

MAY-AUGUST 2019



# New Daylight

Sustaining your daily journey with the Bible



Included in this issue

Harvest PAUL GRAVELLE

Judges 1–12 AMY BOUCHER PYE

Resilience TONY HORSFALL

# New Daylight

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Edited by **Sally Welch**

**May–August 2019**

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## Suggestions for using *New Daylight*

Find a regular time and place, if possible, where you can read and pray undisturbed. Before you begin, take time to be still and perhaps use the BRF Prayer on page 6. Then read the Bible passage slowly (try reading it aloud if you find it over-familiar), followed by the comment. You can also use *New Daylight* for group study and discussion, if you prefer.

The prayer or point for reflection can be a starting point for your own meditation and prayer. Many people like to keep a journal to record their thoughts about a Bible passage and items for prayer. In *New Daylight* we also note the Sundays and some special festivals from the church calendar, to keep in step with the Christian year.

## *New Daylight* and the Bible

*New Daylight* contributors use a range of Bible versions, and you will find a list of the versions used opposite. You are welcome to use your own preferred version alongside the passage printed in the notes. This can be particularly helpful if the Bible text has been abridged.

*New Daylight* affirms that the whole of the Bible is God's revelation to us, and we should read, reflect on and learn from every part of both Old and New Testaments. Usually the printed comment presents a straightforward 'thought for the day', but sometimes it may also raise questions rather than simply providing answers, as we wrestle with some of the more difficult passages of scripture.

*New Daylight* is also available in a deluxe edition (larger format). Visit your local Christian bookshop or BRF's online shop [brfonline.org.uk](http://brfonline.org.uk). To obtain a cassette version for the visually impaired, contact Torch Trust for the Blind, Torch House, Torch Way, Northampton Road, Market Harborough LE16 9HL; +44 (0)1858 438260; [info@torchtrust.org](mailto:info@torchtrust.org). For a Braille edition, contact St John's Guild, Sovereign House, 12-14 Warwick Street, Coventry CV5 6ET; +44 (0)24 7671 4241; [info@stjohnsguild.org](mailto:info@stjohnsguild.org).

## Comment on *New Daylight*

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**Amy Boucher Pye** is a writer and speaker who runs the *Woman Alive* book club. She is the author of the award-winning *Finding Myself in Britain* (Authentic, 2015) and *The Living Cross* (BRF, 2016). [amyboucherpye.com](http://amyboucherpye.com)

**Paul Gravelle** is an Anglican priest in Auckland, New Zealand. He is a poet, writer and retreat leader and has ministered in military, urban and rural settings, supporting himself as an industrial journalist.

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## Sally Welch writes...

One of my tasks as editor of *New Daylight* is to read through the entire issue just before I send it to BRF for further editing and proofreading. Usually I end up with my head reeling with hundreds of new ideas, reflections and insights, and it takes me a few days to return to 'normal'. This issue is no exception – for the next few months you will experience a wide range of writers, subjects and approaches, some of which will challenge, some comfort and others entertain you. All, I hope, will inform your spiritual life.

Amy Boucher Pye bravely tackles *Judges*, a difficult and challenging book, which seems concerned mostly with recording the many ways in which God's people turn away from him and towards other gods. However, Amy finds pockets of hope in the stories of Deborah and Gideon, and useful lessons for us all in the way that God never loses faith in his people, even when they lose faith in him. She demonstrates the way in which the Old Testament can provide depth and new dimensions to our understanding of God and of the redemption of his promises in the person of Christ.

Penelope Wilcock's reflections challenge us in a different way. Through her examination of the roles of women in the New Testament, she helps us to see that our task is to assist with the 'restoration of equality' for men and women, away from attitudes of 'dominance and subjugation', which have their roots, she asserts, as far back as the fall. She declares, however, that our challenge is to ensure that such restoration takes place 'quietly, gently, gracefully and with propriety, as befits the Christian way'.

