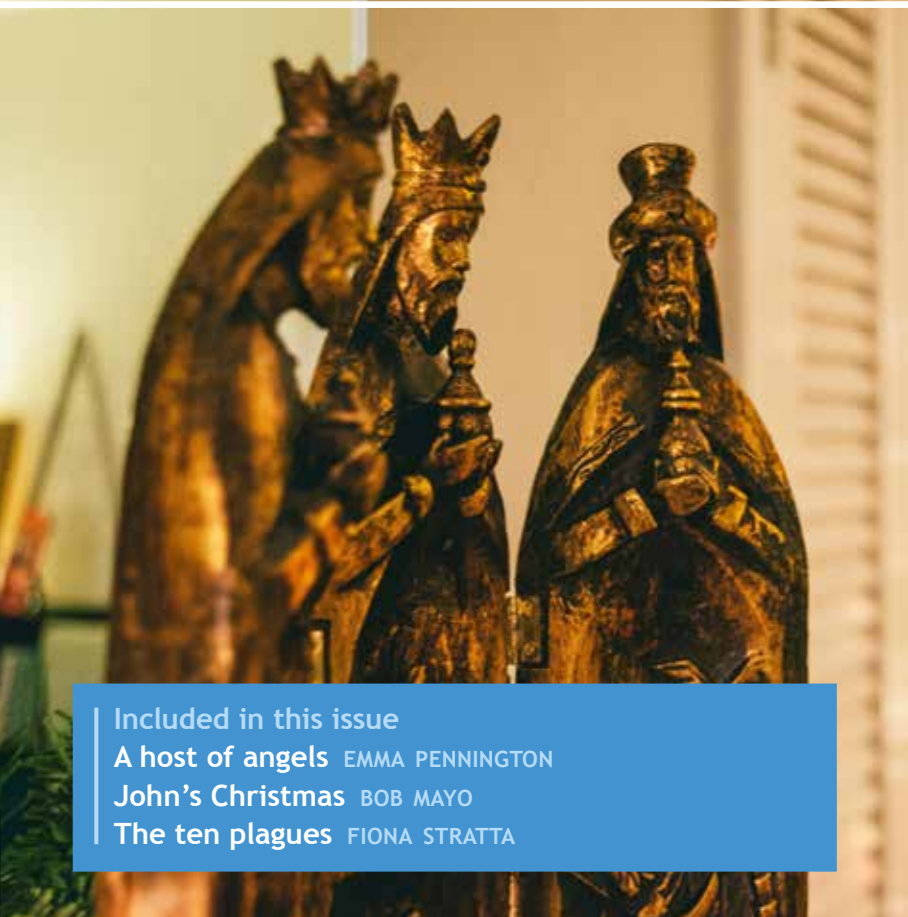


SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2026



New Daylight

Sustaining your daily journey with the Bible



Included in this issue

A host of angels EMMA PENNINGTON

John's Christmas BOB MAYO

The ten plagues FIONA STRATTA

New Daylight

Edited by **Gordon Giles**

September–December 2026

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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 prayer of BRF Ministries on page 6. Then read the Bible passage slowly (try reading it aloud if you find it overfamiliar), 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 brfresources.org.uk. To obtain an audio version for the blind or partially sighted, contact Torch Trust for the Blind, Torch House, Torch Way, Northampton Road, Market Harborough LE16 9HL; +44 (0)1858 438260; info@torchtrust.org.

Comment on *New Daylight*

To send feedback, please email enquiries@brf.org.uk, phone +44 (0)1865 319700, or write to the address shown opposite.

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Sally Welch is vicar of a group of parishes in rural Herefordshire. She is a keen pilgrim and a writer on Christian spirituality. She is a former editor of *New Daylight*.

Gordon Giles writes...



‘Listen my child and incline the ear of your heart.’ These are the opening words of the sixth-century Rule of St Benedict. Since 1964 Benedict has been one of the patron saints of Europe – not simply because his influence on European faith and culture has been so huge, but because his rule is still so relevant. He not only *advocated* common values and purpose, he *provided* them.

It is from the Latin word for ‘listen’ that we get the concept of obedience, one of the three Benedictine vows. Obedience entails a healthy sense of humble self-knowledge and of respecting and listening to the guides, leaders, teachers, and fellow travellers who are accompanying us on our life’s journey.

Another vow is that of stability. Stability is bound up with ‘staying put’, living together. It is about committing oneself to the people with whom you live, work, pray, and learn. I imagine many of you have lived and worshipped in the same place for many years. A church family can be a wonderful thing: walking together, bearing one another’s burdens, sharing each other’s joys as well as the family meal of the Lord’s Supper.

