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A Journey of Faith



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Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

# DO WE SEE JESUS IN BILKIS?

To watch a three-year-old girl's head smashed on a rock by a burly, raving man, will haunt any sentient human for the rest of his or her life. Multiply the pain a millionfold if the girl is your only child. And for a young mother, pregnant with a new baby, to then be gang-raped by the same mob of religious bigots – who then in their fury continue to rape and kill many more of her family, is the life story of Bilkis Bano of Gujarat.

Her search for justice, over the next twenty years from 2002, is rape and murder by other means, a cynic would say.

The seemingly endless ordeal chasing that elusive justice was

against the most unsurmountable of obstacles, a system that had turned on the helpless citizen who had hoped to find safety and succour in this haven. But imagine doctors denying on path that she had been gangraped, police and their experts covering up the tracks of the criminals and destroying forensic evidence, intimidating witnesses, and taking punitive action against the rare officer who too want to find the truth.

The repeated death threats seemed trivial in the face of the mass murders of that period, and the near death of justice.

There is relief perhaps when



some of the culprits are finally punished and sent to jail for the minimum punishment written in the law after activists in civil society, putting their own lives at risk, challenge the government, the police and some of the most powerful political persons in the country to see that courts do their duty.

But even to someone who had suffered such soul scarring violence, there is a final shock in store. The rapists and killers are lauded for their good conducted in court, their high caste in India's stratified society, and the political patronage they still enjoy. They are released from jail in a gesture that records their goodness and celebrate India's celebrating 75 years of its Independence.

As the killers walk out of jail, they are welcomed with garlands of flowers, cheers of joy and slogans of political and religious solidarity. No conquering soldier returning from a victorious war, would have been given a more rousing reception.

Bilkis who was just "learning slowly to live" with her trauma, has her world shaken all over again and the threat to her and

her family's safety has become very real. No wonder in her statement released on August 17, 2022, she says that she was "bereft of words," and was "still numb."

Mercifully for India's collective conscience, the release of the 11 men, all her neighbours and all indoctrinated and radicalised by a poisonous right wing religious bigotry, has been condemned by political leaders opposed to the ruling dispensation. At least two members of the ruling party, one a high ranking deputy chief minister of Maharashtra, have faulted the early release of the guilty and have condemned the reception they were given by their religious and political supporters. For those looking for straws, these can be said to be good signs.

It is also good to see condemnation from some church quarters, and Christian activists. They perhaps remember Kandhamal in Orissa in 2008 – a miniature repeat of Gujarat 2002 where the community at the receiving end of religious targeted violence was the Adivasi and Dalit Christian, and not the Muslim. In Kandhamal, several

women were gang raped, among them, a Catholic Nun. Many were hacked to death, or burnt alive, as others had been in Gujarat. The police in both states was a mute witness, and judicial system crawling at the same pace of a tortoise. Caste mattered, too.

Any human being, and any citizen of a secular democratic republic such as India, must ask some searching questions of the nation, and of oneself. The first question should be: Is our collective conscience, as a nation and a people, numbed, or possibly dead? as well? What message do we want to send to women who are fighting for justice in a country notorious for the very large number of violations of girls and children, especially those of the Dalit and Adivasis communities? And, finally, are we afraid of mobs because we fear the rule of law has been compromised?

As Indian citizens, we must ask questions. But as Indian Christians, we must also introspect about the response of the Church at large.

Have we become so desensitized

that something like this does not appal us anymore as something against the law, immoral and obscene? Or are we just too timid to speak out, fearful of the repercussions?

How does God expect us to respond?

We claim to be followers of the God of justice and people of the Book that explicitly speaks about justice among other key themes. On the cross, our Saviour demonstrated perfect justice and perfect love leading us into perfect peace with God. But that came with a cost, of self-sacrifice. He did not seek self-preservation, or the cross would not have taken place. He did not seek a favourable public opinion, in fact, that was turned against Him as they shouted, 'crucify Him,'.

Throughout history, the Church has never been able to influence for good while seeking proximity to power or power itself. There are far too many examples that can serve as warnings including some witnessed today in our globalized world.

The way to transformational

influence consistent with God's character and Kingdom values has always been self-sacrificial and the way of love despite opposition.

This is not to say that there is no place for denouncing or calling out the wrong. That must be there. But calling out the wrong is only half the part. The other part is lovingly and sacrificially engaging with what's wrong and in fact the root of it or the system that effects it. That kind of engagement brings transformation.

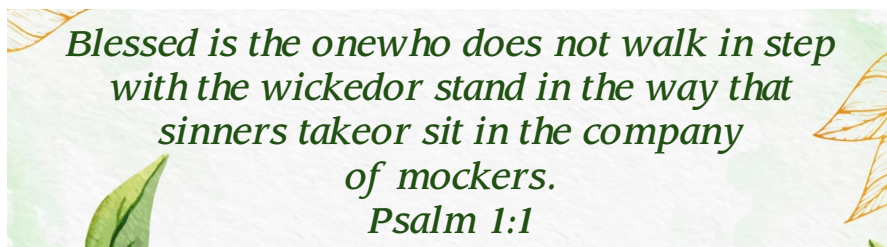
Mission history is replete with examples of people who have engaged with prevalent social evils and injustices in ways that are loving and through much hardship and sacrifice on their part, brought much needed change. We have just observed the 100th death anniversary year of Pandita Ramabai, whom God used not only as a social reformer but also as an educator and Bible

translator. Her work among the child widows, destitute women, and orphan and outcast children required much love and sacrifice. However, she engaged herself in working for them for she was concerned and possibly appalled at the way society treated those who were weak and marginalized like those whom she served.

Mother Teresa famously said that she saw the face of Jesus in the face of each sick and dying person she helped. "I see Jesus in every human being. I say to myself, this is hungry Jesus, I must feed him. This is sick Jesus. This one has leprosy or gangrene; I must wash him and tend to him. I serve because I love Jesus."

Do we see Jesus in Bilkis and many like her? If we do, as we must, what then are we willing to do about it?

**Rev. Vijayesh Lal**



# Taking Our Own Lives



Dr. Shantanu Dutta

10th September is world suicide prevention day and even though it is becoming mainstream to have candid discussions about suicide and attempted suicide, both from legal and mental health angles among others, the church is still edgy to talk about it outside of a few urban churches. Of course, suicide is a complicated topic and what the Bible has to say on the subject is not straight forward. It in fact records a few instances of suicide without offering any observation. The most commonly known one is that of Judas Iscariot after the crucifixion, but there are others too as we shall see.

In modern Christian discourse, I remember conversations happening widely after Pastor Rick Warren's son Matthew committed suicide in 2013, after a

life-long battle with mental illness. Partly, because of Rick Warren's stature and partly, because he never hid his son's struggle from his close friends and church elders, the direction of the conversation began to change and has possibly continued to change in at least some circles, though not all.

Suicide happens for many reasons — mental illness, extreme pain, emotional torment being a few common ones. Even medication can cause suicidal ideation. Suicidal tendencies are far more common and more widespread than we think. If suicides are less common than the tendency to commit them, it is because the instinct to self-preservation is so strong, and the pain necessary to overcome it is much greater. Therefore, the

percentage of people who are in sufficient possession of their rational minds as they are ending their own lives is somewhat small.

Individuals who commit suicide often have been struggling with serious problems, such as depression, alcoholism, or other forms of drug abuse. Taking one's life isn't the right way to deal with any trial, but the people who do are more than likely not thinking clearly. Sometimes, when people want to commit suicide, the things on the external are so great, the things on the outside of them are so difficult, there's so much pressure, that one is just seeking to escape the difficulties of life resulting in pursuing suicide. Suicide in which one flees of the present or inevitable sorrows of life for which one has no control.

The Scriptures have given us a detailed description of various kinds of suicides. These descriptions are important because if we're going to help people deal with suicide, we need to be able to categorise the reasons why—the core issues of their suicide—so that we can attack it from a compassionate, loving, careful, and consistent manner.