Finally, Paul Gravelle's reflections on harvest are particularly interesting, since they come to us from the other side of the world – New Zealand. Harvest is both a universal theme and a highly place-specific phenomenon, and Paul helps us to explore both physical and spiritual harvest times.

All the reflections in this issue are written by enthusiastic and thoughtful people, whose heart for the gospel is such that they share it in the best way they can, to everyone possible. I wish you good reading!



# Resilience

If you listen carefully to the media you will know that resilience is a buzzword. You will hear it in many different contexts, from sport to politics to economics. You may also become aware that Christians talk about it a lot as well.

The word ‘resilience’ comes from the Latin word *resilio*, which means to rebound or to spring back. In engineering, resilience describes the way some materials can recover their shape after having been under great pressure. More recently it has been used in psychology to describe the resilience of the human spirit – the way people recover from stress and cope with adversity. It is a quality that can be shown by individuals or whole communities as they adjust to difficult circumstances.

There is some debate as to how we become resilient. While we are born with a degree of resilience (think about a premature baby fighting for its life), we can also develop resilience as we go through life, learning from the challenges we face how to persevere and keep going. This means that resilience can be enhanced or increased through learning, and there is now a growing interest in identifying the factors that make for resilience, both in children and adults.

While the Bible does not use the word ‘resilience’, it does record many examples of people who showed great resilience in their lives, and we can learn from their examples – think about the men and women of faith listed in Hebrews 11. The nearest equivalent word for resilience in scripture is the Greek word *hupomone*, usually translated as ‘perseverance’ or ‘endurance’ in the New Testament and a characteristic encouraged by the apostle Paul.

Many secular writers note the important part that faith plays in resilience, and I think it is fair to say that we can speak about spiritual resilience when we are describing the strength that we may find in God to cope with our struggles. This is the theme for these readings, and my prayer is that you will discover the wealth of encouragement there is in scripture to keep going through adversity and hardship, and be reminded how faith can help us recover from setbacks and disappointments.

TONY HORSFALL

## The need for resilience

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

The epistle to the Hebrews was written to encourage Jewish Christians who were in danger of losing their faith through discouragement and difficulty. In this context the writer says they need to persevere, using the Greek word *hupomone*, which, as we have seen, could be translated as 'resilience'.

Resilience can be defined as the ability to keep going during times of difficulty; to bounce back after disappointment; to recover from hurt or injury; to deal effectively with pressure and stress. When we read the situation surrounding these first believers, it is easy to see why they needed resilience. When we think of our own society, and the pressures we face today, we probably feel the same way. All of us have our own personal struggles and experience our share of suffering. The temptation to quit is real, the desire to give up a constant danger.

Here we are reminded that, to do the will of God and to receive the good of all he has promised us, we must find the strength to keep going. Where does such strength come from? From within ourselves, yes, as we find the determination to carry on. But also from outside ourselves, as we begin to learn how to find our strength in God. It is not his will for us to fail or to give up. His help is always available to us, even in our weakness. We have only to call out to him for help and he will come to our aid.

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*Lord, you know the pressures I face. Give me strength to persevere even when I feel like quitting.*

TONY HORSFALL



## Finding strength in God

When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. David's two wives had been captured – Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the Lord his God.

Is this David's darkest day? Having sought temporary refuge among the Philistines from Saul's murderous threats, David has been forced to return to his desert home in Ziklag. A scene of utter devastation awaits David and his men. The encampment was utterly destroyed and looted, their loved ones taken hostage by Amalekite raiders. Battle-hardened soldiers are reduced to tears. In their grief they turn on David, venting their anger on their leader.

Trauma of any kind has a way of knocking us off our feet, of destabilising the steadiest of people. No doubt David too was initially shaken, but he finds equilibrium again by turning to God. In moments of sudden and unexpected crisis we either turn away from God or turn towards him. David chose the latter and to find his strength in the one who was his rock and his refuge.

