

December 2018, January 2019

*Your priest writes:*

## **‘THE ONLY CONNECT UNIVERSAL CHALLENGE’**



On Monday evenings for the last few weeks, if there has been nothing booked in my diary, I have enjoyed an hour in the company of BBC2 television for its Quiz hour. This begins at 8.00pm with the fiendishly cryptic ‘Only Connect’ where one has to find the connection between various random items. Then there is the long running competition for students, the rigorously academic University challenge. For the hour my little grey cells are given a serious workout as my knowledge and interpretation are put to the test, and often found wanting!

What do you make of the following questions?

1. Who comes next in the following sequence – Adam, Noah, Jared,?
2. Which five books of the bible contain only one chapter?

When I was at theological college, I discovered my knowledge of scripture faced the same challenges. Though I had read my bible since childhood, I was amazed at how little knowledge I had of its contents, and how I had never made the connections between different styles of writing and how the old and new testaments were connected.

Occasionally when preaching if I ask a rhetorical question about the Bible I catch a brief glance of some in the congregation and see a ‘please don’t ask me’ look in their eyes. So I thought I might use the next year of my monthly letters to look in a little more detail about the bible.

Many people today think the bible is boring, irrelevant, too long to read, written in archaic language, only understandable by experts. None of this is true. The Bible is still very relevant today for the following reasons:

- It is about ordinary people like us and the issues they face
- It is historically important, influential and inspiring
- It addresses the ‘big’ questions about life
- It is the ‘Word of God’

The problem is not so much with the bible, but rather with our approach to it. Sometimes it seems we approach the bible rather like a visit to the dentist, for the occasional check-up, or when we need emergency treatment! But if we were to be excited by the prospect we might be better placed if we look at the bible as a wonderful country to explore.

Nick Page, the writer and unlicensed church historian, talks of the Bible as being made up of:

- Continents – Old & New Testaments
- Regions – History, Prophecy, Law, Poetry, Wisdom, Story, Biography, Letters.
- Cities – the different books.
- Streets and Houses – individual chapters and verses.

As we make our journey of exploration, we need to constantly ask questions. Rudyard Kipling’s honest serving men can help; ‘Who, What, Where, Why, When and How’ are great aids to exploring Scripture.

As we read we can ask, ‘Who wrote this? When was it written? What style is it? Where is it set? Why was it written? How does it apply to my life today?’ and other similar questions.

The real purpose of reading the Bible is to deepen our relationship with God, and as we read the bible we are constantly engaging with the main characters, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

With best wishes for a Happy and Holy Christmas and a Good New Year.

Yours in Christ

Reverend John, your Priest.