The Bible tells of six self-killings. The best known is that of the betrayer Judas as recorded in Matthew. A thousand years earlier, King Saul fell on his sword rather than become a captive of the Philistines who had defeated his army. Another notable suicide is recorded in the Book of Judges. Samson desired to take revenge on the Philistines who had tortured him, and so he prayed: "Please God, give me back my strength just this one time more, so that I can get even with the Philistines for making me blind." He then pushed against the pillars supporting the temple of the god Dagon and shouted. "Let me die with the Philistines!" When the building fell, Samson perished, along with many of his enemies. The biblical writers neither condemn nor commend those whom they record as having taken their own lives. Perhaps the narrators thought it was fitting for Samson, Saul and Judas to respond to their varied situations by committing suicide

Some other passages of scripture dealing with or describing suicide:

2 Samuel 17:23, "When Ahithophel saw that his counsel

was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order and hanged himself, and he died and was buried in the tomb of his father."

1 Kings 16:18, "And when Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire and died."

Lastly, we see Abimelech in Judges 9:53-54. It says, "And a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull. Then, he called quickly to the young man his armour-bearer and said to him, 'Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" And his young man thrust him through, and he died."

There is no commentary or observation in any, just a statement of fact. In fact, in the Old Testament passages, it can really be said that often taking one's own life was a sign of valour and a preferred option to being killed by the enemy.

In early Christianity, suicide was sometimes regarded as a virtuous act. Eusebius, in his account of martyrs at Antioch

tells of a mother who taught her two beautiful unmarried daughters to regard rape as the most dreadful thing that could happen to them. Eventually, the mother and daughters were captured by a band of lustful soldiers. On realising their plight, they modestly requested to be excused for a minute. They then threw themselves into a nearby river and drowned. Later, theologians like St Augustine however believed that at no point does the Bible make it lawful to take one's life. The command, "Thou shalt not kill" implies, he argued, that one's own life as well as the lives of others should be preserved.

Thomas Aquinas, one of the most outstanding of Catholic theologians, gave three succinct arguments why suicide is a sin against self, neighbour, and God. First, suicide is contrary to nature: every living organism naturally desires to preserve its life. Second, it is contrary to our social obligations: the whole human community is injured by self-killing. Third, suicide is contrary to our religious rights: God alone should decide when a person will live or die. Aquinas reasoned: "To bring death upon oneself in order to escape the other afflictions of this life is to

adopt a greater evil in order to avoid a lesser.

An examination of our biblical and church heritage discloses different degrees of tolerance toward suicide. For some, it is always absolutely wrong; for others it may be an appropriate response in exceptional situations. The historical discussion provides some guidance for facing current dilemmas. Modern medicine occasionally extends artificially the time of death -- a fact that has generated fresh inquiry into situations in which suicide might be acceptable.

With this context, when we pontificate on social media, especially on sensitive issues like this, we must remember that we have multiple audiences out there. We need to learn to be especially understanding of families that have sustained suicides. It is appalling to a family when one of its members decides that he or she would rather be dead than continue to share their company. Since no illness or accident is to be blamed for the killing, they are consumed with guilt. Sometimes, they are so ashamed that they dread facing their acquaintances in the

community. Not only do they feel socially isolated, but they may also feel spiritually alienated. Such alienation may be expressed in resentment toward God for allowing such an injustice to happen to them. Or they may feel self-hatred for having contributed to the nurture of someone who, as they see it, arrogantly took his or her life -- a prerogative of God alone: A survivor's grief may be so severe that it can become a cause of self-execution on the part of the bereaved. We may not be privy to all of the whys surrounding suicide. But whether those details are available to us or not, let's respect the privacy of those who have passed. Let's reserve their final moments as belonging to only them, their families, and their Lord.



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# Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Rev. Dr. David Mende

Human history has seen several men and women who dedicated their lives to fighting against violence, oppression, and dictatorship. They risk their very lives to promote peace. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation was one such person who played a vital role in gaining our independence through non-violence. Along with other scriptures, Gandhi studied the Bible and was attracted to the teachings of our Lord. He was particularly impressed by the teachings of Christ on humility and forgiveness.

After living in South Africa for 21 years, Gandhi returned to India. He began a series of non-violent

protests, called satyagraha. He was one of the prominent freedom fighters. Eventually, India gained independence on August 15, 1947. As Indians, we are grateful to God for Mahatma Gandhi's sacrifice for our nation's independence. He achieved our independence by being a peacemaker. That's why he is honored with the title, 'Father of the Nation.' In Matthew 5:9, Jesus says that the peacemakers are blessed and they will be called by a greater title - "sons of God."

In Matthew 5:9, Jesus teaches that the peacemakers are blessed and promises that they will be called sons of God. This



beatitude is part of the Sermon on the Mount. This is often called the "Constitution of the Kingdom." In Matthew 5-7, Jesus teaches how a citizen of his kingdom should be.

Even as we observe September 21st as the International Day of Peace, let's see what we can learn from this beatitude.

### **1. God Favors the Peacemakers.**

After speaking about the pure in heart (v. 8), our Lord speaks of the peacemakers. Since peacemakers are pure in heart, they don't make peace with sin. Those who battle sin in their lives and conquer it can help those who have conflicts with others. Note that Jesus doesn't say that peace-lovers are blessed. It's not enough to love peace. It takes efforts to make peace. Some just enjoy watching two people or groups fighting with each other. Others ignore the serious issues and sweep them under the carpet. But these issues can become more serious later.

Peacemakers wisely deal with

situations that can bring divisiveness. Jesus says that the peacemakers are blessed. God favors them. Peacemakers are not passive. They actively work towards bringing peace. Here, the Greek word for "peace" is *eirene*, which is an equivalent of the Hebrew word, *shalom*. It doesn't merely mean an absence of trouble. It means enjoyment of everything good.

This beatitude recognizes that in this world, there are conflicts, wars, and injustice. As God's people, we must make this world a better place to live for everyone. God is a peacemaker. He is the author of peace. Isaiah 27:5 speaks of the theme of making peace with God. We are reconciled to God and one another through Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Col. 1:20; Eph. 2:15-16). Jesus is called "the Prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6-7). He speaks peace to the nations (Zech. 9:9-10). He reconciles humans to God and one another. We too must be passionate to see people reconciled to God and one another.

Jesus doesn't limit peacekeeping to only one kind. So, in this article, I want to focus on how we can be peacekeepers in two ways:

**a. We must reconcile people to God by sharing the gospel.**

Since God is holy and righteous, sinners cannot have a relationship with him. They are enemies of God. As we share the gospel, we are being peacemakers. We seek to reconcile sinners with God. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-21). But as we share the gospel, we run the risk of being misunderstood and persecuted (vv. 10-12). When we share the gospel, some people may be offended and persecute us (Mt. 10:34). Still, we must seek peace with all people (Mt. 10:13).

**b. We must reconcile people with one another.**

The word "peacemakers" may be a reference to bringing peace during wars or a conflict between two people or groups. It is said that in the last 3,400 years, humans have been at peace for

only 268 years. In just the twentieth century, 108 million people were killed in wars. In the 1990s, more than 2 million children were killed due to wars. During a war, civilians are bombed, raped, starved, and forced to flee their homes. Our world desperately needs peacemakers!

Keeping the peace is difficult. It's even more difficult to bring peace where there is no peace. Only those who have peace with God (Rom. 5:1) can be true peacemakers. We must be peacemakers in our homes, church, and community. We must not have a divisive spirit. We imitate the devil when we divide people.

It's sad to see many families and churches divided over petty issues. God is not pleased with those who divide people. We must never cause any conflicts between people. In Romans 12:18, the apostle Paul says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Peacemaking is not just about solving problems, but it's about

reconciling people to God and one another.

We can be peacemakers by initiating reconciliation when others offend us. We can be peacemakers by asking for forgiveness when we offend others. Our efforts to make peace can often lead to persecution and trouble (v. 10). Still, we are called to be peacemakers. Sometimes, there will be conflicts in a church. In Philippians 4:2-3, apostle Paul pleads with two women in the Philippian church, Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord. We must actively seek to bring peace in the church. Divisions open door to the devil (Eph. 4:26-27). We lose out on the blessings of the community (Ps. 133) when there is no peace. Church fights are the worst fights because we profess to believe in unity and love among believers, but don't practice them.

