

# The Book



Once upon a time, there was a man called Christian who lived in the City of Destruction with his wife and four children. He wasn't very rich but he worked quite hard and earned enough money to buy all the food and clothes which his family needed. He had a smart little wooden house and plenty of friends and neighbours to gossip with, and for a long time he was really happy. Then one day he found the book.

It was lying on the floor of his attic – covered in dust and cobwebs. He picked it up and rubbed the dirt off the cover with his sleeve.

## *The Pilgrim's Progress*

It looked very old. He sat down on a box and started to read it.

Poor Christian! The book he'd found was very frightening. Before he had read two pages, he was shaking all over, and by the time he'd reached the end, he was in tears.

'My wife and children mustn't see me like this,' he thought. 'I'd better go outside and give myself time to calm down.' He closed the book and tried to stand up – but he couldn't. There seemed to be a heavy weight pulling at his shoulders and dragging him back.

'What's the matter?' he wondered in alarm. He put his hands behind him and started feeling around. Soon his groping fingers made out the shape of a huge, knobbly sack on his back. It was strapped to his waist and shoulders but, however hard he tried, he could not get it off.

'This is terrible! What am I going to do?' he thought. He tried to stand up again, and this time he just managed it. Then, puffing and panting, he got himself out of the house without being seen.

## *The Pilgrim's Progress*

He paced up and down the garden, hoping the fresh air would make him feel better. But it didn't. The trouble was, he couldn't forget his burden, or his book – which he kept stopping to re-read, even though it upset him so much. When he went back indoors, he was in tears again.

Christian's wife saw him hurrying past the kitchen and called out, 'Why, whatever's the matter with you? And what's that thing on your back?'

'Oh, nothing, nothing!' Christian answered, trying to sound cheerful. But it was no use. Before long, his real feelings showed, and he had to explain why he was in such a state.

'I have just had some very bad news,' he said, looking sadly at his wife and children. 'One day, perhaps very soon, a terrible fire is going to sweep right through our city and burn everything up.'

The children hardly had time to feel frightened before their mother laughed and said, 'Whatever gave you that crazy idea?'

'I read it in this book,' Christian replied, holding it up.

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'You can't believe all that you read!' exclaimed his wife.

'But it's true,' insisted Christian. 'Ever since I read about it, I've had this heavy pack on my back and felt miserable and worried.'

'You're just over-tired,' said his wife, firmly. 'And as soon as I've put the children to bed, I'm going to make sure that you get a nice early night.'

The children decided there was no need to be frightened, as their mother wasn't, so they went to bed happily. Not long afterwards, Christian's wife bundled her husband into bed, telling him that he would feel quite different after a good sleep. But she was wrong.

Christian didn't sleep a wink, and in the morning he was as miserable as ever. His wife looked at his long face and began to feel just a little annoyed with him.

'You really must try to pull yourself together,' she told him. 'You'll frighten the children! And what will the neighbours think?'

'Please read this book,' Christian begged her, but she replied crossly, 'Certainly not! If you want to be

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miserable – go ahead, but don't expect *me* to join you!'

After that she kept well out of his way, and made sure that the children didn't come near him either.

Christian now felt very lonely, as well as sad. He spent the next few days all by himself, either in his room or walking up and down some nearby fields. Sometimes, he prayed to God for help, and sometimes he studied the book which he now took everywhere with him. And all the time there was a lump of misery inside him and a lump of guilt on his back.

During one of his walks, he met a man known as Evangelist. This gentleman came straight up to Christian and asked, 'Why are you so upset?'

'Because this book tells me that if I stay here, I will die,' Christian replied.

'Why not leave then?'

'Because I don't know a safe place to go,' Christian said.

'Now that's where I can help you,' Evangelist answered. Christian could hardly believe his ears! Here,

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at last, was someone who understood how he felt and could tell him what to do.

Evangelist pointed far across the fields and asked, 'Do you see that light?' Christian screwed up his eyes and thought he saw a faint glimmer.

'Yes, I think so,' he said.

'Well, keep walking straight towards it along this path, and before long you will see a gate. Go right up to it and knock, and someone will tell you what to do next.'

'Thank you, thank you!' exclaimed Christian. Then, in spite of the load he was carrying, he started to run – towards the light and away from his home, family and friends.

His wife was looking out of the window and saw what was happening. She rushed out of the front door, shouting, 'Christian, where are you going? Come back! Come back!' But her husband called out, 'I'm going to find life and safety,' and went on running. He knew it would be pointless to go home and try to persuade her to come along too, but he hoped that one day she and the children would follow him.

