The Ways of God

‘Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.’
Psalm 86:11

Selwyn Hughes
Revised and updated by Mick Brooks
FURTHER STUDY: IAN SEWTER


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Torch Trust for the Blind, Torch House, Torch Way, Northampton Road, Market Harborough, LE16 9HL.
It seems incredible that Waverley Abbey House has been open as CWR’s headquarters now for 25 years. Each year around 5,500 people come through its doors, just under 4,500 beds are made and approximately 20,000 meals are served. It is a place where marriages have been mended, burned-out leaders have been restored, people have been healed and envisioned, professionals and counsellors have been trained, and many thousands brought to a fresh understanding of and enthusiasm for God’s Word. Many have gone on to establish significant ministries of their own both in the UK and around the world.

God’s timing never ceases to amaze me, not least in that we find ourselves on this anniversary at yet another milestone – that of a new step for CWR with Pilgrim Hall, which also has a rich Christian heritage and history.

The process of purchasing and developing the ministry at Pilgrim Hall has certainly been one in which the ways of God have been very evident. As Selwyn explores these ways in this issue, I pray that we will see how, when we begin to understand God’s ways rather than resist and struggle with them, He will indeed ‘reveal, reverse and restore’.

I thank God for all of you who have invested in and continue to invest in the ministry of CWR. First written as a celebratory issue, I hope that this will be so again, as we move into a new phase.

His way is to do everything in His time: may all the glory go to Him.

Sincerely yours, in His name

Mick Brooks, Consulting Editor
‘It’s His way’

FOR READING & MEDITATION – EXODUS 33:1–14

‘... the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.’ (v.11)

This issue of Every Day with Jesus was originally written to coincide with the official opening in 1987 of Waverley Abbey House, CWR’s teaching and training centre. CWR was formed in 1965, and the purchase of the House was a significant milestone in the life of the ministry. And so, at this juncture, it seemed appropriate to ask ourselves: what are some of the lessons we have learnt along the way? How has God revealed Himself to us and what has He shown us about His manner and methods of working?

There is no doubt in my mind that one of the most significant and important lessons that Father God has taught us, and is still teaching us, is a deeper understanding of His ways. The insights He has given us on this matter have now been gathered together to form this issue – The Ways of God.

And so we begin with the thought that the more we know and understand God’s ways, the better we will know Him. When we meet someone new, we may hear others say of them: ‘It is just his way’ or, ‘He thinks and acts differently to most people, but once you get used to his ways, you will get on well with him’. So it is with God. The better we know and understand His ways, the richer will be our relationship with Him.

Take this verse: ‘He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel’ (Psa. 103:7). The Israelites knew only the acts of God and easily fell prey to murmurings and misunderstandings; Moses knew the ways of God and became, as our text for today shows, His confidant and friend. Some see only the actions of God: happy are those who understand His ways.

O God, I see that if I am to get on with You better then I must come to know and understand Your ways. Open my eyes that I may see, not just Your acts, but the purposes that lie behind those acts. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY

Gen. 18:16–33; James 2:21–23
1. Why would God hide or reveal His plans?
2. What was special about Abraham?
The leisured heart

FOR READING & MEDITATION - PROVERBS 3:1-18

‘Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.’ (v.17)

The amazing thing about knowing and understanding the ways of God is that it has helped me to look at my difficulties and circumstances through a different lens, and everything has taken on a completely new perspective. Life can change from boredom and emptiness, profitlessness and purposelessness, to meaning, direction, hope, encouragement and deliverance from despair.

As I look back to the early days of CWR and reflect on God’s leadings, I clearly remember some situations when I was at the point of panic – simply because I did not know or understand the ways of God. I used to say to myself: ‘What is God doing? Why doesn’t He do this, rather than that? What possible purpose can He have in taking us down this road?’ If I had had a better understanding of the ways of God and had known them as well as I do today, many difficult situations would have been robbed of their fear. I saw His acts, but did not understand His ways.

I have now a little more understanding and insight into the way God works and, as I came to terms with it, so I entered into the experience of what someone has described as ‘the leisured heart’. Those who knew me well said: ‘What has changed you? You were fussy, aggressive and easily ruffled – what has made the difference?’ I was able to share with them that I had begun to understand something of God’s ways, and with that understanding had come a deep inner security and peace.

Many people are living strained spiritual lives, and though there can be many reasons for this, by far the commonest is this – we are unfamiliar with our Father’s ways.

My Father and my God, I know to understand Your ways is something that is important and significant. I need also to become more familiar with You. Help me come through to a deeper and clearer understanding of this. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.
‘Will you be made whole?’

FOR READING & MEDITATION – JOHN 5:1-15
‘When Jesus saw him lying there ... he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”’ (v.6)

We ended yesterday by saying that some are living strained spiritual lives because they do not always understand their Father’s ways. So they find it difficult to know the experience of the ‘leisured heart’.