The third vow Benedict called conversion, which was not a once-in-a-lifetime turnaround event, but an ongoing willingness to change and to be changed. That can be a challenge, especially where there is stability. Yet change is inevitable.

Benedict’s Rule engenders a holistic approach to education and life, stressing the importance of community: fostering mutual respect and spiritual and intellectual growth. He promoted reading as study, encouraged curiosity, and valued the practical application of knowledge. He embedded spiritual guidance and pastoral support in community life. His words have been preserved and passed on to us, wafted by the same Spirit of God who inspired him in the first place. We hear the voice of the Spirit when we listen to the words of Benedict echoing down the centuries, advocating obedience built on listening to God and each other; the value of, need for, and call to stability, in life, prayer, and community; and the call to constant conversion – to recognise and welcome change, to admit error, and to embrace the new and exciting.

Gordon

The prayer of BRF Ministries

*Faithful God,
thank you for growing BRF Ministries
from small beginnings
into the worldwide family it is today.
We rejoice as young and old
discover you through your word
and grow daily in faith and love.
Keep us humble in your service,
ambitious for your glory,
and open to new opportunities.
For your name's sake,
Amen.*

'It is such a joy to be part of this amazing project'

As part of our BRF Resources ministry, we're raising funds to give away copies of Bible reading notes and other resources to those who aren't able to access them any other way, working with food banks and chaplaincy services, in prisons, hospitals, and care homes.

'This very generous gift will be hugely appreciated, and truly bless each recipient... Bless you for your kindness.'

'We would like to send our enormous thanks to all involved. Your generosity will have a significant impact and will help us to continue to provide support to local people in crisis, and for this we cannot thank you enough.'

If you've enjoyed and benefited from our resources, would you consider paying it forward to enable others to do so too?

Make a gift at **brf.org.uk/donate**

1 Timothy



The epistle of 1 Timothy is a book full of confusing contrasts for a modern reader. On the one hand, Paul is clearly writing to a specific person – Timothy – to address particular issues at a precise time and place in history. On the other hand, his letter includes at least two early credal statements (possibly prayers or hymns) that apply to the whole church in the broadest sense (2:5–6; 3:16). The letter contains both some of the most well-worn verses quoted against women in ministry (2:11–14) and other passages which seem to describe the early stages of a women’s diaconate (3:11; 5:9–12). Within a few paragraphs, Paul is clearly anxious to make sure of the age and experience of church teachers, and tells Timothy not to let others look down on him because of his youth (4:12).

Like many of Paul’s letters, 1 Timothy can also be frustrating to read because of the many hints at a contemporary culture that has now faded into the mists of history. What was the doctrine of the false teachers that Paul warns Timothy to stand against? What on earth had Hymenaeus and Alexander done to suffer such shipwreck in the faith? What was the purpose of the mysterious list of widows for which only single ladies over 60 need apply? Commentators and historians offer many and varied answers, some very plausible; but there must come a point when we admit that we just do not know for sure.

Today’s readers would be forgiven for consigning the whole letter to a folder marked ‘It must have made sense back then’. But, as with all of scripture, we would miss out on priceless gems if we abandoned 1 Timothy. Instead, let us lean into the contrasts we find in this letter, and we might find them not so contradictory after all. And, despite the obfuscations of two millennia, we may even be able to see ourselves in some of the situations Paul addresses.

These notes follow 1 Timothy chronologically, taking a short passage from each chapter. Although each note has a narrow focus, do try reading a whole chapter each day as we go along to get a sense of the themes that run right through the letter.

Hearsay and heresy

I urge you... to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach different teachings and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith. But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.

Travelling light has never been one of my skills. Until the moment of departure, I can still be found adding little ‘essentials’ to the suitcases. My reasons all begin with the words ‘What if...’ Of course, during the trip I never need half the things I have packed. But what if we *had* been invited to a stranger’s wedding with a specific colour scheme during a snowstorm in July? Then I would have been fully equipped!

Here, Paul asks Timothy to instruct ‘certain people’ who were departing from the message of the gospel because of a fascination with extra myths and theories. Like all my ‘What if’ scenarios, these ‘speculations’ were causing additions to be made to the basic doctrine of the church, and the result was the same for them as it was for me: a heavy burden. Paul points out that the result of the true gospel is much lighter to carry: it looks like love, with a pure heart and a good conscience – in other words, the knowledge of forgiveness and salvation. There is no room for additional guilt. Anything else is ‘meaningless talk’ (v. 6).

