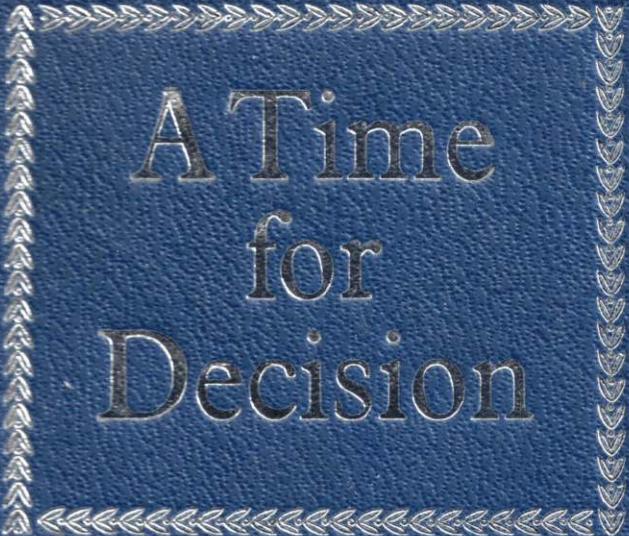




A Time for Decision

Readings for younger people

A TIME FOR DECISION

*Readings for a month
for younger people*

M. F. FLETCHER

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A Great Life Ahead

THIS BOOK is meant to open the way to the greatest discovery and adventure in the world, and to help you to find what your part in it is to be—the part that only you can play.

Everyone wants a purpose in living. Some dream of being discoverers of new places, of being inventors, scientists, of taking leadership, of breaking records, of being writers, artists, or musicians. The recent discoveries in the exploration of outer space have stirred us. But, as someone has said: "It does not really matter who gets to the moon first. What does matter is the sort of people who go and the ideas they take with them."

Whatever we imagine ourselves doing, we can be sure of one thing: that God has a plan for each of us. He means us to give the best we have, and so make the world a better place for everyone to live in.

If we want an easy, comfortable life, we shall never find adventure. The man who wrote "In all these things we are more than conquerors" was having a very tough time—laughed at, beaten up, put in prison, thrown out of cities and stoned and left for dead. But the triumphant message that Paul sent to his friends, who had taken on the fight with him, was true. God's power proved stronger than all the might of Rome and the world has been different ever since.

We are called to have a part in a creative living which is far beyond our imagining, and which surpasses any-

thing that the great advances of science can show us, though they can all be used to forward it. The new life with its freedom and fellowship is there for us, if we decide to take on the fight for a new world.

This book has been divided into sections for daily readings for a month. It might also be read as a whole, or parts of it at any time.

I

GOD AND OURSELVES

How the Adventure Begins

How Can I Know God?

When Jesus Came

Taking on the Fight

What it Means

Where it Begins



How the Adventure Begins

MANY OF us have, at some time or another, felt as if something or Someone were calling us to follow the way to greater living.

I remember one early morning, when I was about fourteen or fifteen, climbing to a place I loved on the hills behind my home in Westmorland, from which there was a wonderful view. I had been feeling pretty miserable—bad at lessons, slow at games, shy of people, but longing to be a success. I looked out on the loveliness of that spring morning and felt I was meant to be a part of it, but I could not see how. So I asked God to help me, and then sat very still.

Suddenly I seemed to hear, so clearly that I can never forget it, a Voice saying to me, "It doesn't really matter what you are, but only what I can be in you." And then everything felt different; so it has done all the years since. I made a decision that morning to let God have my life to use.

That decision brought me to some definite point where I knew I ought to be different. I was working at home for an exam, and my immediate and practical decision was to be honest about really doing the work when left alone to do it. I used to wander off into telling myself

stories, or I would start drawing, or, if no one could hear, playing the piano—anything rather than sticking to that boring work. So I told my teacher that I had been cheating over it, and had decided to play fair in future.

I have had to renew my first decision again and again; it did not work for instance when I was wanting everyone to praise or admire me, or when I was jealous of someone who I thought was getting more notice than I was.

In these next years you, too, are bound to be making decisions that will shape your life. Only you can make these decisions, no one else can make them for you. But you don't have to carry them out by yourself.

TO THINK ABOUT

Let your mind take in God's power to change us ordinary, selfish people into people who can do His will. Praise Him for the possibilities that He sees in us, for the patient work that He will do in us. Offer Him your life to be made new. (From New Life, Margaret Cropper.)

PRAYER

O Thou, Who art heroic love, keep alive in our hearts that adventurous spirit which makes men scorn the way of safety, so that Thy will be done.



How Can I Know God?

YOU MAY say, "How can I get to know God? What is He like?" That is exactly why Jesus came, to show what God is like, and how much He loves us and everyone everywhere.

The most wonderful adventure of all time is told in the four Gospels—the story of Jesus. It is told so simply that we may not always see what it really means.

A French soldier was so severely wounded that his arm had to be amputated. "I am so sorry that you had to lose this arm," the surgeon said to him one day. But the soldier raised himself up in bed, exclaiming, "I didn't lose it; I gave it."

Jesus gave His life to save the whole world from terrible danger. He let men crucify Him as if He were a sinner, and took on Himself the blame for our sins without ever having deserved any of it. And He opened a glorious way for all of us so to live, set free from fear and hate and greed, that we can help to build the new world for which He died.

TO THINK ABOUT

This is how men get to know God—by doing His will.
(Henry Drummond.)

PRAYER

Eternal God, the light of the minds that know Thee, the joy of the hearts that love Thee, and the strength of the wills that serve Thee: Grant us so to know Thee that we may truly love Thee, so to love Thee that we may fully serve Thee, to the honour and glory of Thy Holy Name.



When Jesus Came

WHAT KIND of home and background would Jesus choose to have on earth when He came? What would you have suggested?

The people He chose to come to, the Jews, were a conquered people living in an occupied country. The Jews feared and hated their conquerors, the Romans, and held on to their faith in God, who centuries before had given them a promise of a great deliverer who would come and save them from their enemies. They were waiting for this Deliverer, whom they called the Messiah, to appear, to lead out His armies and rout the Romans.

So perhaps it was not surprising that when Jesus came, they found it hard to believe that He was really the Deliverer for whom they were looking. Someone has described it this way:

"Here is a young man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in

another village. He worked in a carpenter's shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held public office. He never owned a house. He never had a family. He never travelled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness.

"He had no credentials but Himself. While He was still a young man, the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

"When He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth—His coat. When He was dead He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

"Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race and the Leader of the column of progress. . . . No other life or lives have affected the life upon this earth as has this one life."

This picture does not quite fit in with most people's ideas of greatness. Yet in Jesus, this humble carpenter, God was made man and triumphed over sin and death so that "unto Him alone is given glory for ever and ever".

TO THINK ABOUT

If we dare to take the way of love which He took, we have the unspeakable joy of His companionship in all that life may bring, and the unutterable satisfaction of knowing at the last that we fought in the good fight

and have our share in the Final Victory. (From The Church Under the Cross, J. B. Phillips.)

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who hast called us to build the City of God, enrich and purify our lives and deepen in us our discipleship. Help us daily to know more of Thee, and through us, by the power of the Spirit, show forth Thyself to others. Make us humble and strong and loving; make us ready for adventure and keep us loyal to Thee for evermore.

(From The Splendour of God)



Taking on the Fight

YOU MAY have noticed that people who are talked about as "tough" have often missed finding real toughness. They may be physically strong, but as they have never conquered their self-will and pride, they are still slaves to their desires and tempers and moods.

