

# Education Sunday

12 FEBRUARY 2006

The ninth Sunday before Easter is traditionally set aside by all the Christian churches as Education Sunday

## Prizes That Last

Imagine the scene – the runners are all poised at the starting line, the crowd is roaring, the atmosphere is electric . . . The athletes have all been in strict training but only one, at the peak of fitness, can win. For many, this year will be full of excitement, with much emphasis on sporting excellence. Television enables us to appreciate the effort involved and to join the celebrations of the successful athletes on television. Competitors in the Olympics, the World Cup or the Commonwealth Games will, if successful, win cups and medals, but these are prizes that will not last. Their achievements are beyond the reach of most of us, yet we have the opportunity to attain a greater prize, even if we have little or no interest in sport.

Sometimes education seems like a sporting event. There are new targets to aim for, new rules, new trophies to claim. But education is not just about being the best: it has wider purposes which need to be valued for their own sake - the development of individual potential and the pursuit of knowledge and truth. Education is about becoming spiritually, physically and mentally fit, developing healthy attitudes to others and to ourselves. Christian teachers and learners know, as Paul does, that we should put our efforts into winning a crown that will last forever. Following Paul's example, we do not run aimlessly, but with a purpose: listening for God's word, which fits us for life and prepares us for the ultimate prize – to be with God for ever.

In sport success is transitory. In education we should always encourage people to strive for prizes that will last.

1 Corinthians 9.24-27

## Seed thoughts for sermons/talks

**2 Kings 5.1-14 (see also v15a)**

**'Is this prize worth having?'**

A highly respected soldier, possibly facing the 'early signs' of his illness, has a number of important lessons to learn, such as:

- Children sometimes know best! (verse 3)
- Friends in high places aren't always helpful! (verses 6 & 7)
- Pride goes before a fall – if you're not careful! (verses 11 & 12)
- Sometimes you only need to do the little thing! (verse 13)

Naaman almost missed the simple source of his healing – because he thought the cost derisory and beneath him. But thanks to timely advice from some 'insignificant people' he took the man of God at his word, and did the 'little thing' asked of him.

In doing so he gained his greatest prize and learnt his most important lesson:

- The one true source of healing is the one true God. (verse 15a)



## Suggested Hymns

- All I once held dear
- Come on and celebrate
- Fight the good fight
- Jesus, we celebrate your victory
- Oh Jesus I have promised
- Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
- You are the King of Glory

## Lectionary Readings

2 Kings 5.1-14 (*see also verse 15a*)

Psalm 30

Mark 1.40-45

1 Corinthians 9.24-27

**For well over a hundred years there has been an annual recognition of Education Sunday in England and Wales. It is a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education. The theme is devised by an ecumenical steering group representing different Christian denominations.**

**For some years it has been celebrated on the ninth Sunday before Easter. The ideas in this leaflet are intended to be used as a springboard for a variety of events on or around Education Sunday. If you feel unable to devote a whole service to the theme on Sunday 12 February why not use some of the ideas on another occasion?**

## Prayers

We pray for all those around the world who want to learn, but are denied their right to education.

We pray too for those who teach, especially those who work with few resources and little support.

We give thanks for the knowledge, skills and understanding we have and we ask your help to remember how much we have still to learn.

Teach us to respect wisdom, wherever we find it.

As you walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus walk with us as we try to understand.

Open our hearts and minds to new learning even when it challenges us to change.

Give us the courage to tackle injustice and guide us towards a new, shared future, where everyone has the chance to learn, and all may grow in wisdom and understanding.

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*Leader:* God of all time and wisdom, through the power of your Spirit, enlighten us all as we teach and as we learn, that we may discern your word and find your truth.

Lord, by your Spirit:

*All: Bring in your Kingdom*

*Leader:* God our inspiration, uphold all those who exercise their vocation in education whether as teachers, leaders or helpers.

In our community we pray for . . .

Lord, by your Spirit:

*All: Bring in your Kingdom.*

*Leader:* God our anchor and support, we pray for all those who are responsible for education planning, policy-making and administration.

In our community we pray for . . .

Lord, by your Spirit:

*All: Bring in your Kingdom.*

*Leader:* God of renewal and growth, give us all, learners and teachers, children and adults, ears that are eager to listen, eyes that are quick to see, hands that are sure to do, and hearts that are always open to learn more of your love.

Lord of the Church

*All: Hear our prayer, and make us one in heart and mind to serve you with joy forever. Amen.*

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## Further Suggestions for Prayer

There will be specific needs in each community, but these points may guide further prayers:

- that all of those involved in education will have a sense of purpose and feel God's call on their life
- that we continue to grasp opportunities for learning throughout our lives
- thank God that the ultimate prize for each of us is to know that God loves us

## Resources

- *Creative Assemblies for Key Stage 1*, Heather Baker, Scripture Union
- *Ready-Made Assemblies about Famous People*, Scripture Union
- *Values in Sport*, Scripture Union
- [www.culham.ac.uk/cw](http://www.culham.ac.uk/cw) (Outlines for Collective Worship)
- [www.christiansinsport.org.uk](http://www.christiansinsport.org.uk)
- [www.rejesus.co.uk](http://www.rejesus.co.uk)

## Supplement for Education Sunday issued jointly by

### Association of Christian Teachers

94a London Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 1NX  
[www.christian-teachers.org.uk](http://www.christian-teachers.org.uk)

### Baptist Union of Great Britain

129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxon OX11 8RT  
[www.baptist.org.uk](http://www.baptist.org.uk)

### The Catholic Church, Catholic Education Service, 39

Ecclestone Square, London SW1V 1BX  
[www.catholiceducation.org.uk](http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk)

### The Church of England & The National Society

Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ  
[www.natsoc.org.uk](http://www.natsoc.org.uk)

### The Methodist Church Education Office, 25 Marylebone

Road, London NW1 5JR  
[www.methodist.org.uk/sundays](http://www.methodist.org.uk/sundays)

### The Salvation Army Schools and Colleges Information

Service,  
UK Territorial HQ of the Salvation Army, Newington  
Causeway, London SE1 6BN  
[www.salvationarmy.org.uk/schools](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/schools)

### Student Christian Movement

Unit 308F, The Big Peg, 120 Vyse Street, The Jewellery  
Quarter, Birmingham B18 6NF  
[www.movement.org.uk](http://www.movement.org.uk)

### The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT  
[www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)

[www.educationsunday.org](http://www.educationsunday.org)



And next year . . . Education Sunday will be on  
**4 February 2007**