



**Assisting
Children's
Evangelists
Worldwide**

Devotional:

“This is eternal life, that they may know You the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent” John 17:3

Augustine, the great Christian theologian of the 5th century, wrote that the Summum Bonum –the highest goal and good–of every Christian is the PERSONAL INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. The English theologian, J.I.Packer, wrote “What higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal, can there be, than to know God in this way.” And the question we all ask is “How can we come to know God in this way?”

The first, and initial, step in the knowledge of God is to trust Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. The verse above makes this clear.

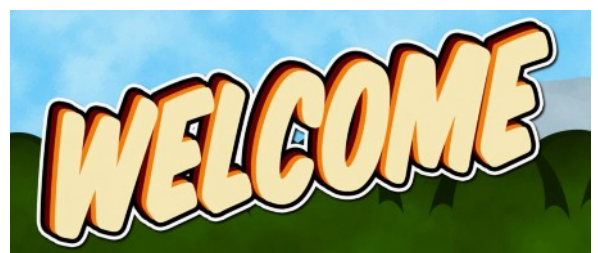
**SUMMUM BONUM –
THE HIGHEST GOOD**

Those who trust Jesus Christ receive eternal life and forgiveness of sins and they

BEGIN to know Him and, through Him, God the Father. The Bible teaches that ALL believers know God in this sense (John 17:3, Galatians 4:8, 1 John 2:12 along with 13c, 5.:20) and that ALL unbelievers do not know God in any sense. (1 John 3: 1,6) Knowing God in this initial sense is the privilege of ALL those who have trusted Christ. We, as believers, did not know God in the past, but now we do.

After this initial step, when we come to know God and His Son at our conversion, the next step, as believers, is to know what our God is like, to study His attributes and His qualities, and to apply that knowledge to our lives and ministries. That will help us to know Him better. And that is what we have been doing in the last 24 issues of Mini Mag, and we have been greatly blessed through that study.

But there is more. God wants us not just to know about Him; He wants us, in our next step, to know Him personally. May we echo the goal and the prayer of the Apostle Paul when, ten years after his conversion, he wrote in Philippians 3:10 “I want to know Christ.” (NIV) So we are now ready, like Paul, to seek the



As we begin the third year of our monthly Mini Mag, we want to welcome and invite each of you who have been downloading Mini Mag, to join us for another year. But we long that many others will join you this year and discover our little four-page magazine on the internet. Many children’s workers are looking for help and encouragement in their lives and ministry and we feel that ‘Mini Mag’ could be at least part of the answer. If you agree, we would appreciate it very much if you could tell children’s workers, with whom you are acquainted, about Mini Mag and encourage them to download it at www.cefbookministry.com, And you can let them know that all the previous 24 issues are also available, free of charge. Thank you for doing this.

Summum Bonum, our highest goal and greatest good, which is TO KNOW GOD PERSONALLY AND INTIMATELY. And we will seek to find out how we can achieve this goal in future issues of Mini Mag.

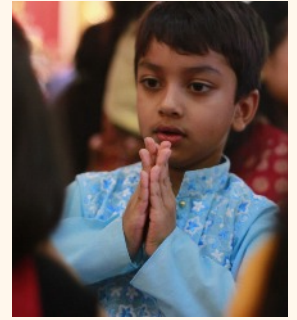
“Let him who glories glory in this –that he understands and knows Me” (Jeremiah 9:24)

Children in the Bible:

In the past issues of Mini Mag we have been studying the PASSAGES about children in the Bible, which help us understand them, and what God says about them. In this issue and the issues which follow we are going to look at PICTURES of children in the Bible, which answer many questions about children, and also help us understand them better.

God had promised Abraham and Sarah that He would give them a child—a son. But they were now old and the promise had not been fulfilled. They became impatient, and Sarah asked Abraham to have a child by her servant Hagar. Abraham did so and Ishmael was born. (Genesis 16) But some years later, God fulfilled the promise He had given, and Sarah gave birth to a son whom they called Isaac. However, as the years passed by, problems arose in that household. Ishmael made fun of Isaac, and Sarah asked her husband to cast out Hagar and Ishmael, and he did so. (Genesis 21:14) Hagar and Ishmael went out into the wilderness and, before long, their water was all gone, and Hagar placed her son under a bush believing he was going to die. But we read in verse 17 that “God heard the voice of the lad” and, as a result, He opened Hagar’s eyes to see a well of water, and Ishmael’s life was saved. We don’t know what Ishmael said. Perhaps he wept. More likely he said something. He may have asked God to supply the water they needed, or He may have “reminded” God of the promise He had made in verse 13 to bless him and