In 1 Corinthians 6:1-11, we see that the believers in the Corinthian church were putting lawsuits against one another. Paul exhorts them to appoint wise people among themselves

to settle their disputes (1 Cor. 6:5). Reconciliation is God's work. Bringing division is the devil's work. We must not do Satan's work. Some are trouble-makers by nature. Be careful about whom you go to when there's a conflict. Instead of bringing peace, some people add more fire to the conflict. But God grants grace to some people to bring peace between two people or two groups. They build bridges. God's favor is on those who bring peace, not those who bring divisions.

Sometimes, reconciliation includes confronting people's sins. The Lord explains this whole process in Matthew 18:15-17. Unfortunately, many people short circuit this process by gossiping about the person's sin. Psalm 34:14 says that we must "seek peace and pursue it." Some people don't confront sin as they don't want to take the trouble of dealing with sin. But if you keep quiet about someone's sin, that person may sin against others too. As apostle Paul says, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6).

So, how can we become better peacemakers? Peacemakers must be patient. It takes time to resolve conflicts. In Galatians 6:9, apostle Paul writes, "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." Peacemakers must be good listeners (Jas 1:19). They should not jump to conclusions. They should take time to hear both sides of the stories and then use discernment.

Communication is not just about words. It includes body language and tone too. Peacemakers must choose their communication (verbal and nonverbal) carefully. Proverbs 15:1 says that "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." In Proverbs 29:20, the writer says, "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him." Some people say something in haste and think about what they said later. Peacemakers must control their anger. Proverbs 15:18 says "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger

quiets contention." Also, in Proverbs 29:22, the author writes, "A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression."

So, God favors the peacemakers.

## **2. The Peacemakers Will Be Called Sons of God.**

In the Old Testament, Israel is referred to as "sons" (Deut. 14:1; Hos. 1:10). Also, in Hosea 1:10, the righteous would be called "Children of the living God" on the day of judgment before the nations. But here, those who make peace are called sons of God. When we make peace and reconciliation, we imitate God, and thus we will be called sons of God. God's children act like him. In Hebrew thought, the word "sons" refers to those who strongly reflect the character of another. For example, in the early church, a man by the name of Joseph was given the name, Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36). Joseph was such an encouraging person that he was called a "son of encouragement." So, when we

make peace, we demonstrate God's nature. We are doing God's work.

In Greek, the word "they" is emphatic. It can be literally translated as "they alone." The phrase "shall be called" is a continuous future passive. We will be called "sons of God" for all eternity! The word "called" is passive, which suggests that God himself will call the peacemakers "sons of God." If you are not a peacemaker, you are probably not a true believer or you are being a disobedient believer. Those who are truly born again will be peacemakers.

### **Conclusion**

So, what is the main message of this article as the world observes the International Day of Peace? **Let's imitate God by being peacemakers.**

My prayer is that each one of us will be a peacemaker. When that happens, our world will be a better place to live in. Jesus gave his very life so that we can be

reconciled to God and one another. Let's imitate God by being peacemakers.



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# GOD DIDN'T SAY IT'S SINFUL

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

Was Jesus suicidal? He said, "... I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" (Jn. 10:17-18). If taken out of context, it could be said that Jesus had a death-wish. Actually, however, Jesus showed no eagerness to die. There were many attempts on His life (Lk. 4:29-30; Jn. 7:30, 44; 8:59; 10:31, 39), but He dodged His would-be killers and escaped from an untimely death time and again. Jesus lived His life according to God's timetable and so He didn't want death to come before it was time for Him to depart this earth (7:6, 8). Isaiah prophesied about

the Suffering Servant of the Lord that "the will of the Lord will prosper in His hand" (Isa. 53:10) and that He "poured out His life unto death" (v.12). It is in this context that Jesus said He would choose the moment to lay His life down. No one could take His life. Death would be His own voluntary act of atoning for people. That's not suicide. That's sacrifice.

In the same way, those who stood by their commitment and witness to Jesus being the Saviour and Lord, knowing that they could be killed for it, were manifesting courage under fire and were not suicidal. They chose an honourable death instead of dishonouring Christ by denying

Him. It may appear suicidal to those who regard saving their lives being of first importance, but in the end those who die for the name of Jesus are the ones who save their lives (Lk. 9:24).

It must be noted that God has given no commandment against committing suicide. There is no "Thou shalt not commit suicide." That is not to say that God approves the taking of one's own life. In His word, He neither advocates it, nor condemns it. We may fairly conclude that God doesn't have any words of condemnation for anyone feeling such great despair as to end everything by suicide.

### **Biblical Record**

The Bible does record a few suicides. Samson chose death so that he could kill his enemies. He was God's servant – a judge who fought for God's people. But his love of women led to his downfall. Though, to capture him his enemies resorted to subterfuge. Then they boasted as if their god Dagon had been the one to deliver Samson into their hands. So, when they put him on public display, Samson prayed to God

that He would restore his strength once more so that he could avenge what had been done to him. In the end, the record says that in death Samson killed more of the enemy than in all the battles he fought during his lifetime (Judg. 16:23-30). Despite his sinful ways and failures, Samson's life and death is not to be despised for he is mentioned honourably in the scriptural "Hall of Faith" (Heb. 11:32).

Suicide bombers today die for causes. Are they to be likened to Samson who killed himself to kill his enemies? No. Suicide bombers are brainwashed by cowards who hide in safe spaces but send out foot soldiers to die believing that what they do will earn them glory. The poor fools don't pause to think that those who push them out to do the work don't think much of earning glory for themselves in the same way by being at the forefront of suicide bombing. They also don't think about the fact that they target people who themselves are not enemies, but random, innocent bystanders who just happen to be where the suicide bombers are to kill themselves.



Next, we have the story of Saul who killed himself so that he would not fall into the hands of the enemy to be abused, and his armour-bearer followed suit (1 Sam. 31:3-5). Saul chose to die rather than be shamed and/or tortured into a forced worship of the false god of his enemies.

Years later, there was Ahithophel. He had been one-time counsellor of David, but he joined Absalom in his rebellion. However, his counsel was not valued by Absalom, and Ahithophel probably felt that he had lost everything by leaving David's side without gaining Absalom's confidence. Finding he could neither return to David's camp, nor advance in Absalom's, he ended his life ([2 Sam. 17:23](#)).

Next was Zimri, who had treacherously killed King Elah to ascend the throne. The nation rebelled against the murderer and when he lost to the Israelite army fearing capture and punishment for treason, Zimri burnt his palace around himself to avoid the ignominy of execution (1 Ki. 16:9-20).

## **Judas**

The last suicide recorded in the Bible is that of Judas. It would appear that Judas didn't expect that Jesus wouldn't fight to save Himself, nor that He would be condemned to die. He seemed to have wanted to goad Jesus into being a militaristic Messiah who would overthrow Roman rule and restore the kingdom of Israel (Matt. 27:3). Too late, he realised that Jesus was not going to fit in with his plans but would go through with being the Suffering Servant of God who would give His life a ransom for people. Burdened by guilt and despair, Judas chose suicide.

Could he have chosen repentance? The Lord did reach out to him in the moment of betrayal by challenging him to consider the enormity of betraying a friend with a kiss – which was a sign, not of betrayal, but of love (Lk. 22:48). Judas didn't allow any tender appeal from His Master to shake him from the course he had chosen. On the other hand, when Peter realised that after all his bravado, he had denied his Master, he was immediately sorrowful, paving



the way for repentance (Lk. 22:61-62). Judas waited too long and in the end was left with remorse, an ungodly sorrow, instead of repentance (2 Cor. 7:10).

While there are a few good stories of suicides in scripture, the last one of Judas's suicide seems to be the bottom line on the matter. Maybe that is the reason that the Church throughout most of its history has condemned suicide with some vehemence and in earlier times, even classified it as the "unforgivable sin", whereas the Lord of the Church had declared that only blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would be unforgivable (Mk. 3:29).