## *The Pilgrim's Progress*

Hearing all the noise, the neighbours came out of their houses. They, too, called Christian to come back, but he took no notice.

'We've got to stop him – come on!' shouted Obstinate, and he started to chase after Christian.

'Wait for me!' called Pliable, beginning to run, too. His name suited him, because he could be persuaded to try anything new – but it took very little to make him give up. His companion, Obstinate, was just the opposite. He stuck to his opinions, no matter how many people told him he was in the wrong.

These two men quickly caught up with Christian, who was slowed down by the weight on his back.

'We've come to make you see sense and go home,' Obstinate panted.

Christian shook his head.

'You've got a house, a wife, children and lots of friends – what more could you possibly want?' Obstinate demanded.

'I want to live, not die!' Christian answered. 'Come with me to a safe and happy place!'

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'I can see it's no use arguing with you in this mood,' said Obstinate, sounding very annoyed. 'Come along, Pliable.'

'But supposing Christian's right?' Pliable asked, hesitating.

'Of course he's not right!' Obstinate answered.

'If you don't believe me, read what my book says,' Christian said earnestly. He looked and sounded so sincere that Pliable was persuaded.

'That settles it. I'll go with Christian,' he said.

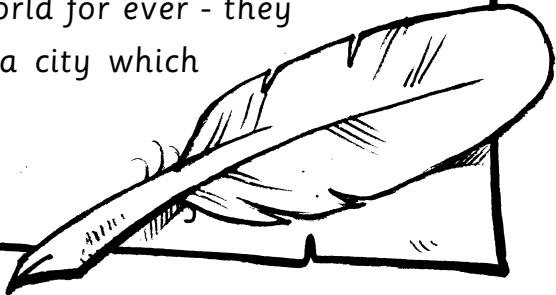
'You're a couple of fools!' exclaimed Obstinate. 'Goodbye and good riddance!' With these words, he turned and set off in the direction of his home, while Christian and his new companion walked towards the light.



## Christian

Christian, the pilgrim in John Bunyan's story, found an old book one day. What he read in it changed his whole life. He was convinced that the city where he had been living would be destroyed, but he didn't know where to go for safety. Then he met Evangelist and set out on an exciting and dangerous journey towards the heavenly city. Very soon he met people who tried to mislead him.

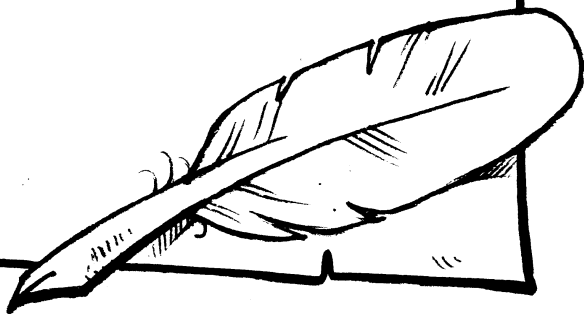
Perhaps John Bunyan got his idea from a Bible verse like Hebrews chapter 13 verse 14 when he wrote about Christian as a pilgrim in this world. In this Bible verse it tells us that those who believe in Jesus will not be in this world for ever - they are looking for a city which is to come.



## Evangelist

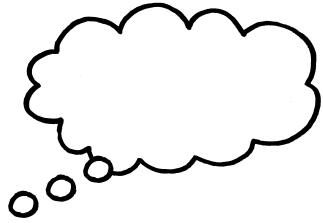
Evangelist's job was to guide people to the cross and then on to the heavenly city. He came along at just the right moment, when Christian was in despair and didn't know what to do, and started him off in the right direction. Evangelist wasn't afraid to speak the truth and he could be stern, as well as kind. Christian found *that* out when he stepped off the path later on!

Perhaps John Bunyan chose the name of this character while reading Paul's advice to Timothy in the Bible. You will find it in 2 Timothy chapter 4 verses 1-5.



## **Think about it:**

Are you usually  
obstinate or pliable?  
When is it good to stick  
by your own opinions  
and when is it wrong? If you are a pliable  
person what difficulties might you get into?



Do you ever feel burdened like Christian did?  
Do the wrong things you say and think and  
do bother you?

## **Bible Search:**

Look up the following Bible  
verses to find out what you  
should do about sin:



Psalm 32:5

Romans 6:12

Mark 1:15

Psalm 119:11

Matthew 26:41

Luke 13:5