



The G.E.M.

Volume 4 Edition 1

The Grace Electronic Magazine

January 2010

REMEMBER THE WORD

Queen Elizabeth II of England in her Annual Christmas speech last year said that 2009 was a year to forget. I am sure that many would agree, considering the global financial situation, one million people in SA alone losing their jobs, the war on crime throughout the world, and the ever present threat of terrorism.

Well 2010 is here, and even though many of the worries of 2009 will certainly be carried through, this is the year that many have been waiting for, especially here in South Africa with the FIFA World Cup just around the corner.

As Christians, 2010 presents us with many opportunities for ministry. The challenges that lie ahead, when faced with God on our side, will make this year a year to remember. It is time to share the Good News with those visiting the World Cup, and we need to make sure that we have the answers.

Therefore in this first edition of *The G.E.M.* for 2010 we focus on the starting point for ministry, the place where we find all of those answers, the Bible and our study of it. The main article on page 3 will certainly challenge you in that regard.

And do not forget the usual *Bible Basics*, *Product Reviews* and *This Day in History* on Page 2 as well as the trivia challenge on *The Back Page*.

Finally, be sure to visit us from **11 to 23 January** to receive **10% discount** on all **reference titles** in this month's Mid-Month Markdowns.

Until next time, "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

Have a blessed year.

Glyn and Linda. †

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Dates: Thursday 4 February 2010, 19h00-21h00,
and/or
Saturday 6 February 2010, 08h30-10h30

Venue: Grace Media

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Mid month markdowns

11 - 23 January

10% OFF ALL REFERENCE TITLES

(EXCLUDING ALREADY REDUCED AND SECOND-HAND TITLES)

BIBLE BASICS

Nehemiah

Return from Captivity Continues

Nehemiah continues the story of the return of the Israelites from their captivity in Babylon back to the land of Judah. Originally as one book Nehemiah continues where Ezra left off.

After gaining permission from Artaxerxes, Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem with the plan of rebuilding the walls of the city. On arrival he first surveys the situation, and then goes about organising the building, despite much opposition.

Author: Most of the book of Nehemiah is written in the first person, so we can assume that Nehemiah himself could be the author, or at least that whoever compiled the book used accounts originally written by Nehemiah.

Date and Basic Outline: The book of Nehemiah covers the third return of the Jews back to Jerusalem during the reign of Artaxerxes (±444BC). Taking this into account, if Nehemiah was the author, then the book would have been written sometime after this date.

The outline of the book neatly divides into three divisions surrounding the main accomplishments of Nehemiah during the return:

| | Chapters |
|----------------------|----------|
| The Walls Rebuilt | 1-6 |
| The Covenant Renewed | 7-12 |
| The Sins Purged | 13 |

Nehemiah the Man: We learn early in the book that Nehemiah was a court official in Persia, as “cupbearer to the king” (1:11). This was a position of great responsibility. As cupbearer, Nehemiah would have had to taste the king's food and drink before giving it to the king to make sure that it was safe for the king to consume.

The position of cupbearer was also an administrative role, and one that signifies the trust and influence that he would have had in the king's court. Much of this character is seen in Nehemiah's manner in how he organised the Jews in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

Another important aspect of Nehemiah's character is that he was deeply devoted and committed to God, and His will. As a result, Nehemiah was very influential in turning the people in Jerusalem towards godliness.

Did you know? King Artaxerxes' step-mother was Esther, who may have still been alive at this point in history.

Lesson: The prophets up till the time of the captivity warned the Jews about the worship of idols and marrying idolatrous neighbours. The captivity and Nehemiah's and Ezra's reforms cured this. Even today, the Orthodox Jews are very strict about intermarriage and the worship of other gods. As Christians we need to take this to heart, by turning from any idolatrous ways and be careful to not yoke ourselves with unbelievers (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14). †

PRODUCT REVIEWS

BIRDIE & BOGEY DVD

★★★★★



Birdie & Bogey tells the story of Danny O' Connor, played by Mike Norris, and his daughter Birdie, who wants nothing more than for her father to play on the PGA tour once again.

Birdie, herself a very good young golfer, “coaches” Danny not only with his game, but also in terms of his confidence. Danny begins to rebuild himself and starts to perform well on the tour with Birdie by his side as his caddy. That is until she is diagnosed with a life-threatening disease and he needs to face the golf course without her.