### **Church Condemns Suicide**

It may have started in the fifth century, when Augustine wrote *The City of God*, wherein he categorically condemned suicide. He argued that since the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" did not include the words "thy neighbour", it had to mean that the killing of oneself is not allowed either. By extension, it would have to also mean that

humans couldn't kill any animal life either – not for food, nor for sacrifice. But it doesn't, because God Himself commanded sacrifices and gave rules for consumption of meat. Further, that sort of interpretation would be ridiculous if applied to the commandments against stealing and adultery because they too were given without reference to neighbours.

American evangelical Joseph Tate Bayly (5 April 1920 – 16 July 1986), wrote the dystopian novel *Winterflight* (1981). The novel imagines a world that appears perfect on the surface, but is a place where abortion is the rule for imperfect fetuses and euthanasia is mandatory at age 75. Among the characters of the story is a six year old boy who is a haemophiliac needing treatment after an injurious fall. He would have been aborted before birth had the mother undergone prenatal tests, and it was feared the state would not view him kindly even six years later. At the same time, having turned 75, his grandfather had received orders to report for euthanasia. As the parents of the boy, struggle with

these two problems in the context of the scriptural requirement to be obedient to the authorities ("ordained by God" – Rom. 13:1-2), the grandfather took matters into his hands to save them from their moral dilemma. He took the boy and walked into the ocean to die together. If Christians in India should face a similar situation of challenges to practising Christian ethics or facing the possibility of being tortured into denial of Christ, would it not be better to die than deny the Lord?

Probably, the earliest attempt by the Church to prevent suicides was classifying suicide as the unforgivable sin. That meant that those who committed suicide would not be buried in "hallowed ground" but where the outcasts of the Church and infidels/heathen were buried. That was like a double punishment. The individual would be unforgiven and go to hell and the family would be shamed and given hell on earth for what their loved one had done.

Still, it didn't stop the suicides. It only left families bruised.

## **Suicide Prevention**

The Bible has one story of how a man who wanted to commit suicide was stopped in time and in the end saved. When the jailer in Philippi woke up with the earthquake, he saw all the prison doors wide open. He thought that all the prisoners would have escaped. Thinking that he would be executed for dereliction of duty, he drew his sword to kill himself. Paul called out to him to stop him from suicide. What Paul did was to tell him that

- He should not go through with the suicide
- He didn't know the truth about his own situation
- Knowing the truth would give reason to hope

These are the three essential elements of ministering to persons contemplating suicide: emphatically counsel them to stop, helping them assess their circumstances with fuller knowledge, and giving them reason to hope.

All of it starts with caring for the troubled person. Paul and Silas had been beaten up. The jailer

had either administered the flogging or ordered and supervised it. He was their enemy. In spite of that, they cared for him and didn't want him to come to harm.

In the case of Paul and Silas, their relationship with the jailer was a passing one – a chance encounter. They didn't know him from any earlier meeting. They were just sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting and to the man's need. It happened all of a sudden. That is not how it happens most of the time. But those representing the Lord can be caring toward people around them and show discernment about their emotional situation. Equally, they need to be responsive when the Spirit guides them to reach out to people who are troubled and take His counsel in ministering to them.

Even then, we may not always be able to save someone from suicide. While someone intent on committing suicide is planning it, those around him or her are caught unawares and ill-prepared.

Often, we won't be there when it happens for the simple reason that the person didn't want us to be there. He or she picked the time and place knowing we won't be there just then. Even God doesn't interfere with people's freedom of choice.

As in other cases of death, our ministry is really to those who survive the death of loved ones. Whether it is death by illness, or an accident, or a suicide there is nothing more to be done for the departed. Everything we do is thereafter for the bereaved. They are the ones needing comfort and encouragement.

In the course of time, people accept death by disease or accident. But accepting suicide is very hard. Most people take it as a judgement on themselves. The person who committed suicide seems to announce to the watching world that those surrounding him or her failed to care or protect. There is the feeling that society holds them responsible for the death of their loved one. In fact, they themselves may feel that way. Instead, what must be noted is

that a person's mental state is responsible for the self-destructive act.

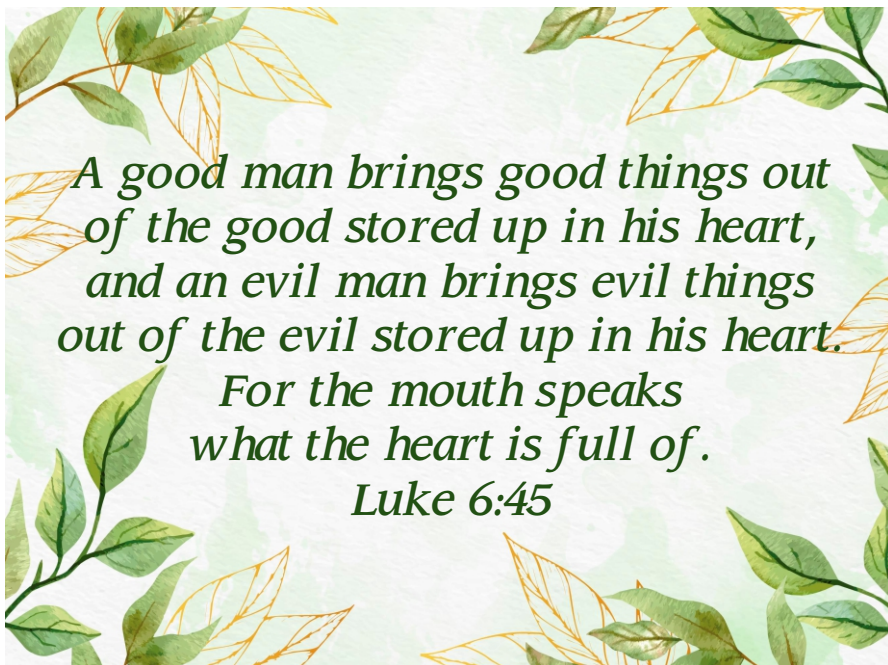
Suicide-prevention then starts with discernment of a person's state of mind. We need to be alert and sensitive. Sadly, because of the stigma attached to mental issues, parents, guardians, and families are in denial about problems, until they get out of hand, and beyond redemption. As with all health issues, timeliness in discovery and initiation of treatment are crucial to experiencing healing. There

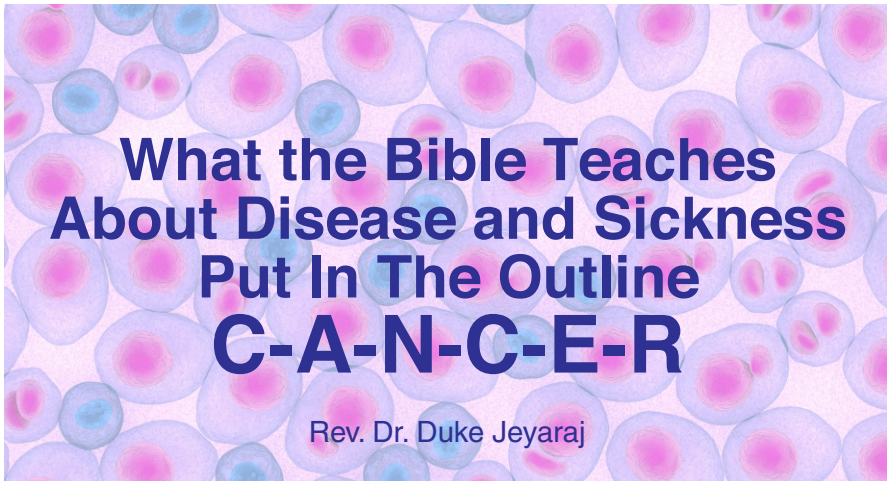
really is no dishonour in seeking healing. Isn't it better to get treatment for the loved one than to lose a loved one to despair?



**Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy**

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# What the Bible Teaches About Disease and Sickness Put In The Outline C-A-N-C-E-R

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

A 'cancer' in the Body of Christ is the wrong understanding of what the Bible teaches about sickness and disease.

I figured out that we could learn about what the Bible teaches about Sickness and Disease using the outline, C-A-N-C-E-R.

Let's do it! The first letter in the acronym CANCER which we are about to use to learn about what the Bible teaches about sicknesses and disease is C:

**C-Creation of Disease and Sickness:** Peter pointed that the Devil was the source of sickness when he said this while preaching in the home of Cornelius:

'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good

and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him' (Acts 10:38). He was repeating what he learnt from the words of His Master, the Lord Jesus who talked of the woman who had a bent back for ver 18-years this way:

'And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?' (Luke 13:16).