We can only find real strength and freedom as we learn to say "No" to self and "Yes" to God. Every time we do that we are fighting on His side. All down the ages there has been a tremendous conflict between good and evil. It is not only going on around us, but the most crucial part is going on inside each one of us.

A decision, once made, is sure to be tested. Strength grows as we stand up to the testing. There's bound to be a time when you feel, "Just once won't matter", "They'll think me a softy if I don't smoke", or, "I'll have just a few more minutes in bed today".

When Florence Nightingale was sixteen, she felt God was calling her to nurse sick people. She was too young to start training, but she began to prepare herself. She wrote in a little book of her thoughts, "I want to do all for the love of God". One decision was to get up earlier in the morning and have time for prayers. She found it very hard to jump out of bed when she woke. She liked to lie on having dreamy, idle thoughts. So she asked God to take these away. He did, and she fought on and won the battle against what she called, "idle dreaming and scrappiness in work".

The early discipline led to far-reaching results. One was the beginning of nursing as we know it today.

In this age we live in we can see clearly the clash of good and evil forces right across the world. We do not always see so clearly that the only way good can triumph over evil is through the decisions we make and carry out in our own lives. We think someone else should do something about it. Do we ever stop to think that it may all start with us, and that things might be different if we are different?

TO THINK ABOUT

Jack Hogan, a young American soldier who fought with great courage in the last war, and was killed in the battle of Okinawa, wrote many letters home about what God was teaching him of the greater battle that has to be

fought and won for true freedom, in which we all have our part.

"Nothing compares in importance to your own inner fitness," he wrote. "It is your willingness to obey, ability to be guided and to live for God's service that will be the answer in every direction, the solution to every problem."

PRAYER

Pray that God will "make and keep you pure within", so that you may take on the fight for a new world.

Just as I am, young, strong and free,
To be the best that I can be
For truth and righteousness and Thee,
Lord of my life, I come.

(Marianne Farningham)



What it Means

I WAS watching on Television one night a programme called "The Challenge". It was about boys at the "Outward Bound" training centre in my own country, the Lake District. I knew well the hills they were climbing and their difficulties, and I found myself feeling, "Why should these boys have to go through this very hard physical testing? What is the point of it?"

One smaller boy in particular hated the rock climbs. Some people felt he should be left out on the stiffest climb. But the man in charge said, "No, they must all go through with it," and added, "I'll go first on the start of that bit, and belay the rope, and then I'll make him come next after me." So he did and, after he had fixed the rope, he called down to the boy to start.

Half-way up the boy was terrified and called out, "I can't make it, sir!"

But the trainer's voice came back, steady and kind, "Oh yes, you can! Remember you're roped. Now take your hands off and feel the rope. Now your feet. Do you feel it? One other thing. Don't look down. Now come."

After a few moments more of struggle, the boy was up the first stage; and when the trainer said, "Would you like to lead up the next bit?" his face shone.

He had achieved something that could strengthen his courage for all his life. Our training for the Christian adventure must face us again and again with the kind of situation when we shall need to "feel the rope" (God's hold on us), and to know that we must not look down.

In her speech on Christmas Day, 1957, the Queen gave the same challenge when she said, "Today we need a special kind of courage, not the kind needed in battle, but a kind which makes us stand up for everything that we know is right, everything that is true and honest."

TO THINK ABOUT

When Jesus called men to follow Him, He put a clear-cut choice in front of them. He said, "There are two roads ahead. One looks broad and easy to follow, but it leads to

destruction. The other looks narrow and steep and hard, but it leads to Life. You cannot serve God and the world at the same time. You will have to choose. Do you want to follow Me and My way, or go your own?"

No wise man wants a soft life. (King Alfred the Great.)

Wilfred Grenfell, who went to the Arctic Circle to teach the Eskimos and trappers about Jesus, and who had the hardest life imaginable, said to someone, "I have had more fun and adventure with Christ than anything else in the world could have given me."

PRAYER

My Lord and my God, I do not ask that you will give me an easy life: I ask for courage and strength to dare to do the difficult thing, and to obey You always.



Where it Begins

IT MAY not always seem to matter very much whether you stick to some promise you made; whether you can be relied upon to do a job properly and cheerfully; whether you keep yourself and your belongings and, above all, your thoughts clean and clear. But the fact that you fail

means that there is a break in the defences around you, and the enemy forces can get in.

If we try to find out what started a fire, a family row, or even a war, it may have been what seemed a small thing at the time—a fire, started by a match or cigarette-end carelessly dropped: a row started by an unkind or untrue word spoken in a fit of temper. But it started something that spread fiercely. (Read what St. James said about it in James 3. 2–6, 10.) However, the trouble can be stopped when one person or party or country is willing to take the blame and make an honest apology.

Aggrey, the African leader, told a story to some students and teachers who could not get on together, of how he had once hurt his wife's feelings before a sister, and had been too proud to say he was sorry. In the night he saw that the manly thing was to apologise. The coward in him said, "Slip into her room, wake her up and apologise." But the giant in him said, "No, you hurt her feelings before her sister at a meal; go back there." He wrestled with himself all night, until by God's help he won, and at breakfast the next morning, in front of the sister, he apologised unconditionally. "Since then," he told his audience, "I have not found it hard to apologise. I downed myself." The students and teachers, deeply moved, made things up with each other and were able to work together again.

TO THINK ABOUT

Isn't it, isn't it plain as can be—

Good, bad, indifferent—change starts with me?

(Colwell Brothers.)

Be reconciled with thy brother. (Matthew 5. 24.)

P R A Y E R

Ask God to give you His Spirit to control your words, and to show you if there is anything you have said for which you should say you are sorry.

II

IN TRAINING

Fitness

Food

Fresh Air

Exercise



Fitness

NOBODY WOULD dream of crossing the Antarctic, or climbing Everest, or entering for an athletic contest, without training. So when we have decided to enlist in what has been called "the greatest revolution of all time", we will need to get into training for it.

When Richard Byrd, the American Antarctic explorer, was a boy of twelve, he wrote in his diary that he was going to the North Pole. Having made this decision, he immediately began training, and in the cold winter months he did all he could to toughen himself for Arctic life.

To be fit for our great adventure, we, too, must be disciplined and regular in our training. An athlete needs three things: the right food, fresh air, and exercise. Food comes to us in what we read, most of all in the Bible, and in worshipping together and receiving the Sacraments. Fresh air is prayer. Exercise is the way we put into action the things God tells us.

TO THINK ABOUT

Jonathan Edwards, who lived two hundred years ago, wrote: "Resolved: To live with all my might while I do

live." What would my life be like if I made the same resolution? (Read I Corinthians 9. 25-8.)

P R A Y E R

Holy God, Who madest me
And all things else to worship Thee:
Keep me fit in mind and heart,
Body and soul, to take my part.

Fit to stand, fit to run,
Fit for sorrow, fit for fun,
Fit to work and fit to play,
Fit to face life day by day.

Holy God, Who madest me,
Make me fit to worship Thee.



Food

MANY BOOKS give nourishment for our spiritual life, especially the Bible.

We should read some of it every day but we shall need help in understanding it. We can use some regular study course and we may find it a great help to have one

of the modern translations by Moffatt, Knox, Weymouth, or J. B. Phillips.

The Bible tells us how all through the ages God was helping men to find His way and to know Him. There are books of history, poetry, drama and the writings of prophets and teachers in this collection of books we know as our Bible. Once you have begun to follow God, the Bible becomes a new book showing you what God can do through people whose lives are committed to Him, and in it you can find your own orders for the day.