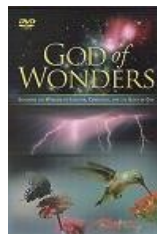
Birdie & Bogey is a heartfelt drama that teaches us that sometimes the strength to complete a task comes from the least likely of places. This is a good family viewing and is a worthwhile addition to anyone's DVD collection.

Our Price: R 150



GOD OF WONDERS DVD

★★★★★



God of Wonders takes the viewer on a journey of discovery. Begin by taking a tour of some of the awesome wonders in the universe as one ponders not only its size, but also the great amount of energy it, and all matter, contains.

The journey then comes closer to home as one begins to examine the tiny water molecule that is essential to all life; from its scientific structure, to its beauty in the complex formation of snow crystals. From there, look at the amazing complexity of DNA and the vast amount of information it contains about each individual creature on earth. Even plant life is investigated as you see the miraculous workings of tiny seeds.

Then take a look at the functional design of birds to the transformation of caterpillars into butterflies.

These are just a few of the awesome features of creation that are highlighted in this visually stunning presentation.

All of this serves to remind us of the great and awesome God that we serve. It raises much doubt on the whole evolution argument and leaves one believing more so in a Creator.

This is an excellent DVD for your collection and is perfect for use within your Bible study group, or to show to family and friends that may be questioning.

Our Price: R 140

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1 January

Verse by Verse

When preached simply and purely, verse-by-verse and book-by-book, the Bible can change lives and transform history. Just ask Zwingli.

Ulrich Zwingli was born on January 1, 1484, in a Swiss shepherd's cottage in the Alps. His parents instilled in him a love for God. The young man proved a brilliant student, and following a brief stint as a schoolteacher he entered the priesthood. For ten years he labored in the village of Glarus, and there he began corresponding with the famous Greek scholar Erasmus.

The Swiss church was bubbling with corruption during this time. In 1516, when Zwingli moved to Einsiedeln, he, too, was struggling hard with sin. In his new village, the young priest fell into an intimate relationship with the barber's daughter. But it was also in Einsiedeln that he borrowed a copy of Erasmus's newly published Greek New Testament. Zwingli copied it. Carrying it everywhere, he pored over it continually and scribbled notes in the margins and memorized it. The pure Scripture began doing its work, and Zwingli's life and preaching took on new vigor. Soon he was invited to Zurich as chief preacher in the cathedral.

He arrived on December 27, 1518, and began his duties on his thirty-sixth birthday, January 1, 1519, with a shock. He announced that he would break a thousand years of tradition by abandoning the church liturgy and the weekly readings as a basis for his sermons. Instead, he would teach verse-by-verse through the New Testament, beginning immediately. He proceeded to preach that day from Matthew 1 on the genealogy of Christ.

Such preaching was radical in its day, but Zurich loved it. Zwingli's concern for the city's youth, his courage during the plague, and his cheerful temper dispelled initial doubts about his reformation ideas. Later, when opposition arose, Zurich's City Council and 600 other interested citizens gathered to evaluate his actions. The assembly (the First Zurich Disputation, 1523) affirmed Zwingli and encouraged his work. Lives were changed; history was made. The Swiss Reformation had begun.

Quoted from: *On this Day: 365 Amazing and Inspiring Stories About Saints, Martyrs & Heroes* (electronic edition) by Robert J. Morgan. †

NEW RELEASE

Miracles

A 52-week Devotional

by Karen Kingsbury

The journey of life can be difficult. Discouragement and doubt often gets in the way of our relationship with God.

In this weekly devotional by best-selling author Karen Kingsbury, true heart-warming stories will inspire and motivate you, helping you to renew your faith in God, and believe that all things are truly possible with Him.



R 140

BE OF NOBLE CHARACTER

¹⁰As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ¹²Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men. ¹³When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. ¹⁴The brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. ¹⁵The men who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible. (Acts 17:10-15)

When Scripture makes a complimentary statement about the character of a person, it will benefit us greatly to examine that character trait and then try to emulate it in our own lives. In the passage above, Luke makes such a complimentary statement about the noble character of the Bereans, and goes on to explain it was because “They received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (v11). The Bereans were eager to hear from God and respond to what they heard, and that made them noble.