I imagine David stepping aside for a period of solitude and there turning to God in heartfelt prayer – venting his feelings honestly, expressing his confusion and rage – and yet working his way through his pain to a place of trust in God. Perhaps he even chose to praise God amid his difficulty. Certainly he would have reminded himself of God's promises and asked for divine guidance. Then, when he had recovered his balance, he was ready to step back into the fray and respond to the situation.

This is a pattern we see often in David's psalms, and one that we can follow for ourselves. It reminds us that there is a spiritual dimension to resilience, and that faith in God is an important resource when it comes to coping with life's demands.

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*Lord, help me to turn towards you in times of stress.*

TONY HORSFALL

## Practising self-care

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

After his success on Mount Carmel against the prophets of Baal, Elijah is suddenly overcome by a feeling of utter despair. Exhausted from the ordeal and fearing for his life, he hides in the desert and begs God to let him die.

God's way of caring for Elijah is to send an angel to attend to his physical needs. What the prophet most requires at this moment is a good meal, some refreshment and a long rest. This may seem like pretty basic care, yet it is exactly what Elijah needs to recover his strength and the angel's practical ministrations are repeated for good measure (vv. 7-9).

Research has shown that there is a physical dimension to resilience that involves looking after ourselves properly. Regular exercise, sufficient sleep, a healthy diet and drinking enough water are just some of the factors highlighted as being vital aspects in self-care. In the demands of daily life, the pressures of work and church responsibilities, it is easy to be overcommitted and to become exhausted. If we continually give out to others without caring for ourselves, we leave ourselves at the risk of operating out of a deficiency of energy and motivation. Left unchecked, such an imbalance can lead to burnout.

Resilient people practise appropriate self-care, not selfishly for their own comfort, but so they can sustain their service for God and others. Be sure to take care of your body as well as your soul.

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*Lord, my body is a gift from you. Help me to respect it,  
and to care for it wisely.*

## Looking after your mind

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Paul was always urging his followers to give themselves fully to God, and to live radically different lives to that of the pagan world around them. He longed to see them increasingly transformed into Christlikeness, and at the heart of this struggle he recognised the importance of right thinking.

In speaking of the renewal of the mind, Paul is thinking about making sure our thoughts are in line with God's thoughts, that we adopt a Christian world view, whereby we see things from God's perspective. This is not easy to attain, as we all bring with us patterns of thinking from our old lives. Furthermore, we are constantly bombarded by the world's way of thinking. The media, in its many forms, impacts us daily and seeks to influence our thoughts, values and behaviours. The result is that our minds are often full of unhelpful ideas that work against our growth in Christ.

Resilient people guard their minds. They challenge their own thinking so that negative thought patterns do not rob them of their self-worth and self-confidence. They discipline their minds to take in the word of God through study, scripture memorisation and meditation, allowing their thoughts to be shaped by God's truth. Thus their thinking becomes more robust and they are better prepared to withstand the lies of the devil and any falsity in cultural norms. Further, they have a way of interpreting what happens to them in the light of God's purposes.

In particular, they take hold of the promises of God and bring them to mind whenever they need reassurance. They learn to trust God's word more than their feelings or their circumstances, and to walk by faith and not by sight.

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*Lord, help me to renew my mind, to sift out any unhelpful thinking  
and to replace it with your truth.*

## Validating your emotions

My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One, with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng. Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.

The writer of this psalm is probably a temple musician exiled either in northern Israel or even Babylon. Separated from all that he loves, he experiences a time of reactive depression, which he bravely acknowledges before God and others in this poignant song.

The ability to identify, own and validate our emotions, and to be open about our feelings, is another characteristic of resilient people. Emotions add colour to our lives, but they can also be troublesome, captivating our souls and, if we are not careful, pushing us to behave unhelpfully. All of us must learn how to take control of our emotions rather than allow them to control us, although that is not the same as suppressing them or pretending we don't have them.