Jesus, of course, is our example of what it means to live in the knowledge and understanding of the Father’s ways. He was never in a hurry, and appeared to be adequate for every situation that confronted Him. In the passage before us today, we see He was so familiar with His Father’s ways that He quietly walked past the crowd of desperate people sitting by the pool of Bethesda and said to just one person: ‘Do you want to be made well?’ Why didn’t He ask that same question of everyone? There was a great crowd of people needing His help – why focus on just one?

I used to have great difficulty with this passage until I came to see the connecting links in verses 17 and 19: ‘My Father is always at his work ... and I too am working ... the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing ...’. Jesus seems to be saying that He did not get His guidance from what went on around Him, but from what went on above Him. Note the phrase – ‘what he sees his Father doing’. Jesus looked up to heaven, saw that His Father’s way in this situation was not to heal all but to heal one, then moved in to make the divine will a reality. The way of man would be to minister to the whole crowd, but God’s way was to single out one individual and focus only on him. We cannot say why, but a closer look at God’s character reveals His motives are always good.

Father, help me to understand that though Your ways sometimes seem unpredictable, they are never capricious. There is always a good, gracious and benevolent reason behind everything You do. Amen.
Is God Irish?

FOR READING & MEDITATION - ISAIAH 55:1-13

‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’ (v.9)

The incident we looked at yesterday illustrates the fact that God’s ways are so different from man’s that they sometimes appear to be the complete opposite. We have a certain approach to life – but God has another. And unless we come to terms with this, we will find a lot of the things that go on in our Christian life make no sense at all. A friend of mine from Northern Ireland claims he can prove from the Bible that God is Irish. When asked to support this claim, he says: ‘Because God does everything in the opposite way to everyone else!’

We may have a fixed view and modus operandi to life – but God who understands and sees all may have another. For example, we might think that leadership is getting others to serve us. However, God says: ‘Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant’ (Matt. 20:26). The great are not those who have the greatest number of servants, but those who serve the greatest number. Then again – man thinks that to surrender his life to God is to lose it. God says otherwise: ‘For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it’ (Matt. 16:25).

Take one more example – we think that the basic keys to good health are sleep, food, exercise and rest. A phrase often used in newspapers and magazines is this: ‘You are what you eat.’ God says that ‘... godliness has value for all things ...’ (1 Tim. 4:8). Sleep, food, exercise and rest are important, but not nearly as important as a godly lifestyle. It is not so much what you eat but what is eating you that is important.

O Father, I am beginning to understand that my ways are not always Yours. Help me bring my wandering desires and inclinations into line with Your perfect will. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.
## CWR Ministry Events

**PLEASE PRAY FOR THE TEAM**

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Please also pray for students and tutors on our ongoing **BA in Counselling** programme at Waverley and our **Certificate and Diploma of Christian Counselling** and **MA in Integrative Psychotherapy** held at London School of Theology.

For further details and a full list of CWR’s courses, phone +44 (0)1252 784719, or visit the CWR website at [www.cwr.org.uk](http://www.cwr.org.uk)
Revealed – not discovered

FOR READING & MEDITATION - ROMANS 11:25-36

‘Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!’ (v.33)

We are ready now to begin looking at some of the ways in which God works, but before we do so we pause in the light of today’s text to ask ourselves this question: if God’s ways are ‘unsearchable and past finding out’, why try to discover them?

The point this text makes is that it is impossible for the human mind on its own to search out and understand the designs of God. It is not saying we cannot understand them; it is saying that we cannot understand them by our own unaided reason. Therefore, God has graciously revealed something of His ways through Scripture, and one of the main purposes of the Bible is to help us become familiar with the ways, will, plans and purposes of God. So, without any further preamble, let’s dig into Scripture and see what we can learn about our Father’s ways.

I have highlighted for our meditations over the next few weeks eight specific ways of God, and the first to come under consideration is this – it is the way of God to train before He entrusts. God will never place us in a position of great responsibility in His kingdom without first putting us through some spiritual training. The apostle Paul said: ‘... he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service’ (1 Tim. 1:2).

A.S. Way translates it thus: ‘He tested me ... ere He entrusted me.’ Believe me, if you want to do something great for God, you must be willing to be tried and proved. And the ‘testing’ is not so much that God might be convinced of your ability to perform, but that you yourself might become more refined and ready through the process.

Father, help me understand that I must not look upon Your training as an obstacle I have to overcome, but as an opportunity to be grasped. For I see that it is as I grapple that I grow. Amen.
We said yesterday that everyone who seeks to do something great for God must be prepared to undergo spiritual training as preparation. What are some aspects of our training? I have discovered, both in my own life and in talking with others, that there are five or six major areas of training or preparation that God uses before He entrusts us with special responsibility in His kingdom.

One is our financial stewardship. Our text tells us that Jesus ‘sat down opposite the treasury, and watched …’ I believe He is watching still. I remember very clearly, in the early years of CWR, when just hundreds of pounds went through my hands, how the Lord spoke to me and said: ‘I am watching how you handle this responsibility. Do it well and I will give you greater things to take care of for Me.’ Later, as CWR grew, thousands of pounds went through my hands, and again the Lord came alongside me and said, in the tenderest way: ‘I am still watching.’