This is only one side of the story. When we read the whole of Scripture, we will quickly know something else about the 'creation' or source of disease and sickness. A careful reading of the New Testament tells us that, at times, God uses disease and sickness, as a means of inviting people to repentance and holy

living, as baffling as it sounds. Apostle Paul was 'filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 13:9) when he said that Elymas would become blind for being a stubborn stumbling block to those who sought to come to a faith in Jesus (see Acts 13:10-11). Jesus does something similar in Revelation 2. He warned Jezebel, a woman in ministry in the early church. Jesus said that she would be thrown in the sickbed by he himself! This disease would deter her from further leading God's people into a life of sexual immorality, Jesus felt (Rev. 2:20-23). Some of you can't believe that Jesus would do such a thing! But it is there in the Bible. Revelation 2:22 records the words of Jesus this way:

'Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works'. Yes, disease, at times is a tool in God's hands to make us fall at his feet in repentance!

But at the same time, we must not make the mistake of saying to a sick person, "You have this disease because of your sin". This right is only reserved for Bible-authors who were directed by the Spirit (Acts 13:9-11) and for the Lord Jesus himself (Rev.

2:20-23). Only in the day of judgement, will we know why a certain disease came upon a certain person and a lot of other details. So, do not jump the gun. God calls us to pray for the sick. Let's stick to that.

The next letter in the acronym CANCER which we are about to use to learn about what the Bible teaches about sicknesses and disease is A.

**A-Annulment of Disease:** The annulment of all disease will only happen in the other side of eternity. The Bible makes this clear in Revelation 21:4 where we read this: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, either shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Please notice the future tense used in this verse. So, only after the return of Jesus, the creation of new heaven and earth, will there be a time when there is no disease or sickness in this world. Apostle Paul also implied this when he wrote, we the children of God "await" the "redemption of our bodies" – the total healing from every sickness (Rom. 8:23). Till such a time dawns after the return of Jesus and setting up of new heaven and earth, we can enjoy the 'first-fruits' (meaning



partial, reversible healing according to the will of God on a case by case basis) (Rom. 8:23). Even those raised from the dead by Jesus and the Apostles eventually died - didn't they? Paul compares our bodies to a tent that will be destroyed one day (if the Lord's coming tarries). He writes, 'For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands' (2 Cor. 5:1). Paul believed that even if our disease-hit body eventually dies, we will live in perfect health in heaven.

The next letter in the acronym CANCER which we are about to use to learn about what the Bible teaches about sicknesses and disease is **N**.

**N-Now, Yes Even Now, We Can Be Healed From Any Disease, If It Is God's Will To Do So!** The Bible is full of examples and exhortation actively asking us to seek healing here and now. That is why Jesus gave this instruction to his disciples: 'Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give' (Matt. 10:8).

May I share a personal story in this regard? I have suffered with wheezing right from my

childhood. I remember telling my mom, "Mom, I want to die. I cannot bear these bouts of wheezing!" As a student of Agricultural Engineering in SHUATS, Allahabad, I was even admitted in the hospital situated opposite to the college campus because of a severe attack of wheezing. I prayed for a healing. The Evangelical Union leaders in that campus also prayed. I have never ever had another bout of wheezing all these years! It has been over 25 years since I graduated from college, now! Does that mean healing will happen in each and every case we pray? Absolutely not. There was an occasion when Paul left Trophimus, a valued team member 'sick' at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). The implication is this: Paul prayed for Trophimus' healing, but the sickness did not go away and consequently, Paul decided to move on leaving him behind.

The next letter in the acronym CANCER which we are about to use to learn about what the Bible teaches about sicknesses and disease is **C** (again).

**C-Church Elders Will Be God's Instruments When It Comes To Healing:** James make this clear as he writes the following words: 'Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church

to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven' (James 5:14-15). Church leaders must regularly pray for the sick. But again, this passage is not teaching healing will always happen irrespective of God's Will. The same author, James, writes this under the Spirit's inspiration: 'Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes' (James 4:14). The implication is this: while some will get healed and get a fresh lease of life, some others could pass away and die, perhaps affected by a dreaded disease or by anything else.

The next letter in the acronym CANCER which we are about to use to learn about what the Bible teaches about sicknesses and disease is E.

**E-Explanations, for why sickness comes, the Bible offers these.** Jesus explained why a man was born blind as his disciples questioned him about that. Jesus said that he was born blind to display the works of God (John 9:1-3). So, we can be assured that there is a purpose of God in each and every sickness.

As I already mentioned, in Acts 13 and in Revelation 2, we see that sicknesses would have a sanctifying effect on those upon whom it comes – this is God's expectation. Paul was not unfamiliar with this kind of situation. God told him that 'His grace was sufficient' when he prayed for a stubborn thorn in his flesh – perhaps a painful disease in his body - to be removed from him (2 Cor. 12:7-12). What's more, this persistent thorn which can be seen as a sickness, was God-allowed (notice the phrase 'was given') to keep Paul from being 'conceited', as he himself admitted (2 Cor. 12:7).

In Galatians 4:13, **the** apostle Paul said, "As you know, it was **because of an illness** that I first **preached the Gospel** to you." In this case, the arrival of the sickness was a blessing in disguise for Paul. As he stayed sick in Galatia, he preached the Gospel in Galatia. You may be sick in a hospital bed now. But as you share the Goodnews with the medical personnel and fellow sick people there, you fulfill one of the purposes that God had in allowing a sickness to come to you (Job 1). If Lazarus had not died, Jesus could not have resurrected him. And because Jesus resurrected Lazarus, people saw him and believed in



Jesus (John 11:45). When healing happens in response to prayer, people come to Jesus.

The final letter in the acronym CANCER which we are about to use to learn about what the Bible teaches about sicknesses and disease is R.

**R-Relentless we must be, when it comes to prayers for those who are sick.** The Bible is clear: we must not give up when it comes to prayer for anything, including for those who are sick. Jesus' point was this: 'you ought to always pray and not give up' (Luke 18:1). The deliverance from the disease in response to this prayer may come instantly (see Acts 8:7), or with some delay (see Luke 17:14), or on the other side of eternity (see Rev. 21:4).

It is my prayer that believers will embrace all what the Bible teaches on healing, sickness and diseases instead of being selective. This outline, C-A-N-C-E-R will help us recall all what the Scriptures teach about healing, sicknesses and diseases!



### **Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj**

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# EFI National Youth Commission Report



The EFI National Youth Commission (EFI-NYC) hosted Yuva Sangati at Amaris Hall, St. Ursula School, Nagpur on 19th August, 2022. Rev. Ashish Hirday and Brother Gladson Peter were the resource persons. The event was attended by 250 plus participants.

We thank God that many young

people committed their lives to Jesus Christ. Many shared amazing stories of what the Lord has done in their lives. Praise Jesus!

We deeply appreciate your valuable prayers and support for making this retreat successful. Do continue to pray for the youth of Nagpur.

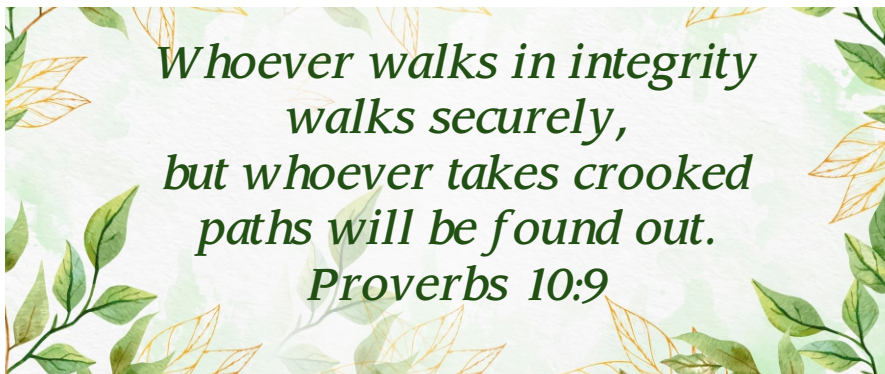


EFI National Youth Commission (EFI-NYC) organized a seminar with the theme "Bridging The Generational Gap" for senior and emerging leaders on the 30th of July, 2022 at Nagpur Union Church, Behind Hotel Heritage, Nagpur. The seminar focused on effectively working with and among youth.