Throughout the whole letter, Paul repeatedly refers to credal statements, some of which may have been recited by early Christians to cement and remember their faith. In this chapter, Paul boils it down to one sentence: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ (v. 15).

There is always room for curiosity, but if we become overwhelmed by questions or if extra caveats and burdens are being added to the message of our faith, it is time to remind ourselves of the true gospel and to check that the result of our belief is love and a forgiven heart. The creeds are a good place to start.

*Lord, when I am distracted by questions and divisions,
remind me of what I can know and trust: that you came to save me. Amen.*

AMY SCOTT ROBINSON

Authority and humility

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.

Paul begins this chapter with three strong inclusive statements. They are: prayer should be made for *everyone* – even the kings and rulers, who were not Christians (verses 1–2); God desires *everyone* to be saved (verses 3–4); and Jesus gave himself as a ransom for *all* (verses 5–6).

These statements form the background to the instructions that follow about hierarchies in the church. They act as a reminder that everyone is equally included in the gospel, no matter who is currently in charge.

Paul is concerned that people are taking on positions of authority too soon, seeing it as a means of power and riches instead of having the gospel at heart. He has already mentioned that some are teaching before they have understanding (1:7) and now points out that a recent convert should not be made a bishop (or overseer, 3:6). Paul's instructions about women, strange to our ears, may likewise be because women had only just started to be allowed to learn alongside men (2:11). Like new converts, they were not yet ready for authority.

Above all, Paul wanted the church to be 'quiet and peaceable... in all godliness and dignity' (v. 2), but instead the men were squabbling and the women were trying to prove their status with expensive fashions (vv. 8–9).

This passage should act as a good humility check. One-upmanship and power grabs contradict the inclusive message of Christ, not to mention how this behaviour in a church appears to the rest of the world. Instead, we should be outward-looking, praying for God's kingdom to come in the world Jesus gave himself to save.

Father, I lift to you in prayer all those who have authority – in my country, my church, and my work. Bless and guide them with your wisdom, and whatever I feel about their decisions, help me to keep your plan for salvation at the front of my mind and purpose. Amen.

Knowledge and mystery

Without any doubt, the mystery of godliness is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.

Just as Paul opened his specific comments about the church in Ephesus with a wide, inclusive credal statement, he finishes them with another, bookending his local instructions with reminders of the faith shared by the worldwide church. Once again, he reminds Timothy that the church is the ‘pillar and support of the truth’ (v. 15), that their behaviour matters because there is a truth that is supposed to shine through them to the rest of the world. This time, the bit of verse Paul quotes – probably an early hymn or creed – focuses on the mystery and paradoxes at the heart of the Christian faith.

Anyone who has seen the film *Shakespeare in Love* might remember Henslowe’s evasive catchphrase in sticky situations: ‘I don’t know. It’s a mystery!’ But Paul is not just taking refuge in mystery because he cannot work out the answers; he is rejoicing in it. Recognising the great mysteries at the heart of what we believe is better than inventing the baseless myths that Paul referred to in chapter 1.

The verse presents three paradoxes. First, Christ was revealed in flesh, but vindicated in Spirit, referring to his divine and human natures. Second, Christ was seen by angels but proclaimed even to the gentiles – unexpected outsiders now adopted into God’s people. Third, Christ was believed in through the world but taken up in glory to heaven.

Paul’s opening statement emphasised Christ’s salvation for all; this one declares his dominion over all, across heaven and earth. It lifts our eyes from human concerns that can seem so important straight to God’s majesty. Whether we are preoccupied by local squabbles or worried by the state of the world, it’s good to be reminded of the vast mystery of our faith to make us marvel and bring us back to worship.

Almighty God, help me to take my eyes off the world and gaze at you for a moment. You fill me with awe and wonder, and I know I can trust you to be in charge of everything, even if I don’t understand how. Amen.

AMY SCOTT ROBINSON

Abstinence and abundance

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer.

When Paul says that people are forbidding marriage and demanding abstinence from foods, I am reminded of the priests from the comedy *Father Ted*, standing outside the cinema with a sign that reads 'Down with this sort of thing'! Christians have often been so keen on forbidding things that we have gained ourselves a reputation as grumpy killjoys. Paul goes further: he calls these people hypocrites and liars who have paid attention to demons (vv. 1-2)!

The problem is that humans are so practiced at misusing God's gifts that it starts to look as if the gifts themselves are the problem. The effects of the fall confuse us into thinking that abstinence is a good idea. But Paul takes us back to the story of creation to point out that God called everything good as soon as he had created it. God's gifts were designed for us.