I made mistakes, of course, but they were not major ones and were easily rectified. Now, along with my fellow directors, I am a trustee of a property of significant value.

One of the things I find saddest is to see a young man start out in the work of God with tremendous spiritual potential and then fail the money test. I know some Christians, and so I am sure do you, who looked as if they were going to set the world on fire, but because they couldn’t handle money they fell by the way. It is a sobering thought, but Jesus still sits quietly by the treasury, carefully watching how we handle money, and the influence and effect it has on us.

O God my Father, I see so clearly that money can be a ministry or it can be my master. Help me see that I am a steward not a proprietor, and that everything I have is part of a sacred trust – Your trust. Amen.
The time test

FOR READING & MEDITATION – COLOSSIANS 4:1-18

‘... make the most of every opportunity.’ (v.5)

We continue looking at some of the areas of our lives in which God works as He prepares us for special responsibility in His kingdom. Jesus sits alongside us, not only to look at how we use our treasure, but also at how we use our time. One of the greatest tests of discipleship is what we do with the minutes and hours that are entrusted to us day by day.

I am convinced that if I had not learned to become a good manager of my time, I would never have been able to continue writing issue after issue of Every Day with Jesus, which is now read by hundreds of thousands of people around the world. In the words of John Wesley, that master user of time: ‘Never be unemployed and never be triflingly employed.’

In photography, we are told that the quality of the picture depends, not only on what you put into it, but what you leave out. Likewise, our capacity to say ‘No’ determines our capacity to say ‘Yes’. You have to say ‘No’ to lesser things in order to say ‘Yes’ to greater things. Life, it has been said, ‘demands elimination as well as assimilation’. That is why the first qualification of a writer is – a wastepaper basket. Throw away things that do not contribute.

Can you pass the ‘time’ test? Do you carry on conversations, for example, long after they have run out of intelligence? Or waste hours daydreaming? Time is distilled opportunity – a sacred trust. Don’t waste it, for in doing so you waste yourself. People often say to me: ‘My problem is that I don’t have enough time.’ I have often responded: ‘No, that’s not your problem, your problem is that you do not use to the best advantage the time you have.’

My Father and my God, I want to be ready for whatever You have for me in the future. Help me make the most of every moment, so that when the great moments come I will be a prepared person. In Christ’s name I ask it. Amen.
Another area of our life which God uses to prepare us for special responsibility in His kingdom is persistence. Talk to any spiritual leader you know and I will guarantee that somewhere in their life you will find that God brought them to a time when they felt like giving up – but kept going nevertheless. The Church is filled with people who made good beginnings but bad endings. People start with good intentions but then, for various reasons, compromise on their original plans or become discouraged and give up.

One translation of the passage before us today says: ‘Where is the trusty, thoughtful steward whom the lord and master will set over his establishment?’ (Moffatt). Note the two words ‘trusty’ and ‘thoughtful’. A ‘trusty’ servant will go through to the end, a ‘thoughtful’ servant will consider the best ways to achieve that end.

Some time ago I watched a marathon race on television and saw a man come in hours behind the others. As he staggered towards the rope, weak and exhausted, the crowd applauded him more than they did the winner. And why? Because although he finished last – he finished. Everyone is impressed with a finisher. In 1 Corinthians chapter 16, the apostle Paul said: ‘... I'm staying right here ... A huge door of opportunity for good work has opened up here. (There is also mushrooming opposition.)’ (vv.8–9, The Message). Many others might have said: ‘I am quitting ... I have great opportunities here ... but there are too many things against me.’ Determine, whatever God asks you to do, that you will stay with it – and finish it.

My Father, I know You want to use me. But I cannot be used unless I am trusty and thoughtful. Help me to be trusted to go through clear to the end with unwavering persistence. Amen.
We continue looking at some of the training which God puts His people through before He passes on to them greater responsibility in His kingdom. Today we look at what I am calling the ‘what is’ test. I am thinking here of those Christians who adopt the attitude: if I were anywhere but here, I would be all right. They dream of what they would do if they were not in their present circumstances. They are like birds in a cage, uselessly beating their wings because they cannot fly.

While it is true that it’s important to have vision in our Christian experience and we need not stop desiring and longing for higher things, let’s not allow the desire for ‘what can be’ to hinder us from living effectively in the ‘what is’. The children of Israel lived on manna in the wilderness as they journeyed to the promised land. Imagine it – manna every day for 40 years! They got tired of it at times, but it sustained them right through the wilderness journey until they got to Canaan.

You and I may get tired of our present circumstances or situation, but we can learn to live with it until we get to our promised land. If I were to tell you the difficulties and problems that we encountered in remodelling Waverley Abbey House, you would have difficulty believing it. We might never have stayed with it if God had not taken us this way before and taught us the lesson of living with the ‘what is’ until we come to the moment of ‘what will be’. If we can’t get what we like, then we must like what we get. Learning that lesson gives a staying power that transforms everything.

Lord Jesus, You who lived on the manna of the silent years of obscurity in Nazareth – and lived on it gloriously – help me to live on the ‘what is’. Then I shall really live. Amen.