Begin with the narratives about Christ in the four Gospels. St. Mark's Gospel is the simplest. Study from His life what revolutionary living means and what it can do. When everything seemed lost, when Jesus had been betrayed and forsaken by His friends and put to death on the Cross by His enemies, that was the moment when the eternal victory was won.

Go on to read of the ventures and victories in the Acts of the Apostles. See how clearly God guides men and how those first little teams went out in faith to conquer the world for Christ. Read the letters to the young Christian churches in the Epistles.

The Bible is a mine of treasure never exhausted. There are many other books we can discover for ourselves, written down the centuries by those who have been explorers of the Way. A Canadian boy found one of these, a poem called "The Hound of Heaven", by Francis Thompson. "That is a wonderful story," he said. "I've always taken God for granted. I never knew He cared so much."

(At the end of this book are suggestions of books and study courses that will help.)

TO THINK ABOUT

In the Letter to the Hebrews, the writer tells of the heroes of the Old Testament, and says of them: "All these won a glowing testimony to their faith, but they did not then and there receive the fulfilment of the promise. God had something better planned for our day, and it was not His plan that they should reach perfection without us. Surrounded then as we are by these serried ranks of witnesses, let us strip off everything that hinders us, as well as the sin which dogs our feet, and let us run the race that we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus the Source and goal of our faith. . . . Think constantly of Him enduring all that sinful men could say against Him, and you will not lose your purpose and your courage." (Hebrews 11. 39, 40, and 12. 1, 3. Phillips.)

PRAYER

Lord, as we watch Your life, made one with the will of the Father, we hear also Your call to us, "Follow Me". Lord, give us strength to follow in Your victorious way.



Fresh Air

PRAYER IS like breathing. We breathe in the fresh things God wants to tell us. We breathe out the things we want to say to Him.

Someone once said, "It is stupid to ring God's doorbell and then run away." So tell God everything, and give Him time to answer. For "In prayer the important thing is not so much what we say to God as what He says to us" (Father Considine).

People often say, "Why should I ask God for things He knows are needed?" Asking in prayer helps us to see our genuine needs, and those of others, in the light of God's will for us. Some prayers can be very selfish. "Please make me win" would be better as "Please help me and everyone to do our best for Your sake."

Prayer should be the natural response we make to God's love. So we do not want to have only set prayers, any more than we would go to someone we loved and simply recite a piece of poetry. But the prayers of God's children down the ages are a shining light on our way. We can find them in *The Book of Common Prayer* and in our hymn books.

We can generally find time for the things we want to do. Praying is the thing we need most of all. It is a vital part of training. So one decision we must make is to be faithful in keeping the time for prayer. We can pray, too, in odd minutes during the day, as we would turn and talk to a friend.

TO THINK ABOUT

Every time of prayer should include some of those things that belong to our relationship to God as His children. These are:

Thanksgiving and worship

Letting God shine His searchlight on our lives

Accepting forgiveness and new life
Receiving direction
Asking help for our own and other people's needs
Going out in God's power

PRAYER

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

(Psalm 139, 23 and 24)



Exercise

THERE ARE many ways of keeping your body fit. Some do physical exercises in the morning, others go for a run every day. If you want to exercise your limbs, use them. If you want to GROW in the revolutionary life, Go Right On Working. As soon as we begin to discover the secret of God at work in our lives, we shall want to help others to find it. It is meant for the whole world. The way to keep what you have found is to give it away. If you keep it for yourself, Jesus said, you will lose it.

There is a legend that when Jesus went back to heaven, the angel Gabriel met Him. "Lord," said Gabriel, "what plan have You made to carry on the work which You

began?" "I have left Peter and John and the others," said Jesus. "They will carry it on." "And if they fail You, what then?" "I have no other plan," said Jesus.

Those early Christians carried the news, until it spread across their world. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," said Peter and John, when the leaders of the Jews tried to stop them. A handful of ordinary men turned the world upside down and brought a faith and power into men's lives that was stronger and more enduring than all the might of Rome.

TO THINK ABOUT

I am perfectly certain that the work He has committed to me is safe in His hands. Take the greatest care of the good things which were entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit Who lives within you. (II Timothy 1, 12, 14. Phillips.)

PRAYER

Lord, take my lips and speak through them;
Take my mind, and think through it;
Take my heart, and set it on fire.

(W. H. H. Aitken)

III

EQUIPMENT FOR THE WAY

A Faith that Works

Can I Trust God?

A Guide and His Guidance

Can God Guide Me?



A Faith that Works

BESIDES TRAINING, there is also certain equipment needed for the way that lies ahead.

What is needed most is a faith that works—an idea to live by and to live for—something for the attainment of which we are ready to give everything.

Faith is something we have all been given, the world could not get on without it. A baby has faith when it takes its first steps. A parachutist has faith when for the first time he jumps from the plane. In any real relationship, and most of all in marriage, we have to have faith in one another. Faith in God grows in us each time we make a decision and act on it. When a child is christened, the sign of the Cross is made on its forehead "in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end".

What does this mean to us? A girl who had just been told that she would never be well again wrote down what her faith meant to her:

"God will always love me,
God will always have a plan for my life,

God will always find a way to make that plan known to me."

About her part, she wrote, "It means a deliberate decision to trust God every day."

TO THINK ABOUT

The real issue is that we keep fighting for the best we know and never let our inadequacies discourage us. The only real tragedy that could overtake us is our own rejection of God's rule in our lives. As long as we fight to serve Him, we can never really fail. (Jack Hogan.)

PRAYER

Say the 23rd Psalm as an act of faith.



Can I Trust God?

"TO TRUST God every day" means finding a faith that works not only when everything is plain sailing, but when it seems as if everything goes dead wrong. Do you get days like that? Perhaps it is you that are wrong, and not "things". It is worth looking into that. Someone in South Africa, who was having that kind of battle, wrote: "When you make a mistake, don't say, 'There I go

again!' and plunge into unfathomable depths of gloom; but say, 'Lord, here I come again!' and accept the unfathomable grace of God."

A boy of eighteen, in the first Fifteen and first Eleven at school, a prefect, and due to go to the University in a short time, was suddenly attacked by doubts and fears for his health, and lost all confidence.

One day he heard a sermon in chapel, on God's plan for everyone. "Real life," the preacher said, "begins when we surrender our wills to God, and start to carry out the plan He will show to us." After chapel, the boy went away by himself and sat down to listen to God. This was the message that came to him:

"God is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. God has shown me the way. He would not plan this if He did not think I could carry it out. God will be constant to me. I will do my best to carry out His plans. He has shown me His life. Let me follow it. He would not have shown me this plan if He had known that I was not destined to lead it. Therefore I shall not accomplish His object if I succumb through accident or disease. Only have faith."

He clean forgot all about his fears, and stepped out into the future with real trust in God.

TO THINK ABOUT

"I realise that anything can happen," wrote Jack Hogan, shortly before he was killed in battle, "but I know with a certainty beyond all explanation that nothing can happen to me of which God has not the foreknowledge, and for which He has not a glorious creative plan and purpose."

PRAYER

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: Grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Collect for the fourth Sunday after Epiphany)



A Guide and His Guidance

THE GREATEST help comes to us through the gift that Jesus left us of His Holy Spirit Who, He told us, would be working with us and in us. The evening before Jesus died, He told His friends that He must leave them and go back to the Father. They wondered what they could do without Him. Read what He said to them in John 14. 16-26, and 15. 7. The Holy Spirit can guide us today.