Paul's Ministry in Macedonia

After being forced to leave Philippi, Paul and Silas, and maybe Timothy, travelled about 150 kilometres along the Egnatian Way, until they reached Thessalonica (v1) and began their ministry in Macedonia.

After being forced to leave Philippi as a result of their confrontation with a slave fortune-teller and her owners, Paul and Silas proceeded south to their next stop, Berea. In keeping with their usual practice they went to the local synagogue and preached Christ to the Jews (v10).

We see in the verses above that there were many converts among the Jews, and also “a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men” (v12).

This ministry was not to last long because, just like in Philippi and Thessalonica, Paul had to make a sudden and rushed exit from Berea. Jews had arrived from Thessalonica and roused the crowds. Fearing for his life, the believers in Berea sent him to the coast and then on to Athens. Paul gave instructions to those who accompanied him to instruct Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as they could.

What at first seems like a bit of a failure in terms of Paul's ministry, actually turned out to be quite the opposite. We know from studying the New Testament and later church history, the churches established in all three of these cities grew into “mega-churches” of the day.

What is this Noble Character?

Luke indicated that the Bereans first investigated the things Paul was saying, and then were saved. We need to bear in mind that this in no way means that they earned their salvation because they studied. That would not be Biblical at all. On the contrary, he is indicating that they were willing to acknowledge their need through their study, which in turn resulted in their salvation. They were willing to step down from their high towers of knowledge and high standing (cf. v12, “prominent Greek women”) or as people of high Jewish heritage (“many of the Jews”) and sought the answers directly from God's Word.

In the Bible, nobility is often expressed as a childlikeness and humility. As Jesus said, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 18:3-4). Here Jesus is saying that we are to have an attitude of humility and repentance which expresses an admission that we are nothing without God, and that only He can save us. It is only with such an attitude that we are open to learn from God what He wishes to teach us, and to receive what He wishes to give.

This then is the heart of true Christian faith: to have an attitude of continually going to Scripture with a humble heart, so that we can learn more and grow. And it is the same faith that brought us into salvation in the first place that will bring us faithfully to His Word so that we will grow in our knowledge and faith of Him.

When we study the Bible, it is not in order that we might earn some medal or extra favour from God. Bible study that pleases God is an expression of our faith. It is an attitude that says, “I need God, and God alone”. We are going to the best place we can go to find Him – the message He has given us as recorded in the Bible.

In 2 Timothy 3:14-17 Paul shows how this same attitude to the Word is the key to our salvation, as well as the key to our growth. Verse 15 connects Scripture with salvation: “and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Paul then connects Scripture with growth in the next verses: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it... All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (vv16-17).

Twenty-first Century Bereans

It is a great shame that in the twenty-first century that people do not seem to be as eager to study the Scriptures as the first century Bereans were. In the postmodern world that we live in, the emphasis is on

personal truth – what is true for you is not necessarily true for me. This is what is known as subjective truth.

Today, people tend to resist the idea of objective or absolute truth. Truth which is true for all, for all times and in all circumstances. It seems as though people are studying what the Bible has to say less than they were a decade ago. Granted, people are attending church and Bible studies, but the subjects covered seem to be more about what feels good than what is truly beneficial.

There are also fewer expository preachers today than a decade ago, and those that are around are finding it increasingly more difficult to encourage people to direct their eyes to the Bibles in front of them. Instead they stare at the preacher with a blank stare and often have their minds on something different to what is being preached. People are also not carrying their Bibles to church and are relying solely on what appears on the screen, not knowing whether those are the actual words in the Bible.

There are thousands of Bible study guides in print today, many of which simplify the task of studying the Scriptures. There is nothing wrong with that, however they often become a substitute to proper and careful study of the Word. Instead of searching the Word for the answers, the answers given in the guides are accepted, irrespective of them being correct or not. Inductive Bible study has become more foreign to people today.

The Challenging Need

In light of all of this, it is clear that there is an urgent need for people to begin to search the Scriptures once more. Whether we ourselves have neglected it, or those we lead, what is needed is proper inductive Bible study within the church.