What about our abuse of those gifts, then? Paul adds a helpful proviso: everything is to be received with thanksgiving. If we are grateful to God as the creator and giver of good things, then we will neither reject nor misuse his gifts. We all have ordinary objects in our homes that we would never throw away because they remind us of the person who gave them to us. It is the giver who makes the things precious and prized.

As the chapter goes on, Paul talks about the spiritual gifts Timothy received 'through prophecy' (v. 14): his ability to teach and pass on the faith. Timothy should use these gifts and train himself in them carefully. In the same way, we should not reject the gifts and talents God gives us any more than we would reject food. Feelings of imposter syndrome can mean that we hide some of these gifts away instead of honing and using them. But if we respect God the giver in our prayers of gratitude, then we should let them shine!

Dear God, thank you for the goodness of your creation, and for my skills and talents. May I use them all to your glory – and enjoy them! Amen.

AMY SCOTT ROBINSON

Youth and age

Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters – with absolute purity.

As one of the youngest new priests in the country, my husband had 1 Timothy 4:12 – ‘Let no one despise your youth’ – written into several of his ordination cards! It was certainly challenging for us to be younger than most of our first congregations, and over the past 15 years it has been interesting to observe that dynamic changing. Paul anticipated that Timothy might have problems because of his youth, but he also made sure that Timothy, in turn, would respect his elders – even if he was the one teaching them.

In fact, in these verses Paul imagines the whole church functioning as a family – brothers and sisters in Christ, yes, but also respecting each other’s age and status as any parents, children, and siblings would.

In the rest of this chapter, it is clear that the oldest members of the church took on many responsibilities. In verses 9–14, Paul refers to a list which seems to denote some sort of ‘order of widows’ for ministry: they could only be considered if they were over the age of 60, an advanced age in ancient Roman times. These women probably cared for the poor and sick and visited prisoners – no easy retirement here. But they were supported in that ministry by the church, just as the elders in verses 17–18 were paid for their teaching.

The younger members, on the other hand, were asked not to rely financially on the church but to take care of their own families (vv. 4, 8, 14–16). Thus the early church was not just a family in the way they spoke to one another, but in the way that every member cared for the others and could expect to be cared for themselves.

Today, the loss of these intergenerational links often causes loneliness. Could you say a friendly word to someone older or younger in your church?

Lord, you designed us to be a family: young and old together, relying on each other. Please put me in mind of somebody who could use my company and skills today, and bring us together. Amen.

AMY SCOTT ROBINSON

Gain and godliness

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

I have fond memories of a friend who, at the age of nearly 100, regarded most of modern life as astonishing riches. She embodied gratitude and excitement. If you offered her so much as a custard cream she would respond, eyes shining, with the words that had become her constant refrain: ‘What a treat!’

Paul’s exasperated response to the false teachers who are saying that ‘godliness is a means of gain’ (v. 5) reminds me of my friend. Of course there is gain in godliness, he says, if by gain you mean learning to be content with what you have (vv. 6–8)! That’s the real secret to richness: being astonished and grateful at the goodness of God in every provision. But if you are hoping for actual riches, says Paul, then you are headed for destruction (v. 9). His advice is to shun all that and ‘take hold of eternal life’ instead (vv. 11–12).

Teaching about the evils of money can make many of us nervous in today’s society. It can be a struggle to make ends meet, and yet we still know that we are far richer than so many people across the world. Paul has advice for the rich, too: he tells them not to set their hopes on their riches, but to be generous (vv. 17–18). It is all about whether we are relying on our own finances or on God, who daily provides us with what we need and who promises us eternal life.

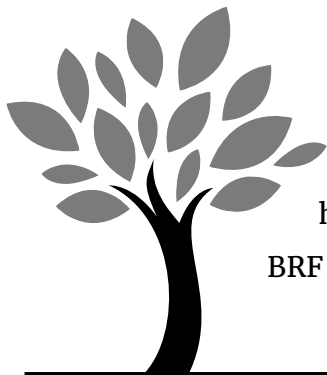
There certainly are gains that come with following God, but they are nothing to do with money. Instead, if we let it, our faith in the riches God has already given us will change our attitude until we respond to every ordinary thing with the wonder and thankfulness it deserves as a God-given grace. What a treat!

*Dear God, thank you for your free gifts of salvation and mercy
as well as all your many blessings. May I notice them daily
and be astonished at your goodness. Amen.*

AMY SCOTT ROBINSON



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