An airman lay in prison hospital in the Second World War, helplessly crippled with both arms terribly wounded. As he watched the stars through the barred window one night, he remembered that years ago his brother had told him that if you listened, God would speak to you. In his despair, he wondered if it could be true.

At that moment God spoke to him, as clearly as if a voice had spoken. "God is love." It was as if a light had been switched on in a dark room. He knew he had finished with his old selfish way of living, and from then on would live as God willed. His bitterness and self-pity vanished. He began to pray and to read his Bible, and to listen to God for His orders. He began to help the other men in the ward. Even more daring thoughts came to him. They were—first to take disciplined exercise and get fit, and then to escape. The story of that escape is most enthralling. You can read it in a book called *Escape to Live* by Edward Howell.

TO THINK ABOUT

One of Jesus' disciples, John, writing as an old man to the new Christians whom he calls his "beloved children", said, "You know that the Spirit teaches you in everything," and "we receive whatever we ask for, because we are obeying His orders and following His plans. His orders are that we should put trust in the Name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another—as we used to hear Him say in person." (I John 2. 27; 3. 22 and 23. Phillips.)

PRAYER

Lord, hour by hour,
Be Thou my Guide,
That, by Thy power,
No step may slide.

(The Westminster Chimes)

Can God Guide Me?

"LISTEN" OR "hearken" is a command that comes often in the Bible. All through it we read of God speaking to men, giving them very clear directions, which were often not at all easy to obey. But with them God gave promises. The trouble was then, and still is, that both leaders and people would not listen and obey, but wanted their own way.

A French priest, Père Gratry, told his congregation in Paris more than a hundred years ago: "The world can change if you change. How do you change? By listening to God—because as the sun is always shining, so God is constantly speaking. How can you listen to God, you ask me? This is the answer. You write. Write so that you hear the word that is in you and keep God's instructions." The old priest's words are very important: to write down what God tells us. Then we can look back and see if we have carried out our orders. "God has not stopped speaking," said a Canadian farmer. "It is we who have stopped listening."

Begin each day by being quiet and listening. It may be a very simple thought that comes, but when you obey because God told you, much can happen.

A thirteen-year-old American girl made the experiment of listening, with her mother. The first thought

that came to her was about toys she sometimes stole from a store and slipped into the front of her blouse. She did not like that thought. "Because I didn't want to get honest," she said, "I threw my pencil at Mommy and refused to tell her what was on my mind." But her mother began telling her how *she* had been dishonest when she was her age. This helped her daughter to own up. That was necessary. But it wasn't enough. She went down to the store, apologised to the owner, and gave him six dollars out of her savings.

"Boy!" she said, in telling the story, "that was the hardest thing I've ever done. But it made me feel free inside. The thing I believe is that if we're willing to live in our lives and not just talk about the things we expect our government and other governments to live, then we can have a world without fear and hate and greed, the kind of world we should have under God."

TO THINK ABOUT

I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do any particular thing, He finds a way of letting me know it. (Abraham Lincoln.)

PRAYER

Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

IV

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Temptations

Moods and Fears

Temptations

WHEN JESUS started out on those three amazing years which He spent in showing people God's way to fulness of life, He met with great obstacles.

The story says "He was tempted of the devil" right at the beginning when He was alone in the wilderness. (The story is in Luke 4.) He had gone there for a time of fasting and prayer, in training for the great task ahead.

The devil tried to get Him to use the power He had as God's Son in a wrong way: to give people a good time, or to show off, or to rule by force. He wanted to get Him concerned about success—His own success. That would cut Him off from God and leave Him under the power of the devil.

We shall be tempted like that. To be out for popularity, to show off in order to be a success, or to get false power by making people afraid of us. Sometimes we are tempted to be funny in the wrong way.

It is not wrong to be tempted. It is what we do when we are tempted that matters. What happens, for instance, when we *don't* pass an exam, or are *not* picked for a team, or are ticked off in a way that seems unfair? Do we sulk, or get into a mood either of despair or hurt pride? Martin Luther once said, "I cannot keep birds

from flying over my head, but I can keep them from building under my hat."

A girl I know, with a strong imagination, spent hours in day-dreaming, making up wonderful stories to herself in which she appeared as a heroine, with everyone applauding the noble deeds she was doing—while all the time she was escaping from real responsibilities and the things which took cold courage. When she gave her imagination to God and let Him use it, it became something by which she could show God's glory, instead of glorifying herself.

The last thing Jesus said to the devil in the wilderness was "The only one I must worship and serve is God and not you." Christ's decision, to serve God only, had saved Him, as yours can save you.

TO THINK ABOUT

He said not: Thou shalt not be tempted, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be afflicted; but He said: Thou shalt not be overcome. (Mother Julian of Norwich. XIVth Century.)

PRAYER

Make your own prayer, asking God to help you with your particular temptations, name them to Him, make a decision about them, ask for His strength to carry it out, and if possible tell someone else about your decision.

Moods and Fears

MOODS ARE like measles; you may not see that you have them, but everyone else does! and they are equally catching. One day I went to a centre where I used to lend a hand when I could. It was not my usual day, and I felt rather pleased with myself for giving this extra time.

The first person I met said, rather coolly, "I didn't expect to see you here today." "Well," I said brightly, though a little daunted, "where can I help?" "You'd better go and look round," was all she said.

So I went to the kitchen, but found they did not need anyone extra. I went to where flowers were being arranged and made my kind offer again, only to be told they had practically finished. I began to feel terribly unwanted, and when I did find something to do at last, I did it pretty badly.

When dinner-time came, I sat next a friend who said unexpectedly, "Do you ever come here and feel no one wants you, and you can't think why you came?" "I'm feeling just like that today," I said. "Well," he said, "I'll tell you what you can do when you get in that kind of mood. Just stop the next person you meet and be honest about how you're feeling. Say, 'I'm feeling awful today'. Ten to one they'll say, 'So am I', and then you'll both laugh and you'll find the mood has gone."

Now I had not realised that *I* was in a bad mood. I just thought everyone was unwelcoming! Moods are sure to come, like clouds across the sky. But the fresh breeze of honesty can carry them away. God never means us to stay in a mood.

What about the fears which are often the cause of moods, or get mixed up with them? Here again we must face them honestly, but face them with God. Face the worst that might happen, but face it in the certainty that God will be with you if you trust Him. The brave are not those who do not feel afraid, but those who know what to do with their fears.

TO THINK ABOUT

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power and love and a sound mind. (II Timothy 1. 5. Phillips.)

Moods don't go by praying; moods go by kicking.
(Oswald Chambers.)

PRAYER

Give me a healthy mind, good Lord,
To keep the good and pure in sight,
Which, seeing sin, is not appalled,
But finds a way to set it right.

Give me a mind that is not bored,
That does not whimper, whine, or sigh,
Don't let me worry overmuch
About that fussy thing called "I".

Give me a sense of humour, Lord,
Give me the grace to see a joke,
To get some happiness from life
And pass it on to other folk.

*(Written by a young British soldier, who was
later killed in action)*

V

THE FAMILY PRAYER

"Our Father in Heaven"

"Hallowed be Thy Name"

"Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be Done"

"Our Daily Bread"

"Forgive us . . . as we forgive"

Direction and Protection

“Our Father in Heaven”

ALL OUR praying can be based on the prayer Jesus gave to His disciples. We often call it “The Family Prayer”, for it is used by all God’s children. Over the whole world, in every language you can think of, it is said in an unceasing petition, binding the growing family together.