Rev. Ashish Hirday, Director, EFI National Youth Commission

challenged the leaders and taught them how they can effectively work with the younger generation collaboratively and also how effectively they can speak to the youth to extend the Kingdom of God.

Around 100 participants attended the seminar and benefitted from it. We thank God for His enablement and His provision.





# The Girl Who Jumped To Death From A Super Posh Flat

Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

The flat was posh. In fact, the 'poshest' in all of Chennai you could say. Her dad was a builder. Rich, perhaps. She was young. Only 33.

Life was actually going good. Life was indeed cool. Till the pandemic hit. Till Corona came. That's when she lost her well-paying IT job. The world would limp back to normalcy slowly. But then, the job she lost she could never get back despite many a desperate attempt. Frustration. Anger.

No job. And no joys of marriage as well. Many wedding proposals did not materialise into marriage. Her biological clock was ticking

furiously, and marriage wasn't happening.

She hardly talked. She stayed indoors. She locked herself in her room. As she looked out at from the window of her 24th floor flat in Egattur area of Chennai, another thought came into her mind. She wanted to end it all. And end it all she did. The DT Next newspaper reported this: 'On Saturday 2 July 2022 around 3 am, She opened the window of her bedroom and jumped from the 24th floor and died on the spot.'

If only, she has recalled what happened at 3 pm on a Friday, she would not have taken the tragic step that she took at 3 am

on a Saturday! What took place at 3 pm on a Friday? The death of God in Flesh Jesus on the Cross! His death and resurrection brings meaning and purpose to life. He came to give life, life more abundantly. The peace he gives is not as the World gives. The peace the world gives will pass away, when that job goes or when marriage does not happen. The happiness he gives does not depend on happenings! The Old Testament prophets talked about this happiness: 'Though the fig tree does not blossom; though the olive crops fail; though there are no cattle in the stalls. Yet I will rejoice in God my maker.' In other words, 'The marching Babylonian army will take all of our agricultural produce. They will pocket all of my animal husbandry profit. Yet, I will be joyous amidst the war disaster. Yahweh has given me a joy that does not depend on circumstances!'

The pandemic may have taken a lot. A loved one is no more. The virus may have punctured your finances. The life partner hunt may be unfruitful. Marriage may

be thorny. Life may be scary. But remember, there is a God who can give you joy which is beyond any abrupt circumstance change.

This girl who jumped to death had a Christian name. She was from a Christian family. But that didn't stop her from doing what she did.

Being born in a Christian family cannot save you. Apostle Paul was a law-practicing deeply godly Jew. But all that he regarded as dog-dong, excreta in comparison to the joy of knowing Jesus intimately.

Take time to know Jesus intimately. Life will never be the same. Life will become meaningful.

And remember, you can't actually 'end it all'. The soul you have will go on living forever. God has placed eternity in your heart. After death, you will have to appear before Jesus, the judge. What you have done with Jesus will determine your eternal destiny - heaven or hell. So, the jump to death is nothing but a dive into hell, a place of eternal



conscious torment. It is like jumping from the frying pan into the furnace. It is not worth it. Judas went to hell and about him the Bible says, 'It would be better for him, if he was not born!'

It is not God's plan that any of us would die and go to hell. He wants our repentance, not riddance. Come now in repentance to Jesus!



**Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj**

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So, being locked up in a room, confined to my bed for the longest period ever, owing to Covid and its shenanigans has driven me to drastic choices, like listening to a podcast. People who know me can vouch for my hyperactive nature where listening to someone without responding back is the most tedious task.

This podcast is by a Christian therapist, Mr Adam Young who helps those dealing with trauma and abuse. The title of this particular podcast was what caught my attention. It read, **"Why engaging your story requires anger at God"**. It mainly dealt with the book of Job and his addressal of grievances to God.

As a young girl starting to explore the bible at the age of 10, I was very puzzled by the book of Job and its inclusion in the bible. I always considered his statements blasphemous and a little too self-righteous. Once I became a young adult, I started sympathizing with this man who was caught up in a power-struggle between God and Satan for no fault of his, other than the fact that he was irreproachable beyond doubt. It is not a favourite read of mine as it raises a lot of questions and emotions unexplainable within me. I get confused as to how my feelings of hurt and betrayal towards God should be expressed or processed. This podcast sort of forced me to read the book as

well as do some research about 'being honest with God at all times'.

I focused mainly on chapters 9 and 10. Chapter 9 shows us a man who seems to have given up. He can't find a way around the plight he is in, as this was brought on unjustly by God and 'He has already found him guilty' (vs 29).

*Even if I summoned him and he responded,*

*I do not believe he would give me a hearing.*

*He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason.*

*He would not let me catch my breath*

*but would overwhelm me with misery.*

*Job 9:16-18*

Chapter 10 takes a 1800 turn where we see man so angry, with nothing more to lose and is ready to be struck down by God, as long as he has given God a piece of his mind.

I loathe my very life;  
therefore I will give free rein  
to my complaint

and speak out in the  
bitterness of my soul.

I say to God: Do not declare me  
guilty,

but tell me what charges you  
have against me.

Does it please you to oppress  
me. Job 10:1-3

Though he acknowledges God's provisions and protection thus far in his life (vs 12), he has reached a point where he wants God to turn away from him so that he can have a moment's joy, before he fades away to oblivion (vs 20).

And this goes on until chapter 37 – 37 long chapters translates to even longer days, maybe months where God just allows Job to vent out his feelings of anger, hurt and betrayal towards Him; 37 chapters of raw, honest vexation towards the creator of heaven and earth. All this anger, ire and hurt did not drive him away from God, but made him rush to the heart of God to probe and question, unlike many of us. He keeps demanding for answers and justice. Those weren't empty words thrown out in anger without a care but were a genuine search for answers. In his own way, he



was trying to understand God's heart as well as what went wrong in his relationship with God. He couldn't see anything in his life that could have culminated in a disaster of such drastic magnitude.

Whenever we feel abandoned by God, and feel left alone to handle things beyond our control, we embrace that feeling of neglect and move away from God. We shut our ears from hearing his voice, we keep our bibles in the farthest of corners and we stop praying/talking to God. We convince ourselves that since even God couldn't be bothered to rescue us, we are beyond redemption. Most often this is because we have been taught that mortals aren't allowed to question the creator, but to accept His decisions and actions without complaint; and blind acceptance isn't a virtue that comes in naturally to our sinful, rebellious selves. Thus, we end up shutting out GOD from the deepest of our turmoils.

*Instead of being honest with God, our misplaced fear drives us away from Him, some days*

*to the point of no-return. All because we believe that God can't handle our anger and words of hurt; that He would react just like one of us – with a bolt of lightning to pierce us through. All because we equate His emotions to that of humans, that He can't understand the deepest places of our hearts.*

I appreciate those of you who can do that- accept hurt and trauma with heads bowed and hands folded, but I have never been one to hide my true feelings. Even from a young age, I was reminded by the Spirit to be completely honest with the Lord, to the point of getting angry with Him and even questioning His plans quite loudly.

At the conclusion of Job's rant appears the King of kings, the Judge of all the earth. He talks of all the ways He is the righteous Judge and, the glorious protector and shepherd of all His creations for 2 chapters, at the end of which He allows Job to address his sorrow face to face.

*The Lord said to Job  
Will the one who contends with*

*the Almighty correct him?  
Let him who accuses God  
answer him!" Then Job  
answered the Lord:  
"I am unworthy—how can I reply  
to you? I put my hand over my  
mouth. Job 40:1-4*

After their honest one-to-one conversation, Job is now at peace with his maker and says "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know." (Job 42:3b). He has come to know God's heart and has humbly accepted His decision.

As I come to the end of my summarisation of Job's anger towards God and the Lord's response to it, here is what I want to bring to your attention.

Why was the book of Job included in the bible?

