an alternative, so long as you don’t leave it too late, and you are tired and mentally exhausted.

**HOW LONG should my Quiet Time last?** It is not easy to give a simple answer to that question. The quality of your Quiet Time is as important as its length. It is better to start off with a shorter time and you will then find that you will want to make it longer. But you could start with a realistic time of 15 minutes and grow from that to 20 or 30 minutes or even longer. Remember that this is time well spent.

**WHERE should I have my Quiet Time?**

Anywhere you will not be interrupted.

**WHY should I have a Quiet Time?** Because time spent in this way will help you to grow spiritually, and, through it, God will give you power and truth for your life and for your ministry to the children. And it will help you live a well organised Christian life.

I think back to my early days as a children’s evangelist. I was full of enthusiasm and always busy. In addition to my secular work as a schoolteacher, I spent many hours evangelising and teaching. As a result, I did not take enough time to be quiet before God each day and to worship Him. But I came to realise how possible it was for me to be so busy in God’s service that there was little time left for the most important activities of all – to worship, to confess, to thank and to pray. So, I adjusted my daily programme to give more time for those most important activities.

But we do need to understand that we need to be practical as to the length of our Quiet Times and not set goals which are not realistic.

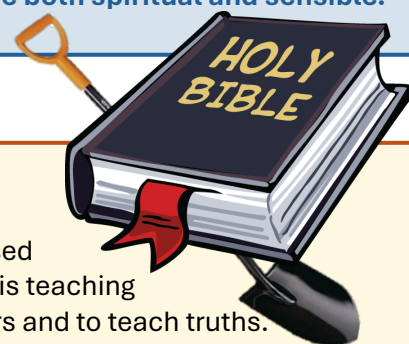
**Our planning should be both spiritual and sensible.**

## DIGGING DEEPLY

## HOW TO TEACH BIBLE LESSONS (AND HOW NOT TO TEACH THEM)

We all want to be good teachers. We want the children to listen to us, to understand what we are saying and to respond to what we are teaching them. We know that children love to hear a story and that they will listen to it if it is properly told.

The Lord Jesus often used parables or stories in His teaching ministry, to give answers and to teach truths. On one well known occasion (Luke 10:25-37), when He was asked the question “Who is my neighbour?”



He used a simple story to give the answer. I am sure the questioner never forgot that answer because the story made it so clear.

We have a wonderful source of stories in the Bible, all inspired by the Holy Spirit, and waiting to be not only told, but to be taught. But the first step in our teaching ministry to children should be to learn how to tell a Bible story and to tell it well. We will later learn how to use each Bible story to teach truths to the children. It is those truths which will “set them free.” (John. 8:32).

A good story depends upon, and is the result of, thorough **PREPARATION**, in which you should follow the following steps:

**1) PRAY** that God will help you understand the Scripture passage you are teaching.

**2) Read** the **PASSAGE** five or six times so that you know it thoroughly. Consult any books which give information about this passage. Read through any lesson notes you have been given. These could help you understand the passage. It is also some help to consult a map of the area (if available) in which the story’s events take place. (and show it to the children).

Why don’t you select a passage of Scripture like Genesis 6 and 7 or Luke 19:1-10 and think about how you could prepare a story based on that passage following the six suggested steps above.

**3) Look** briefly at the chapters before and after your passage to understand its context.

**4) Make** a list of all the **PEOPLE** who appear in, or relate to, the passage in any way. Imagine yourself in each of their positions. Try to imagine their thoughts and desires.

**5) Have** in your mind or create the structure of a **PLAN** for your story which you will follow in your **PREPARATION** and in your **PRESENTATION**. A written plan will be a great help in both situations.

**6) Your plan** should have four **PARTS** or sections, which you will fill in as you prepare.

→ **Part 1** A brief attractive **INTRODUCTION** which will get the interest of the children.

→ **Part 2** A **PROGRESSION** of all the events in the story which you will write down one below the other.

→ **Part 3** The **CLIMAX** where the children’s attention and interest will be most intense.

→ **Part 4** A **CONCLUSION** which will include a challenge.

## VITAL TRUTHS TO DISCOVER

## HE, THE HOLY SPIRIT, IS GOD

Last month, we discovered the vital truth that the Holy Spirit is **A PERSON**. He is not just some kind of influence or power or force. He is a Person Who **influences**, Who **gives power** and Who **works in our lives** and ministries. Why is He able to do that? **Because He is God.**

We start our study this month by reminding ourselves of the great and wonderful truth that our God is a Trinity. **There is only one God**, Who is One in His essential being, but **there are three Persons** within the Godhead—God the **Father**, God the **Son** and God the **Holy Spirit**. All three of them are fully and wholly God. They are not three gods; they are not three manifestations of one god. **ONE GOD; THREE PERSONS**. We cannot understand this great truth, but we can and must believe it.