It begins by showing us our right relationship to God, on which everything else depends. “Our Father which art in Heaven”. He is my Father, and the Father of everyone everywhere.

A girl of sixteen was taken by her father to a conference attended by many nationalities, and she soon found herself working with a group of girls serving meals. The day came when her father had to return to England, and she was left alone. Suddenly panic-stricken, she rushed up to her room.

She flung herself on her knees by her bed and prayed: “Dear God, I can’t bear Daddy going. But You must be my Father now, and I do want to do Your will. I’ve called You ‘Our Father’, but now do let it be real.”

She did not feel alone or afraid any more. She was sure of God’s love, sure that He was not only her Father but Father of all the girls with whom she worked, so that

they were her family, whatever their colour, race, or class.

TO THINK ABOUT

Jesus said, "The Father Himself loveth you." John 16. 27.) Think of some things the best fatherhood can mean—loving provision and care; encouragement and understanding; wise counsel and confidence. How can we show our heavenly Father that we trust Him as loving, obedient children?

PRAYER

Now make your own prayer, asking God to show you what the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all mankind really means. Is there any person or any race that you could not include when you say "Our Father"?



"Hallowed be Thy Name"

THEN WE think of our attitude to God as His loved and loving children, and say: "Hallowed be Thy Name". By many people the Name of God is used mostly in swearing, or as an exclamation. The answer to this is not only to stop swearing, but to see that the thought of God and His goodness and holiness comes to be the centre of our lives. "The Lord's Name be praised from the rising

up of the sun unto the going down of the same". That is what we want to happen. We need to see what our inner thoughts are really like, and then to pray: "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name."

What special responsibility can we take in hallowing God's Name? We only, of His creatures, are able to give conscious expression to His Creation's hymn of praise. It is true that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handywork"; but it was the psalmist himself who put it into the words of that lovely 19th Psalm.

We are not only the mouthpiece of creation, but we were meant to cherish and increase all the beauty in Nature and use it to God's glory in our gardens and in the growing of trees and crops. It can be done, too, in the building not only of churches and cathedrals, but of houses and factories and cities.

We can see that no litter defiles our streets, our parks, our countryside. You cannot throw your bus ticket, your picnic paper, or your sweet paper on to the ground, and say at the same time, "Hallowed be Thy Name". Try it and see if it seems right.

We have a responsibility, also, for the animal creation. It is just as bad to fuss too much over a petted animal, and to be selfish about that, as to give it too little care, or to be cruel.

Science is revealing to us more and more of the wonders of Creation; but we shall misuse the powers that are given to us unless this prayer, "Hallowed be Thy Name", is in our hearts.

TO THINK ABOUT

Think of God as Creator, and see how we can show greater reverence in our handling of all He has created, and in guarding it from any defilement.

PRAYER

Eternal God, the Master of the Field of this world, we are Thy glad and humble workers. Here we present to Thee our souls and bodies. Take the strength of our hands, take our skill and our love, that we may be devoted in Thy service all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Prayer from a church in Africa, where special services are held for offering the seed and fruit of the sowing)



*“Thy Kingdom Come, Thy
Will be Done”*

HAVING BEGUN by praising God and thanking Him, we bring to Him our needs and the needs of the world. And here we start, not with any private requests, but with the biggest thing we can ask for:

“Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

Our Father is also our King and the King of all creation—Almighty and Eternal. His rule is already established in Heaven, but it depends on us whether it is to be established on earth, on whether we choose Him as King in our own hearts and lives. His rule is that of love, and not of force. "Love invites, but has to be invited." We choose His way when we say, "Thy Will be done", and mean it. "Let it be what You want, my Lord and King, not just what I want. Let it be Your way, not just mine."

All through life we must look out for our "must-haves", and see that none of them ever get possession of our wills or affections. "I must have some chocolates, I must have another cigarette, I must have a drink, I must have a kiss, I must have a date, I must have someone to understand and care for me, I must have a new frock, I must have a new car, I must have more money, I must have more time off", and so on. There is only one absolute "must-have", and that is that I must have Jesus and His love in my heart to keep me true and straight. Then the other "must-haves" will never govern me, but God will be in command.

TO THINK ABOUT

*I learnt the truth
That living is to give and not to get—
The blessedness of those who, pure in heart,
Can see the Lord and be a source of light,
Not a mere selfish flame.*

(From *We Are Tomorrow*, Peter Howard.)

P R A Y E R

Grant that we may walk amongst men,
Thy messengers, Thy warriors,
Consecrated to Thy service,
Serving Thee with unswerving loyalty.
Take us, O Lord, this day,
And use us as Thou wilt,
In the cause of Thy Kingdom.

(Abbr. from *The Splendour of God*)



“Our Daily Bread”

NOW WE come to ask God for our daily needs. It is like a morning prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread”.

This does not mean just the bread we eat, but God our Father’s generous provision for all the needs of His children who look to Him to satisfy them. Jesus wanted us to live trusting in our Heavenly Father for all we need each day, so that we might have strength to follow His ways and to do His will.

He said, “You must not be anxious about tomorrow.” We spend a lot of time fussing about our tomorrows. But the important thing is to begin each day by putting our lives into God’s keeping and telling Him our needs.

George Müller had an orphanage, and often he did not know where the food was coming from for the children. One day the "family" was seated at the breakfast table, and there was no bread on the table. "We will ask a blessing," said Müller, and they did. At that moment there was a knock at the door. It was the baker with a load of bread. "I baked too many loaves by mistake," he said. "I expect you can use them."

Someone once said to Müller, "It must be a very hand-to-mouth existence." "Yes," said Müller, "but it is His hand to my mouth."

TO THINK ABOUT

Remember that this prayer for daily bread is not just for you, but for the whole of God's family, and some of them are very hungry. "There is enough," a wise teacher has told us, "for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. If everybody cared enough and shared enough, everyone would have enough." Think what that means.

PRAYER

O God, set our hearts free from the service of ourselves, that it may be our meat and drink to do Thy will.

(From *Great Souls at Prayer*)

“Forgive us . . . as we forgive”

WE NEED never end any day without being quite sure of God's peace in our hearts; and to find this peace, we must first see how we ourselves need to be forgiven: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” For, like all God's gifts, forgiveness is not just something we can have for ourselves. It is meant for everyone, and it has to flow through us. So the channels must not be blocked either by unforgiven sins, or by an unforgiving spirit.

In any quarrel, where the sins of envy, hatred, resentment and jealousy are at work, God wants us to think first where we ourselves are to blame. This is never easy. It is always easier to see where other people are wrong. As a Burmese lady said: “When I point my finger at my neighbour, there are three more pointing back at me.” Try it and see that it is true.

One sign of real growing up and reaching maturity is that instead of throwing blame on others, we are ready to take it ourselves. Even if you are only five per cent wrong, it is easier for you to put your five per cent right than to demand that the other fellow put his ninety-five per cent right. When we say we are sorry for our share in the mess, the barrier can be broken between us and other people, and between all of us and God. Then forgiveness and new life will flow in.

TO THINK ABOUT

O Lord Almighty, let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me. (Ruth Fry.)

PRAYER

Father, I ask for forgiveness because I am Thy child.
I ask Thee in Thy mercy
To restore what I have hurt,
To cleanse what I have soiled,
To strengthen what I have weakened.
I ask for humility that I may work for amendment,
Not in my strength,
But in the power of the Holy Spirit.