The psalmist is honest about his feelings of depression, which takes real courage, but is not content to wallow in self-pity. Rather, he questions the validity of his downheartedness in the light of what he knows about God, and speaks words of hope to himself. He chooses to be optimistic about the future, believing things will change, and although he continues to battle with his emotions, this faith-filled response sets his feet on solid ground.

Crying is normal in times of loss, and there is nothing to be ashamed of in shedding tears. Tears have a way of bringing healing because they release stress hormones from the body, which is why we feel better after a good cry. Expressing what we are feeling through writing, art or music also helps us to cope, as does talking things through with a good listener.

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*Lord, you understand how I feel. I have no need to be ashamed.  
Help me to trust in you even when I feel all at sea.*

TONY HORSFALL

## Building a support network

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: if either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

The author of Ecclesiastes is usually identified as King Solomon, a man noted for his wisdom. Here he speaks about the importance of nurturing and developing good friendships as a way of coping with the challenges of life.

Among the many benefits of close, supportive relationships, he highlights four valuable outcomes: being able to work together on a task; helping each other recover after falling; lending emotional warmth during chilly times of adversity; and offering mutual protection in times of attack. Who would not appreciate such help? As believers we are not called to be independent, but interdependent, and such quality relationships are a great source of strength when times are hard.

Good friendships require an investment of time and energy, but this proves abundantly worthwhile in the long run, for our best support in life usually comes from those closest to us. Keep in touch with your friends; meet them for coffee or a meal; be open and honest with them. If you have such people around you, don't take them for granted – appreciate them and let them know how important they are to you.

Despite the highly connected world in which we live, many people remain lonely and isolated. If that is how you feel, ask God to give you one or two good friends with whom you can share in this way. Remember that to have friends we must also be a friend. Don't let the fear of rejection prevent you from reaching out to others.

All of us should be ready to welcome others into the circle of our friendship and to keep our eyes open for those who are lonely. Friendship is a God-given way of maintaining our resilience in life.

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*Lord, thank you for my friendships. Help me to be a good friend to others.*

TONY HORSFALL

## Seeing the bigger picture

His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. ‘We are your slaves,’ they said. But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

The story of Joseph and his brothers is told in Genesis 37–50 and provides a remarkable example of resilience. Despite his being cruelly betrayed by his siblings, being sold into slavery in Egypt and ending up in prison through false accusation, Joseph is able to forgive his brothers. Not only that, he can also see God’s purpose in all that happened, and how God’s favour on his life has enabled him to provide for his family during the time of famine.

The ability to make sense of what happens to us in life, and to have a way of interpreting our suffering, greatly enhances resilience. Viktor Frankl, in his famous book *Man’s Search for Meaning*, reflects on his time in a German concentration camp. He noticed that the prisoners who coped best were those who could find a sense of meaning even in such tragic surroundings.

Joseph interprets what has happened to him through the lens of faith. He can see a bigger picture. In his providence God has allowed these things to happen to him and has given him a place of prominence in Egypt so that he is able to save his family. This understanding gives his suffering meaning and enables him to rise above the natural temptation to be bitter.

There is a mystery to the providence of God, and it can best be understood with hindsight and the passing of time, but it is comforting to know that, as the apostle Paul said, God is able to bring good even out of the bad things that happen (Romans 8:28). We are not the victims of chance or fate – there is a guiding hand.

---

*Lord, I don’t always understand all that happens to me,  
but I dare to trust that you are in control.*



# Transforming lives and communities

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### Readers' comments on **New Daylight**:

'Thank you for all you do to make every issue so readable and enlightening, giving us the opportunity to get closer to God.'

'Thank you to all the wonderful writers who bring scriptures to life and make them relevant for us in the here and now.'

'I just wanted to say how much I appreciate the notes for helping to keep me going with reading the Bible and shedding light on demanding passages.'



**New Daylight** is edited by Sally Welch. Sally is Vicar of Charlbury and Area Dean of Chipping Norton.

### Contributors in this issue

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