Each of the Three Persons has a special ministry in His **plans** for us. We can see this, for example, in His plan of salvation and in His plan of creation.

→ The Father creates the plan.

→ The Son implements (accomplishes) the plan.

→ The Holy Spirit administers (applies) the plan.

God is active in the world today primarily through the Holy Spirit.

So, the Holy Spirit is not just a PERSON. He is **GOD**. The Word of God makes this very clear.

→ He is called God in Acts 5:3,4.

→ He has all the divine attributes. He is eternal

(Hebrews 9:14), He is all-powerful (Luke 1:35,37), He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10), and He is omniscient. (1 Corinthians 2:10-13).

→ **He does work that only God could do.** He created (Psalm 104:30), He resurrected (Romans 8:11), He gives spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-11), and He inspired the Scriptures. (2 Peter 1:20,21).

It is therefore essential, in the early part of our studies of the Holy Spirit, that we know and believe that He is, firstly, a Person with Whom we can relate, and, secondly, that He is God with unlimited power. These truths lay a good basis for our study of His work, and especially of His work in our lives and the lives of our children.

It is important to remember that the main purpose of the work of the Holy Spirit in the world to-day is to bring glory and honour to the Lord Jesus. When the Lord Jesus was speaking to His disciples about the Holy Spirit, He told them that the Holy Spirit would **TESTIFY OF HIM** (John 15:26), and that He would **GLORIFY HIM** (John 16:14). The main work of the Holy Spirit in the world to-day is to bring **GLORY AND HONOUR** to the Lord Jesus Christ, and we will see that the main way He accomplishes that is by convicting and saving sinners, and by nurturing and transforming saints. (Children included in both).

**Next month we will start to examine the work of the Holy Spirit, especially in relation to our children.**



As teachers of Good News Clubs and Sunday school classes, we are not without our problems. It could be restless children, or lack of interest, or lack of space. I try to see such as these, not as problems, but as challenges. Challenges to overcome. Challenges to test us.

I remember one of the very first Good News Clubs I ever taught. The children who came to that club, when it was started, were noisy, ill-behaved and showed little interest in what I was trying to teach. I was tempted to give up, but every week I saw it as a challenge. I spent hours in preparation and prayer, and I eventually was able to enjoy teaching those children and seeing some of them trusting Jesus Christ. Every problem has a solution.

Last month, I mentioned a problem which can exist in many (even all) Good News Clubs, but it is a good problem or challenge which, nevertheless, needs to be resolved. Our goal is to teach the Word of God to children. We generally aim our teaching to children between the ages of five and twelve. But there are usually older children there as well.

### THE PROBLEMS

**1** The older children often do not appreciate the action choruses, the simple Bible quizzes, and the visuals which the younger children enjoy. They would often prefer discussions, more participation and more help with early teen age problems. But if you aim your teaching at them, the younger children will be restless, and if you aim your teaching only at the younger children the older children may become restless. What can you do to resolve the situation?



**2** This one is probably greater. Over a period, the younger children become the older children. Some, even many of them, have trusted the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, but most of them eventually come to an age when they feel they are too old for the Good News Club, and they leave; and you lose them. What can you do to keep them?

### THE SOLUTIONS

**1) The first and obvious** is to do your best to ensure that your teaching and programme is, as far as possible, good and helpful for both groups, for ALL who are there. This is not easy, especially for those teachers who are inexperienced. But even if you could do so (and it would be difficult), you will eventually lose your older children.

**2) The second possibility** is to divide your club into two separate clubs, one for the younger children and one for the older ones. You yourself might feel able to teach them one after the other in your home or hall, where you hold the club at present. Or you could invite one or two co-workers to take over the second club in the same location or in another location.

I remember one of the early clubs I taught in our home. So many of the local children attended it each week, that we had to divide it into two clubs, according to age, and I taught both each week.

**3) But I believe that there is a third solution** which is the best one of the three. I need time to explain it properly.

**I will, therefore, explain this solution next month.**

The Mini-Mag is published and written by Sam Doherty  
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All of them have occupied leadership positions for many years in the worldwide ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship®. The contents of each Mini-Mag are based upon the author's 75 years of experience working with Child Evangelism Fellowship, successively as national director of Irish CEF, as European CEF regional director and as founder of the CEF Specialised Book Ministry.

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