Direction and Protection

WE HAVE asked for provision and forgiveness. Now we ask for direction and protection so that we can go forth,

Forgiving and forgiven,
With the Provision,
Under the Direction,
In the Protection.

"Lead us not into temptation." "Lead us" is the heart

of the prayer; the rest is an appeal, perhaps of fear lest the way be too hard and we get lost. Even Jesus Himself prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane to His Father to take away the cup if it were possible, but then went forward to a deeper acceptance of His Father's Will as the only way to follow.

"Now, lad," said an old neighbour to David Livingstone when he was a boy, "make religion the everyday business of your life, and not a thing of fits and starts; for if you do not, temptation and other things will get the better of you." David never forgot that, through all the temptations and battles of his life, as you will see if you read the story of his daring exploits in Africa; and people said of him that he had "such an enamel of purity upon his character that no filth could stick to it".

So we go on to say: "*Deliver us from evil.*" The greatest evil comes from our refusal at any time to follow God's way. The forces of evil are strong and cunning, and some of the ideas through which they tempt us are made to look so harmless. "Everyone does it. What's the harm? You're missing a lot of fun. You'll never get on if you have ideas like that. Why bother about it? No one will know." We constantly need these four words of prayer, "*Deliver us from evil.*"

Lastly, as if to assure our hearts that our Father is able to give us "far more than we desire or deserve", we end this prayer with the great words of faith:

For Thine is the Kingdom
And the Power
And the Glory
For ever and ever, Amen.

TO THINK ABOUT

These are some of the things from which we need deliverance: halfheartedness and love of the easier way; unkind criticism, gossip and disloyalty; carelessness and compromise; and the hidden strongholds of selfwill and pride.

PRAYER

Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Collect for the Second Sunday in Lent)

VI

LIFE WITHIN THE
WORLD FAMILY

"The Whole Family in Heaven and Earth"

Our Own Families

Boy Friends and Girl Friends

“The Whole Family in Heaven and Earth”

AS WE use this prayer, we should remember that we are a part of what St. Paul called “the whole family in heaven and earth” (Ephesians 3. 15), that “great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Revelation 7. 9). All down the ages they had faith and courage to follow what one of them called “the Royal Road of the Cross”, and so they are known to us as “the Communion of Saints”.

We may think, “I would never feel at home with that sort of family—not with saints!” But actually we shall never feel really at home except in that company, because they are the Father’s own Family. Robert Louis Stevenson said about them, “A saint is a sinner who keeps on trying.” And one of the first things we find about them as we get to know them, besides their warm-heartedness and deep caring and understanding, is their gaiety, humour, and joyfulness. St. Francis of Assisi, for instance, was the gayest saint imaginable; and he was so daring that he could meet any brigand or wild animal without fear.

All down the ages, too, men and women have used

this "Family Prayer", so that it unites us with all time and with all races. We can never be tired of saying it if we say it from our hearts. If you love some dear, familiar place, some look of mountains, buildings, streets, rivers, or seas, you want to see it again and again, it is never quite the same. And this prayer is infinite—it reaches far beyond our human understanding and knowledge. Yet we were given it by Jesus, to use when we pray, as a guide to living as God's children.

Get used to using the petitions separately, as quick little S.O.S. prayers, just as you need them at any moment. "Father, Thy will be done." "Father, lead me." "Father, deliver me." "Father, forgive me."

TO THINK ABOUT

When I think of the greatness of this great plan, I fall on my knees before God, the Father, and I pray that out of the glorious richness of His resources, He will enable you to know the strength of the Spirit's inner reinforcement . . . that you may be able to grasp how wide and deep and long and high is the love of Christ and to know that love for yourselves. (Ephesians 3. 14, 16, 18. Phillips.)

For it is God who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve His purpose. (Philippians 2. 13. Phillips.)

PRAYER

Pray "The Family Prayer" again, slowly, thinking about each phrase as you use it.

Our Own Families

TODAY LET us think of our own families as part of the world family. Our own family life is meant to be the training ground where we learn how to play our part in building God's Kingdom through His family who call Him Father.

A really united family can be a strong force. It is so easy to get divided over little things, like what programme to listen to or whether to have wireless or T.V. on at all, whose turn it is to do the washing-up, who is bringing in the coal today, or "who's taken my book?"

"Who's boss in your home?" one boy asked another, "your dad or your mum?"

"Neither," was the answer. "God is the Boss in our home." That is the secret, God the Boss of the wireless and T.V. set, the chores, the things that I want to do and the things that I want to have or keep.

In a first-class hockey or football team, it is not one person being brilliant or another being a bit off that counts so much as how the whole side are working together. The families that are like that are the happiest families. Have you got good team-work at home in what someone called "the daily battle against selfishness"? Do you in your family think of how you can manage to do a little less or how you can give a little more?

We can learn in a family what unity means, and that is the finest discovery we can make. So the home is a real training ground.

TO THINK ABOUT

Every family can have a vital part to play in the coming of God's Kingdom. Think how this can happen in your family, and whether it is what you want most, and what you yourself can do about it. A boy said, "I find if I'm selfish at home, I can't be really unselfish anywhere else."

PRAYER

May God grant that the spirit of goodwill which brightens homes today may spread from them in ever widening circles until in the fulness of time it changes the face of the world.

(King George VI on Christmas Day)



Boy Friends and Girl Friends

IN THESE years when you leave childhood behind and grow into manhood or womanhood, almost the biggest responsibility you take on in relationships lies in your attitude one to another, as boys and girls who will be-

come the fathers and mothers and the guardians of the race to be.

Do you want to help each other to become what God means you to be? You need each other all through life, and you can either drag each other down the most dangerous and deadly ways, or together climb up to the finest heights of experience this life can give us. And what you do affects the whole of humanity, because this is our common battle-ground and it has always been the devil's best playground.

Take every relationship into your prayers. Tell God when you feel attracted by someone, whether of the other sex or of the same sex, and ask Him to make it the best kind of relationship for His sake and for the sake of the other person. Often it is up to girls to take the lead here with their boy friends. They set the pace for the kind of behaviour there is between the two of them. But boys must have their idea of what they want a woman to be like, someone who can make a home a real home. Then they must cherish that idea for all the girls they meet, and not let it down into the dirt by asking them to give what both know in their hearts is wrong—a momentary thrill that leaves both unsatisfied and feeling shabby.

All our relationships are either horizontal or vertical. The horizontal ones are when two people are attracted to each other and cling together. Then there are pushes and pulls and jealousies; it is like two hands tied together, stopping each other from doing a good job. But if two people reach up to God first and then, through Him, to each other, they can move freely and yet be one.

Sex is the main channel of the endless stream of life

flowing through us, and our task is to keep it clean and creative, not letting it get sullied, or blocked, or destructive.

Some time in these years the decision will arise about marriage. Jacqueline, a French girl, and Charles, a Swiss boy, said this about their engagement:

Jacqueline: "The evening before I was thinking about marriage, I don't know why. I felt in my heart that God was speaking to me, saying, 'You agree with the way I have been leading you till now. Trust Me completely for the future.' And I thought to say 'yes' to God for ever. When Charles asked me, I felt completely at peace that we could both say 'yes' together to God."

Charles: "One thought I had in my quiet time the other day was that God loves Jacqueline even more than I do, and that the important thing is not the 'yes' that she says to me, but the 'yes' that she says to Jesus. God has prepared the right moment. So often I've wanted to hurry things up. It has been prepared in my heart for about two years now. I have learned to wait and have full trust in God."