ISHMAEL - The boy who prayed



multiply him. But no matter what he said, God heard him. God saw his need, and supplied him with the water he needed. It is interesting to know that the Hebrew word “Ishmael” means “God will hear” We don’t know how old Ishmael was at this time. He was probably 13 years old (Genesis 16:16 and 17:1,25) but in those early days, when they lived much longer lives, he could have been seen as much younger, even a child. This possibility is supported by the picture of Hagar CARRYING HIM, it would seem, on her shoulder (Gen:21:14 KJ), PLACING HIM under the bush, (verse 15) and being told by the angel to “LIFT HIM UP” (verse 18). Also the Hebrew words “Yeled “ and “Naar” translated in these verses as “boy,” or “lad” or “child” often refer in the Bible to children.

The lesson we learn from this story is **THAT CHILDREN CAN PRAY AND THAT GOD HEARS THEIR PRAYERS.**



KEY QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

Question: At what age can children trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour?

Answer: This is a question to which the Bible does not give a specific answer. It is therefore unscriptural to set an age like 12, 13 or 14, before which it is unlikely or impossible for a child to be saved. The only reference in the Bible to the age of children trusting Jesus Christ, are the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:6 “one of these LITTLE ONES who believe in Me” The main reason why the Bible does not give an age when children are ready and able to trust Christ is because children are so different from each other. Some are ready to do so at the age of 5 or 6 or even younger, and some children of 8, 9 or 10 do not have the conviction and understanding they need to trust Him. So, we cannot, and should not, set ages for conversion. The Lord Jesus, speaking about regeneration said “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8)

As soon as a child is old enough to be conscious of his sin, old enough to want to be different, and old enough to understand that Jesus Christ died for Him, he is old enough to simply put his trust in Him, and to be saved. What age is that? We don’t know; but it is certainly a long time before he reaches the age of 12,13 or 14. It is therefore our responsibility to evangelize children of all ages (Mark 16:15) and leave the results in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

In my early years as a child evangelist, I had the joy of leading many children to the Lord Jesus and I kept a record of their names, addresses and ages. Most of them were between the ages of 8 and 10 (although some were younger and some older). Children have “developed” in many ways since those early days, and the equivalent ages of those children to-day would probably be between 7 and 9 or even younger.

At what age can a child trust Jesus Christ as his Saviour? We don’t know, but it is often much earlier than most people think.

Your Ministry to Children:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A BETTER TEACHER?

The greatest ministry in the world is the ministry of teaching, and the most important people in the church are those who teach the Word of God to children. They, who have this privilege, want, or should want, to be better teachers. We all need to keep improving our teaching. The best way to do this is to realise that teaching is governed by a series of principles, to understand these principles, to apply them rigorously to our own teaching, and to discover if we are, or are not, following them, when we are teaching our children.

The first principle of teaching is the **PRINCIPLE OF COMPREHENSION.**

EFFECTIVE TEACHING IS ONLY POSSIBLE IF TEACHERS UNDERSTAND THOROUGHLY WHAT THEY ARE TEACHING.

If you do not really understand what you are teaching, you will not teach effectively, and the children will learn very little.

YOU NEED TO DEVELOP A GENERAL COMPREHENSION.

Focus on the main events in the Bible in their correct order, of Bible characters—both good and bad-- and of basic Bible doctrines. In other words, you need to be a regular student of the Word of God, and a reader of good books which will help you in such studies.

YOU NEED TO DEVELOP A SPECIFIC COMPREHENSION OF THE PASSAGE YOU ARE GOING TO TEACH.

Every teacher needs to be skilled in his studies, and able to know what the passage means and to teach what it says. You especially need to be able to find the central truth of the passage and build your lesson on it.



YOU NEED TO USE ALL THE MATERIAL AT YOUR DISPOSAL TO HELP YOU IN YOUR COMPREHENSION.

Good commentaries on specific books of the Bible will be helpful but the best help you can receive is from teacher's manuals written by experienced teachers. You should only read these after you have studied the passage in the Bible for yourself. You can get good teacher's manuals with accompanying visuals from CEF or ACEW.

YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND THOSE YOU ARE TEACHING AND THEIR NEEDS.

This will help you relate the central truth of the passage, and its applications, to their needs, especially their need to be saved, and their need to grow spiritually.