I challenge you all, make this year one where you begin to earnestly “search the Scriptures” for yourself. Before you realise it, it will be a habit that you will carry with you forever.

Finally, I urge all Christian leaders to not only do the same for yourself, but to also enthusiastically communicate what you learn to those that you lead, encouraging them to also become “Berean Christians.” †

Inductive Bible study has become foreign

Bible study is an expression of our faith

PRACTICAL RESOURCE

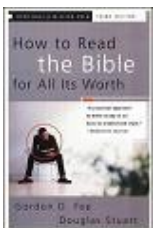
How to Read the Bible for all its Worth

by Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart

Understanding the Bible is not restricted for the few, gifted or scholarly. It is meant to be understood by all.

This book helps to clear up the misconceptions of understanding the Bible and gives clear answers to not only the original context and meaning, but also provides applications for today.

An invaluable asset to any Bible reader's or teacher's library.



R 180

THE BACK PAGE

BIBLE SUDOKU CHALLENGE

How well do you know the Good Book?

Bible-Sudoku Challenge combines the logic skills to solve a normal Sudoku with Bible trivia.

Begin by answering the Bible trivia questions. Using the answers and placing them in the relevant coordinates, solve the grid on the right. The coordinates with each question indicates where in the grid that starter number is to be placed (e.g. A1, E9).

All answers are found in the book of Nehemiah.

- For how many days did the people celebrate the feast after Ezra read from the Book of the Law?
(E2, G6, A4)
- How many times did Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem send Nehemiah a message and he gave them the same answer?
(A2, E1, G3, B5, H9)
- How many hundred yards of the wall were repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah?
(B1, F5, A6, I7)
- How many large choirs were assigned by Nehemiah to give thanks?
(C2, E5, D7, A8)
- In which verse in chapter 2 does Nehemiah ask for a letter to Asaph for timber?
(C1, I2, D4, A5, B8, F9)
- After how many days in Jerusalem did Nehemiah set out during the night with a few men?
(B3, H7)
- How many choice sheep were prepared for Nehemiah each day?
(H2, I4, F6, B7)
- How many sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest were sons-in-law to Sanballat?
(I1, B4, H5, D6, C9)
- How many out of every ten were to remain in their home towns after lots were cast to select residents for Jerusalem?
(F1, E4, H8)

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | |

Answers in the Next Edition

Last Month's Solution

Trivia: 2 (8:27), 7 (6:22) 4 (6:17)
 9 (6:3) 3 (10:9) 5 (5:6-17)
 8 (8:8) 1 (10:16) 6 (10:22)

Sudoku Grid

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 8 |
| 6 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 5 |
| 1 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 2 |
| 4 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 9 |
| 5 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 4 |
| 8 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| 3 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 7 |
| 2 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 1 |

AWESOME QUOTES

Who said the following? Answers at the bottom of the page.

A

"I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Caesar, Charlemagne and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him"

B

"To know about Christ is not enough. To be convinced that He is the Saviour of the world is not enough. To affirm our faith in Him, as we do in the Apostles' Creed is not enough. To believe that He has saved others is not enough. We really don't actively believe in Christ until we make a commitment of our lives to Him and receive Him as our Saviour."

SHOP TRADING HOURS:

Monday – Friday:

9am – 5pm

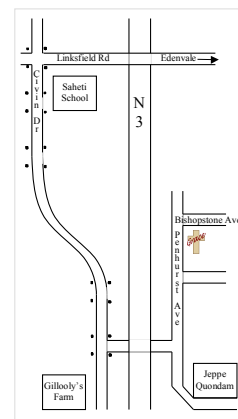
Saturday:

9am – 2pm

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Directions: From the N3, take the Linksfeld Rd off ramp. Turn right up hill. Stay in left lane. Turn left into Civin Dr. At the stop street at the road works, turn left under bridge. At t-junction turn left. Through the boom. We are ± 200m on the right hand side. Entrance is in Penhurst Ave.



To advertise your church, ministry, business, event or product in *The G.E.M.* or on the Grace Media website, contact Glyn Williams on 011-454-6045 or webmaster@gracemedia.co.za

Awesome Q notes Answers: A – Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) B – Billy Graham

Day after day, from the first day to the last,
 Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God.

Nehemiah 8:18