Marriage is God's gift, and to be free to give your single heart in the service of God and mankind as Florence Nightingale did, is equally God's gift. When she refused a proposal, she wrote: "The highest, the only true love is when a man and woman who have an attraction for one another come together in some true purpose for mankind and for God."

TO THINK ABOUT

What are my thoughts like when I am by myself? Am I most eager for my friend to love me most or God most?

*Do I encourage him, or her, to live the finest kind of life,
or to be romantic about me and give me a good time?*

P R A Y E R

O God, give us clean thoughts, clean words, and clean hands. Help us to stand for the hard right against the easy wrong. Save us from habits that harm; teach us to work as hard and play as fair in Thy sight alone as if all the world saw. Send us chances to do good every day, and to grow more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

(William de Witt Hyde)

VII

WORKING TOGETHER

Finding a Team

"Precision Standards"

Uniting Men and Nations

Worshipping Together

The Communion Service

Decisions

Finding a Team

IF NO mountaineer would climb Everest without training, neither would he go without the right kind of team. The first thing Sir John Hunt did, when he was given the leadership of the expedition that was to reach the summit of Everest, was to pick his team.

It was not easy to find men of the right temperament. He had to be sure that each one of the party really wanted to get to the top, for to any one of them that responsibility might fall. "In contrast to this," he went on, "Everest also demands a quite unusual degree of selflessness and patience." To those who were not chosen to go to the top might fall a number of thankless, frustrating jobs. "One man can endanger the unity and spirit of a whole party," wrote Sir John, "and unity on Everest would be all-important."

The Church is meant to give that kind of companionship to us—a trusty, trained team, each fully committed to the task. "It is a wonderful thing," as a younger person said, "to be doing the greatest things and to be doing them all together." In such a team we will always have as comrades those who have made the decision to give God everything; and even if, in some crisis in our lives, we should be alone, we can be sure of their prayers and backing. Those who have found this kind of companion-

ship are bound together with a tie nothing can break, not even death.

TO THINK ABOUT

What the world most needs today is people who can trust each other fully because their own trust is in God. They are not out for private success or gain; they have such an endeavour before them that they know they can never, on their own, achieve the end they seek. Have we found people we can trust like that? and can we be trusted by other people in that way?

PRAYER

O God, Who art seeking in every age for loyal spirits ready to obey the heavenly vision, may our ears be open to Thy voice, and, when Thou dost call us, may we answer, Here am I; send me.



“Precision Standards”

MANUFACTURERS OF steel all over the world can send steel parts of machinery wherever they are required, which they know will fit exactly because they have “precision standards”. Precision standards are essential for us, too; and those who accept them, all over the world, can trust each other fully.

In a certain factory a girl was making small parts. She asked God to take away her fear of the complicated machinery, and to help her to do the job to His satisfaction. She could have worked faster and earned more by accepting a lower standard of work, as the manager suggested. But she refused.

"The girl's a fool," he muttered, and then, thoughtfully, "Or is she?"

A few days later he asked her, "How's the perfection standard going?" The foreman answered for her, "I can't find a single bad one, sir." "There must be something in this perfection business after all," the manager said reflectively.

A nineteenth-century professor, Henry Drummond, summed up the standards Christ set us in the Sermon on the Mount as Absolute Honesty, Absolute Purity, Absolute Unselfishness, and Absolute Love. The important word is *absolute*.

There was only one thing a fifteen-year-old boy, Richard, liked less than work, and that was games. He was usually about thirtieth in a class of thirty-two. And football left him cold. One day he read that God had a plan for everyone. "I didn't think I mattered," he said. From then on he decided to make absolute standards his aim, so that God's plan for him could be fulfilled.

Richard meant business. He was honest with his father about how he had been spending his evenings. He owned up to the masters about stealing exercise-books, and cheating. He decided to spend time early each morning, applying those standards to his life, and finding God's plan for the day.

In one term he rose fifteen places in his form, and

within a short time he was playing football for his school. All through his school and college life he kept up the fight for "precision standards" for himself and others, and fellows who at first laughed at him, went to him with their problems.

Those who play games know the importance of teamwork; a young fellow said that he wanted in his team people whom he could trust not to let him down, and who trusted him not to let them down.

TO THINK ABOUT

Stand fast in a united spirit, battling with a single mind for the faith of the Gospel. . . . Live together in love, as though you had only one mind and one spirit between you. Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves. (Phil. 1. 27; 2. 2 and 3. Phillips.)

PRAYER

God be in my head,
And in my understanding;
God be in my eyes,
And in my looking;
God be in my mouth,
And in my speaking;
God be in my heart,
And in my thinking;
God be at my end,
And at my departing.

(XVth Century)

Uniting Men and Nations

IN THE last prayer Jesus prayed with His friends before He was crucified, He ended by the petition to His Father that "they all may be one". He had been praying for His disciples that they might be kept from evil, and then He went on:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word, that they all may be one as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee . . . that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me."

When we see a faith that can move whole nations and peoples we call it an ideology. We need the right ideology for ourselves and our nation, and for the world today, which will unite us in a common purpose to give our whole lives to God's service.

Freddie Ramm was a fearless Norwegian journalist, who accompanied Amundsen on the first flight ever made over the North Pole. He used his pen to fight in a fishing dispute between his country and Denmark, and when the affair was settled against Norway in the International Court, he redoubled the fury of his attack.

One day God changed his heart. Freddie put things right at home. Then he let go his bitterness, and was deeply sorry that it had divided Norway and Denmark.

"Have you *said* you were sorry for it, Dad?" his young son asked him. Ramm explained that he could not apologise to four million Danes, though he had done so to one or two. The boy was silent for a moment, then said, "You could do it on the radio."

Soon afterwards Ramm had the opportunity of doing this, and the story of his apology, and of the peace and unity which it brought between two nations, went round the world.

The future lies with those who give everything. And that is the chance before us all—to join forces with that growing company through whom God's Kingdom will come on earth as it is in Heaven.

TO THINK ABOUT

It is not for you to build a new world, but for God to build a new world working mightily through you in the power of the Holy Spirit. (From Christ and the Human Need, Theodore Woods.)

PRAYER

Read John 17. 20-23, and turn any part of it into a prayer, thinking of your home, your school, your nation and the nations of the world.

Worshipping Together

AN IMPORTANT part of our loyal witness of service to our Heavenly King is that we come regularly together to worship Him in church, chapel, or cathedral—showing what we believe and Whom we serve.

This kind of witness is deeply needed today. All over the world our faith is challenged by destructive forces. In some countries they seem to have gained control, and Christians have to show great courage in declaring openly what they believe inwardly, as the early Christians did. They often have to face death itself.

In one of these countries, where boys and girls are not allowed to be taught about God, a visitor was surprised to find a boy of eight or nine in a church vestry one day. After he had won the boy's confidence, he asked him who had taught him about religion.

"My comrade," the boy answered. "And who told him?" "Another comrade." Finally the boy explained their system. He had five friends who he was teaching about God. When each had learnt what he told them, he would pass it on to five more. "That is the way it spreads," he said.

"But aren't you afraid of the police?" the visitor asked. "Mightn't they kill you?" "They can kill me," the boy replied, "but they can never kill Christ in me."

We may be tempted to think, "I don't get much good out of going to church. I never feel much better for it, and I find it difficult to follow the service. Some of the best people I know don't go. It would do me more good to get out into the country." But it is not what you get out of it that matters so much as what you take into it, as you come to praise God in His House and with His family, to bring Him your thanks and offerings, and to receive His messages and gifts together.