IT IS TIME NOW TO TEST YOUR TEACHING

Do you agree with this principle? Yes! No! If not, why not?

Do you agree that teachers should follow this principle? Yes! No!

How well have you followed it in your teaching? Always? Sometimes? Rarely? Mark yourself out of 10.

What have you resolved to do as a result of this study?

Spend more study time?

Buy more books?

Nothing?

HELP!



ACEW CAN HELP YOU

If you want to study the subjects in the first three main sections in more detail, we have published the books which will help you to do so:

"The Problems of a Children's Worker and God's Solution" will help you expand this month's devotional.

"Principles of Teaching" will help you with this month's principle and many other principles.

"Children - a Biblical Perspective" will help you in your study of specific children in the Bible like Ishmael.

All three of these books are available to you, free of charge, on our web site at www.cefbookministry.com



I SEE IT

Eureka!

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

An ILLUSTRATION

It is said that when the ancient Greek scholar Archimedes made an important discovery, he cried "Eureka" which means "I see it" or "I have found it." We want the children to whom we teach Bible truths and Bible doctrines to have the same type of experience, and, to do so, we use illustrations – stories which bring light and enable them to have "eurekas" and understand the truths we are teaching. Here is an illustration you could use to help them to see and understand the truth of justification, based on Isaiah 61:10, Zechariah 3:3-5, and Colossians 3: 9,10

A boy came to the palace and wanted to see the King. But his clothes were tattered torn and dirty, and the guards said, "You cannot go into the King's presence dressed like that." "What can I do?" asked the boy "I want to see the King." Just then a man with a kind face

appeared and asked the boy what he wanted to do. When the boy told him of his desire to see the King, the kind man said, "I can help you." He showed the boy his beautiful white robe covered with sparkling jewels, and he told him that, if he would allow him to put this robe on over his tattered clothes, he could then go and see the King. The boy was happy to accept this offer. The kind man put his beautiful garment on the boy, and he looked really well. He also told the boy that he would start to clean the tattered and dirty clothes which were now underneath this beautiful robe, but that this would take some time. The important fact was that the King would now accept the boy into the throne room because he was clothed in this beautiful garment. As the kind man led the boy into the presence of the King, the boy asked him the question "Who are you", and the kind man replied, "I am the King's son." (Our sinful "clothes" are replaced by the righteousness of God's Son and give access to God.)

72 Years and Still Learning:

God saved me when I was 22 years old and, several months later, He led me and my wife into a ministry to children with Child Evangelism Fellowship. During these 72 years I have learned many lessons and made many mistakes, and I would like to share many of these lessons and mistakes with you each month in Mini Mag to help you in your life and ministry to children

GOD HAS A PLAN FOR THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF EVERY BELIEVER AND IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO HEAR HIS CALL AND OBEY IT COMPLETELY. (Ephesians 4:1) The will and the call of God must completely dominate our lives and ministries. His call is three-fold:

1) **God calls us, as sinners, to Himself for SALVATION.** We respond to that call by coming to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith and trusting Him as our Saviour. (John 10:27,28) This response is a once-for-all act on our part, but it should lead, under the control of God, to a growing understanding of what it means to be saved, and a growing experience of the results of salvation, which should dominate the rest of our lives.

THE SUPREMACY OF GOD'S CALL AND WILL IN OUR LIVES AND MINISTRIES

2) **God calls us, as saved sinners, to Himself for SANCTIFICATION** and gives us the desire and the strength to be holy. (1 Peter 1:15) Our response, and our obedience, to this call should dominate our lives from that time onwards and result in spiritual growth.

3) **God calls us, as His servants, into His SERVICE.** The first two calls were "to come;" this call is "to go"; but we need to come first and find out where to go, what to do, and whom to help, in accordance with His plan. This call will determine and dominate our future ministry. Our response to it should be like that of Paul who was "obedient to the Heavenly vision" (Acts 9:6, 26:19). and never give up, no matter what happens.

During these 72 years I have come **TO SEE** that God's Will and God's Call **SHOULD** dominate every part of my life and ministry and I have tried (often without success) **TO BE OBEDIENT** to them. I pray that God will give all of us grace to respond positively to all three calls and submit to their supremacy for the rest of our lives. As we do so, He will bless.

The Mini-Mag is published by Assisting Children's Evangelists Worldwide and written by Sam Doherty with the assistance and advice of Terry Flannigan, Director of the ACEW Trust, and Kenneth Martin, Chairman of the ACEW Trust.

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 70 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. Contact can be made at www.CEFBookMinistry.com.

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