It doesn't follow any chronological order nor does it match with the rest of the books in the bible. It always stands out as an odd story to be told among books of history and prophecies. I believe the Lord planned for its inclusion to let each of us

understand that **He expects honesty from us in every sphere of our life**, even when we are so angry that we want to raise our voices and blame Him for everything. As our maker, He knows our frame and knows we are dust (Ps 103: 14), and He is an everlasting, omniscient God who knows our every thought and every word even before it is uttered. He can handle our tantrums and anger.

Only when we are honest in our anger towards God, can we run to him even when the situation tries to pull us away. Only this will let us engage in a conversation so life-changing with God, just like Job had. But the aim of our vexation shouldn't be just to rave and rant at God but to genuinely know his heart. We should be humble enough to listen to him and stop ourselves from being resentful and bitter. Our anger should take us to a conversation with God and not further toward sin (Eph 4:26) (a tricky situation indeed). Ultimately, anger and honesty with God are aimed at ensuring that my ways are always leading to Him and not away.

We know Job's story. At the end, the Lord spoke to Job's friends, "I am angry with you and your two friends because **you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has**" (Job 42:7). God was pleased with Job's honesty over the pious speeches made by his friends in 'God's defence'.

My sickness raised all these questions and disappointments in me, but Job left me a perfect example of how I must respond and run to my Father's lap even when I wanted to give up most of the times.

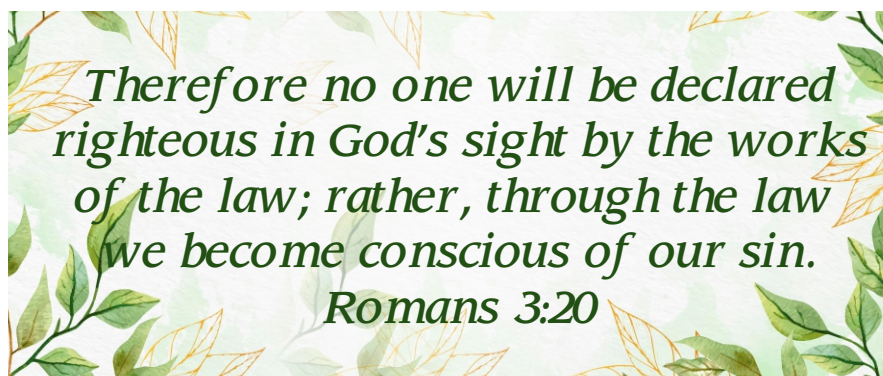
The question remains: do you trust God enough to believe that He can handle your honesty and your anger? Are you ready to run to Him with your anger, rather than away from Him with your

silent bitterness? Are you ready to humbly listen to His voice at the end of your rant?

May His wisdom guide you just as you lean on Him in all honesty.



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# EFI PMBT Report



PMBT is planning to start classes at a new village named Khothran which comes under the district of Nawanshahr (Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar), but it is within the city of Phagwara which is in Kapurthala district.

## **Initiative:**

The initiative to start PMBT at this village was taken by the Pastors' Association Phagwara who were requesting this since 2019. However, due to restrictions during the Covid19 pandemic, this plan was not getting operational. Now that the restrictions have subsided, Pastors' Association has again

approached and express their willingness to start PMBT class in their village and therefore, PMBT Core team gave them an orientation.

## **Response Received:**

The team received a very positive response and the pastors requested for continuation of the classes every month.

## **Feedback:**

After the Bible class, a time was given for feedback and a very encouraging & positive response was received. Many of the pastors gave testimony that they were very happy and enjoyed the



learning time. One pastor shared that they were praying for a bible class in their region for a long time because they wanted to learn the word of God systematically.

### **Report from Teachers:**

The class saw an equal participation male and females, which was very encouraging. The teachers shared that the attendees were keen to learn, were responsive, making notes and everyone expressed their desire to continue the regular classes.

PMBT teachers' team visited this village on 30th August and Mr. Johnson Chidda & Mr. Rajdeep Singh took sessions. The

Orientation session was taken by Mr. Rajdeep Singh & he introduced the history of PMBT and Bible class attendees were made aware about the works of PMBT. The history & curriculum was shared with them. Along with this basic study, they were also informed about the need to study the Bible. Mr Johnson taught from the book of Philippians which was also very interesting and the introduction of the book, its author, date & place of writing, purpose of book & outline of the book was taught to the pastors.

Thank You

Regards  
Team PMBT





# **“A Chosen vessel”**

## **Dr. K. Rajendran (1952-2022)**

***“ ... he is a chosen instrument of Mine ... ”***  
***Acts 9:15 (NASB).***

Dr. K. Rajendran was an extra ordinary Indian missionary pioneer, missionary trainer and missions federator.

He is remembered especially for the hundreds he had mentored personally. He disciplined people from all over the world, including

Indians from just about every state. Rajendran gave us 50 years of remarkable service.

Rajendran went to be with the Lord on 22nd May, 2022. His wife Pramila, and family (daughter Preeti and son, Pradeep) are organising a Thanksgiving Service, (in person meeting in Bangalore and on Zoom) on the 24th of September 10.30 am - 12.30pm. Zoom Details are: Meeting ID 863 8031 4127, passcode 980535.

By way of introduction to AIM readers, “Dr Rajendran was actively involved in all the mission related events of EFI. He was a member of the EFI Executive Committee representing IMA through out the 12 years he served as the IMA General Secretary. Rajendran pioneered the Advanced Mission Leadership Training as a partnership program of EFI, IMA and OM.” John Amalraj, a former Colleague of Rajendran.

Dr Rajendran served with OM, (OM India and the OM Ships) for 27 years (1970 – 1997). These years were very significant for his future contributions nationally and Internationally. During the years 1995 – 1998 OM released him for his Doctor of Missiology studies at SAIACS, Bangalore.

He served 12 years (1998-2010) as the General Secretary of IMA (India Missions Association). This era of his leadership of IMA was significant for India. I have heard it said that it was the “Golden period of Indian Missions”, building on the strong foundation his predecessors has built.

His huge success in OM and at IMA opened door for him to serve with the International Missions Alliance known as WEA/MC (World Evangelical Alliance / Missions Commission). He served with MC for about 15 years, most of the time as its Chairman.

He valued people and saw potential in them: S. N. Shankar, a



former colleague in OM, blessed by Dr Rajendran's mentoring says, "He saw potential in every person and what they could become if trained and disciplined. He was warm, reassuring and inviting. ... We remember his servant heart. ... [God] honoured his faithfulness and seeking to honour Him and value people."

He "valued people" and saw "potential in every person" irrespective of who they were, from which state in India, male or female, caste or denomination they came from?

**A Personal Experience:** It was in the year 1973 in Bihar State. Rajendran was one of 14 members of my OM evangelistic team. We had a large OM truck filled halfway up to the top with lots of tracts for free distribution, and several hundreds of Gospel packets, several Christian titles, Bibles and NTs for sale. Team members came from different states of India and two of them from overseas.

I was a little apprehensive about being responsible for such a large team. I was sure that the Lord had a special plan for this team as we travelled the towns and village markets with our literature and preaching in the Open Air. So I sought the Lord. "Lord, what do you want me to do with this team?" The Lord answered me. He said something like this "Train Rajendran, Pran Ranjan and C. K. Thomas in leadership." This I did, over the next three months, a kind of following the method of Jesus with His disciples.

For practical, on the job training, I divided my team into three and gave them a team each to lead in evangelism and discipleship. During the team's daily Study time, while an Englishman taught the team of ten members of the team, I took the trio aside and we went through leadership, studying the leaders in the Bible. This is because there was only one title on Christian Leadership available in those days. A thin book called "Christian Leadership by A. E. Norrish; older generation might remember it.

Soon they began to lead OM teams and then bigger entities in different states. Rajendran went to serve national and international level, as I mentioned above. All three of them rewarded me richly. I followed their progress some times up close other times from a distance.

OM India and OM Ships (1970 – 1997): Dr Rajendran followed the Lord from a Hindu family in Trichy in Tamil Nadu. He was a close friend of a true Christian and he used to visit him in his house. One day the friend's mother told Rajendran that he cannot see his friend unless he follow the Lord Jesus. Well, that was the beginning of his following Christ, and he never wavered. Thank God.