Take with you something to think about. It may be your own personal needs, the needs of someone you know, the need of people like that boy of whom we have been thinking, the need of this troubled world. See how many things in the service—in the reading, prayers, or hymns—answer those needs.

TO THINK ABOUT

If you are in a crowded church or hall with a company of people, perhaps on some special time of rejoicing or intercession, you sense the great power that can be released from united hearts. It is up to us not just to enjoy this experience but to help to create it.

PRAYER

I want to know Thee better day by day,
I want to draw much closer as I pray,
To listen more intently to Thy voice,
To let the things Thou chooseth be my choice.

The Communion Service

MANY OF you have become, or are going to become, full members of the Church in these years, and will take your part in the service for which there are names so full of meaning: "Holy Communion", "Holy Eucharist" (which means thanksgiving), "The Lord's Supper". It is usually spoken of as a celebration. This suggests a time of great happiness, which it is meant to be.

We come as sinners, the only way we can come. We may not feel fit to come. But that is just why we need it most. As someone said, "If you are very cold, you do not usually say you will not come to the fire because it would warm you."

There, as we kneel to receive those simple daily provisions of bread and wine, they become for us the gift of Jesus Himself, His forgiveness, His strength, His life renewed in us for His service.

As we end by offering to Him "our selves, our souls and bodies", He can take us and make us what He wants us to be, and we go away again, ready to take our full part in bringing in His kingdom on earth, "as it is in Heaven".

Many thousands long to come to that service and cannot, because, where they are, these celebrations are not allowed, or there is no one to hold them. So we who can

come should take in our hearts those who cannot, and determine so to live that our Christian heritage will take its rightful place in our country and in the world.

TO THINK ABOUT

Only a passion can cure a passion. Only the mind and will reborn in the power of God will know the amazing freedom of absolute purity. . . . This passion, born of the passion of Christ, comes through our natures like the sweep of a mighty, quiet river, catching up every energy of heart, mind and will in its flood. (H. Kenaston Twitchell.)

PRAYER

In your own words, give your whole self to God, asking Him to take you as you are, and make you what He wants you to be.



Decisions

A GIRL WAS asked what she most wished she had had in her teens. "I needed most of all," she said, "to have had the chance given me to make the greatest decision."

There are some decisions you will have to make, decisions about a career; what to do with your money

when you begin earning it; what friends you are going to make, and possibly whom you will marry. These decisions will all depend on "the greatest decision", and that is whether God's will or self-will is going to rule your life. Who are you going to serve? God or yourself?

When Jesus was twelve, He began to know more of why God had sent Him and what He wanted Him to do. He committed Himself to that purpose, and the first thing was to prepare Himself to carry it out. He went back from that time in Jerusalem, to learn to do perfect work in the carpenter's shop, and to be obedient to His parents. Then He was ready to go out when the call came. If we, like Jesus, accept God's will and obey Him in all the small daily decisions, we shall be ready when our moment comes.

When God first called Jeanne d'Arc to save her country, she said, "I am too young. I am not educated. I cannot ride. I know nothing about warfare. I could not leave home." "Jeanne," she was told, "it is you whom the King of Heaven has chosen. Jeanne, it is you." She accepted her call, and from then no difficulties and discouragements—and there were plenty—could stop her.

"I would like to be like Joan of Arc," a twelve-year-old Guide thought wistfully to herself, "but I couldn't fight for my country like that." It wasn't until she was older that she knew that an ordinary person like herself could be a Joan of Arc by serving God just where she was, in office, in factory, or wherever it might be. For Joan's secret was that she heard God speaking, and was obedient to what He said, in small details at home as much as in the salvation of her country.

TO THINK ABOUT

These decisions are never made just for ourselves. They are made because we want God to be able to use us in building "the New Earth" He has promised us, His Kingdom. Whatever actual job you take on in life, this is the task which has been given you. This is your heavenly calling, your true vocation. It matters to the whole world which way you decide, today and every day.

PRAYER

Now for our decision
Waits the greater vision.
All we have,
Lord, we give.
Grant us Thy commission.
Thy strength we claim day by day,
Thy command gladly obey,
To build together
What none shall sever,
Bridges from man to man,
The whole round world to span.

(John Morrison)

What to read

THERE ARE SO many books to choose from that here are a few suggestions.

Many people find a daily Bible reading plan is a great help; the commentaries enable us to understand better what we read and to apply it to our everyday life. Try one of these:

Bible Reading Fellowship <i>Series Y</i> —in quarterly parts	12 Buckingham Palace Gardens, London S.W.1
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Scripture Union <i>Daily Bread</i> —in bi-monthly parts	5 Wigmore Street, London W.1
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International Bible Reading Association <i>Discovering the Bible</i> —twice yearly	Methodist Bible Reading and Prayer Union, Ludgate Circus House, London E.C.4
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The Authorised Version of the Bible is a wonderful treasure to possess. It was translated in 1611 when the English language was perhaps at its best, by a devoted company of saints and scholars. Its words have been the basis of the expression of men's highest ideals in this country. Most of you have probably got your own copy already, but try also to get hold of a modern translation—at least of the New Testament.

There are two in the Penguin series:

The Acts of the Apostles (Rieu)
The Four Gospels (Rieu)

Then there are J. B. Phillips' translations, published by Geoffrey Bles:

The New Testament in Modern English

The Young Church in Action

The Book of Revelation

The Gospels in Modern English } also in a cheap edition
Letters to Young Churches } by Fontana Press

Others are:

Holy Bible, American Revised Standard (Thomas Nelson)

St. Mark's Story of Jesus (Weymouth) (Blandford Press)

Letters to Parsi, by Roger Hicks (Blandford Press) is a study in St. Mark's Gospel written in the form of letters to a young captain in the Indonesian Army, who asked to know something about Christianity and the life of Christians.

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Now for some other books, and first of all two that might be called "classics".

The Imitation of Christ. Ever since Thomas à Kempis wrote this book, six hundred years ago, it has been the companion and guide for those who want to travel along the way he calls "The Royal Road of the Cross".

The Practice of the Presence of God. A short and simple book written in the seventeenth century by a soldier who later entered a monastery. He did very humble tasks where he worked, but found in them a means to learn more of God and to feel His Presence constantly with him.

You can buy quite inexpensive editions of these two books.

Here are some more modern books. Among the many lives of saints, two especially good ones are:

Paul the Dauntless. Basil Matthews. (A. & C. Black)
St. Francis of Assisi. John Moorman. (S.C.M. Press)

Two adventure stories of men still living are:

After Everest. T. H. Somervell. (Hodder & Stoughton)

Dr. Somervell was on one of the earlier Everest expeditions, and spent long years in medical mission work in India, founding one of the best equipped hospitals there today.

Escape to Live. Edward Howell. (Longmans Green)

Edward Howell, a distinguished airman in the last war, tells of how he found God when a badly wounded prisoner in Greece, and of the miraculous escape he made—almost like St. Paul's—under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God has been using his life in wonderful ways since then.

* * *

These two books of prayers might help you:

Fellowship with God: A Book of Prayers for Adventurers. Father Sedding. (Mothers Union)

Uncommon Prayers for Younger People. Cecil Hunt. (Hodder & Stoughton)

If you are about to be confirmed, you might like to read:

Letters to a Confirmand. George Snow. (Geoffrey Bles)

Your Confirmation. J. R. Stott. (Hodder & Stoughton)

