



Easter people

As we journey through Lent to Easter, Gordon Giles – BRF author, editor of *New Daylight* Bible reading notes and canon chancellor of Rochester cathedral – invites us to consider Lent with fresh eyes, through the prism of hope.

Lent, a season of hope



Traditionally the period of preparation for Easter is known as Lent (which actually means ‘spring’). Easter was the time for

baptisms and Lent was the penitential period of self-denial and reflection that baptismal candidates went through. Like Christmas and the FA Cup final, Easter comes every year, so how can we engage with Lent and prepare afresh as it comes round again?

The key is hope. Christians are Easter people (and ‘Alleluia’ is our song) and Christians are people of hope (and faith and love). Hope is a constant, while the context of Easter each year is different. In 2020 we missed Easter, locked down by Covid-19. Churches were mostly closed from Mothering Sunday onwards. The real, palpable ‘hope’ that gripped the nation was fuelled by the fear of getting Covid and dying of it.

In 2021, post-Christmas lockdowns remained and, while worship could take place, there were many restrictions and the wine of Communion was not distributed. In 2022 memories of this were still fresh and the hope was a liturgical one, that we would make it to Easter and be able to worship together in a way we had not done the previous year.

A fresh perspective

This year, for the first time in a few years, we hope for, indeed expect a ‘normal’ Easter. It has been a three-year journey, a three-year Lent that mirrors the whole length of Jesus’ active ministry on earth, from baptism to death and resurrection.

This year, make your preparation cross-shaped. Look backwards in time over three years, the long downward direction of the road travelled, but which, above the horizontal cross piece, bears us upwards and forwards to Christ risen, ascended, glorified. Look from left to right, at companions on the journey: friends, family, colleagues, neighbours – those who walked with us, who applauded the NHS, who prayed for and with us, and whom we helped and cared for. Remember those who have died, too; but do not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. So during Lent, we look backwards, forwards and across, as our place and eternity meet at the crossing point of faith, love and hope that is the Easter dawn.



SMASH Food Share, Huddersfield (see page 2)

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The gift of hope in a book

A red letter day for Anna Chaplaincy

Warts and joy in Parenting for Faith

An ‘unforgettably amazing’ baptism

Solace in the Psalms

and more...

Pray with us

*Lord of the empty tomb,
thank you that today
we encounter you,
as ‘the living
among the living’.*

*Lord of the Easter garden,
thank you that today
we greet you
as ‘the one we are looking for’,
peace-bringer and
Spirit-giver.*

*Lord of the open road,
thank you that today
we walk with you
as ‘the fulfilment of the
scriptures and all our hopes.’*

Amen

Martyn Payne

To find out how you can pray with us visit brf.org.uk/pray

We’d love to keep in touch!

For the most up-to-date news about BRF and its ministries go to brf.org.uk/signup to sign up for regular emails from BRF and our ministries. We’ll send you news and updates about the ministries that you have opted to hear about, as well as the occasional email about our work and fundraising.

‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.’

Finding hope in the Psalms



Alison Morgan's new book *World Turned Upside Down* is published on 24 March. Here she tells how she prays her book

will help her readers find hope, even in the depths of pain and suffering.

'We boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope – and hope does not disappoint us,' Paul wrote. But what exactly is hope? It's something you haven't got and you can't see; something you have to wait for, he explains.

How helpful is that, I wondered, when the suffering is not a concept on the biblical page, but an aching reality in your own life? Reflecting on my own experiences and those which others have shared with me, I decided to read the Psalms, and then to pray them. And in the Psalms I found not a simple consolation of this text for that circumstance, but a complex web of interlocking meanings, a song which begins sadly but weaves its way to a triumph of confidence and joy.

'In the Psalms I found a song which begins sadly but weaves its way to a triumph of confidence and joy.'

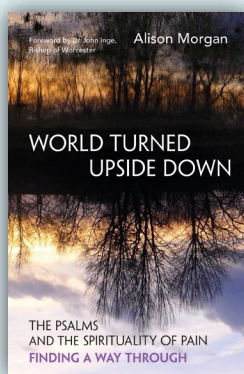
Pointing the way

As I prayed, the Psalms became the signposts on a new journey. Who are you, they ask, and who is the God who made you? Look up and out at the world around you – what does it tell you about him? Look back over history – does your own life fit into the pattern you see there? We can lend you the words – can you now articulate your pain in conversation with this God who is so much bigger

than you? What does he say, what help does he offer? As you do all these things, perhaps, slowly, this thing called hope will begin to grow within you.

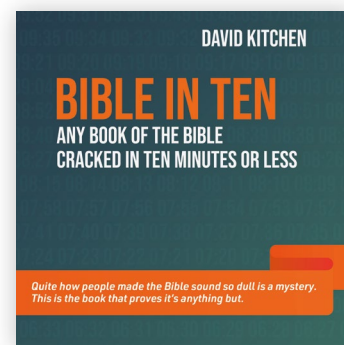
The Psalter is a complicated book. On one level it's a collection of personal prayers offered by a variety of individual authors at moments of anguish or joy; on another it's the reflection of the journey of an entire people; on yet another it's the story of creation, loss and redemption, the story of the gospel itself. The Psalms are the prophetic incarnation of the message of hope which would one day be embodied so powerfully by Jesus and articulated so confidently by Paul – the message which alone can bring healing to our troubled souls. As I prayed the Psalms, I too began to find that hope does not disappoint us. My prayer is that, in reading this book, that may become true for you too.

Alison Morgan has written widely on literature, theology and the Christian life. She is an associate of the Mathetes Trust, where she oversees the Rooted in Jesus discipleship programme for Africa, now in use in 19 countries. In her spare time enjoys birdwatching, walking and photography.



World Turned Upside Down is published on 24 March. A thematic exploration of the Psalms, it aims to bring insight and solace to those who are finding life complex and painful.

To find out more go to brfonline.org.uk/worldupsidedown



Do you have ten minutes?

In the January issue of *BRF News* we were excited to announce the imminent arrival of Dave Kitchen's *Bible in Ten* in print, digital and audio versions. Now we're developing two videos too! First, a short introduction to the concept and content of *Bible in Ten* and, second, an interview with the author covering what it is, what inspired it, what's good about it and who it's for.

'Such an exciting initiative. I love *Bible in Ten*.'

Rob Parsons of Care for the Family

Bible in Ten is a labour of love, many years in the making. Each Bible book is retold in a snappy summary that takes no more than ten minutes to read (even the longest ones) and there's a Bible overview. It's for young and old alike; for seasoned church leaders looking to refresh their knowledge of a particular book and for people discovering the Bible for the very first time.

Explore the print, digital and audio versions and the author videos at brfonline.org.uk/bible-in-ten

Living Faith video

Our Living Faith ministry is having a makeover, as head of content creation Olivia Warburton explains in our new Living Faith video.

Watch it on the Living Faith page of our website: brf.org.uk/living-faith



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