He joined OM India teams in 1970, six years after the small beginnings of OM India. OM was a growing environment for young people as believers as well as place to develop one's spiritual gift. Our motto was borrowed from Navigators, "to know Christ and make Him know". Christian character development was priority.

Many of us who never travelled far from our homes were exposed to the whole country, we travelled the length and breadth of India, in the process of OM training and ministry. We saw India as it is and caught a vision to reach it with the Gospel. Those were the days of many OM trucks and teams made up of nationals and internationals; truly cross-cultural teams. Thomas Samuel, George Miley, Thomas Mathai, Ray Eicher, Alfy Franks, Ebenezer Sunder Raj and many other giants of OM India were around.

George Verwer was personally involved in the development of OM India for many years, even when he was not permitted to live in India; we went to Nepal to meet him a month at a time or joined the OM Ship Logos for three or six months that spent considerable time around India and the region since 1971. Being

on the ship with many nationalities and visiting so many other countries and ministering (from giving testimony to preaching) was all part of leadership training.

A few more years into OM, in 1978 Rajendran married Pramila, a smart lady from Uttar Pradesh, who was on one of our ladies teams. Together they joined the leadership team on the OM ship Logos. Their first child, Preeti was born when the Logos was in PNG (Papua New Guinea) in 1980, and their second child, Pradeep was born in England in 1982 when the Logos was ministering Europe.

Back in India, from 1984 till 1995, the family based in Lucknow at the famous 5 Wazir Hasan Road, what was the WEC mission house. Rajendran was given the role of the National Co-Ordinator for OM India Missionary Training. It was a very significant time for hundreds of young people that joined OM India. "This meant that he was involved in pastoral care issues of missionaries and also interacted widely with other missions in India and abroad", said Ebenezer Sunder Raj, his predecessor in IMA.

OM send him for further studies in 1995 to SAIACS (South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies) which he successfully completed in 1998. Pramila did an MA in Pastoral Counselling while Rajendran tackled a Doctor of Missiology. Graduating in 1998, Rajendran completed a dissertation on missions in India. (Pramila has since gone on to graduate with a PhD and carries on an international ministry of counselling.)

Which way forward Indian Missions: A question most people do not even think of asking became the title of the book, the result of Rajendran's research. It is subtitled "A Critique of Twenty-five Years 1972-1997. Published in 1998, its Foreword is written by the Founding Principal of SAIACS, Dr Graham Houghton. He says that "... The study of the post independence period is

valuable for its sweep across the national landscape in what he calls, a nation in transition. Then he looks at the status of the present Indian missionary movement.

“Rajendran has provided us with a never before undertaken review and reflection on the entire scope of the present missionary endeavour. The issues he has looked at are real and will need to be reflected upon further by Indian mission leaders if the lofty aims before them are to be in any measure realised.

Dr Houghton concludes, “Essential reading for anyone wishing to be acquainted with this expansive and impressively effective movement that has so wonderfully replaced the earlier missionary effort and begun to build so marvelously upon the foundation that was laid by those who went before.”

India Missions Association (1999 – 2011):

With such experience and background, he was well qualified to replace Dr Ebenezer Sunder Raj when he stepped down as the General Secretary on IMA. Pages can be written about Rajendran’s accomplishments in the following 12 years as the head of IMA.

Dr. Sunder Raj writes “Rajendran, along with (now Bishop) Joseph D Souza and Dr Praveen Moudgil in partnership IMA, started in the eighties, Leadership Training for the second line leaders of member missions of IMA, in order to prepare them for the CEO responsibilities. This great vision, along with the Management Training effort of EFI, laid the foundation for the formation Christian Institute of Management 15 years later.

“When I stepped down from IMA, Rajendran was selected by the Society to head IMA. I had the privilege of mentoring him for a year in that responsibility.

“While heading IMA he saw the need for reaching the urban middle and upper class and upper caste India and did extensive survey of cities, conducted seminars and training programs for reaching them.

“Hailing from a family of difficult spiritual background, Dr Rajendran rose up to national level responsibility. He also served as Chairman of the Missions Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance for several years. He mentored many second line leaders, built networks, wrote books and articles, spoke for the unreached, was always active in the work of the Lord. I Corinthians 15:58

May his life and work inspire many in the younger generation for missions.”

That seems to be a good place to conclude this brief tribute Dr Rajendran, although pages could be written about his accomplishments on the IMA and WEA/MC platforms. That is the job of a biographer, which I pray will be forthcoming.

I just want to close with a few bullet points I have observed in Dr. Rajendran as he grew in the Lord and in the ministry. He was an unusual Indian:

- \*Wide exposure over the years into all India and many parts of the world.

- \*He could relate to any one from any part of India or any part of the world.

- \*He rose above traditions, customs, and saw people through the Lord's eyes.

- \*He was not doing a thousand people's ministry but got thousands to do their part.

\*The Glory of God and the Evangelization of the world was his passion.

\*He valued people and saw potential in them and went out of the way to invest in them.

\*Micah 6:8 applied to him, “do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with God”.

\*Big on communication: emails, articles, travels, time with people.

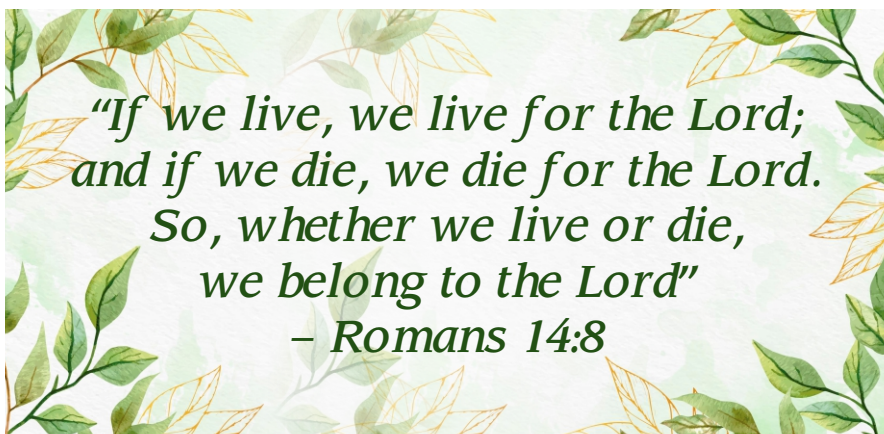
\*Innovative, encouraged others to think outside the box.

\*He finished well, no scandals

\*Indian George Verwer

It is so important that we honour fellow Indians like him. The real honour would come from the Lord. India needs hundreds of such leaders. May the Lord raise up many like Dr. K. Rajendran to bless India.

**Mr. Chacko Thomas**



# Intercessory Prayer Points



September 2022

**1 THURSDAY** Thank God for bringing us to the ninth month of the year. Thank God for His kindness and concern for our lives.

**2 FRIDAY** Pray for the persecuted that they would have the courage and strength to stand through the storm. Pray that their suffering would bear much fruit and magnify God.

**3 SATURDAY** Pray that you and your whole family would have a vibrant personal relationship with the Lord. Pray that the Holy Spirit would enable you to live actively for Him.

**4 SUNDAY** Pray for God's Holy Spirit to move hearts and minds of the people in your Church to encounter Christ and know him in His fullness. Pray also for nearness to God and confidence in His love for yourself.

**5 MONDAY** Pray for the state of Andhra Pradesh today. Pray that every believer would live out their

faith boldly and courageously. Pray that their Christlike transformed lives would impact others and speak volumes about Christ.

**6 TUESDAY** Pray for Karnataka. Pray that the Word of God would change people's hearts and minds, so that God's kingdom would increase in and through the state.

**7 WEDNESDAY** Pray for Jammu and Kashmir. Pray that God would meet the people's need and reveal Himself to those who are seeking Him. Pray for peace and prosperity for this state.

**8 THURSDAY** International Literacy Day. Pray for growth in literacy rate in all the states. Pray that there is growth in Biblical literacy as well within the Church.

**9 FRIDAY** Pray for the state of Tripura today. Pray for Christian maturity for the believers in the state. Pray that Christ and his kingdom would be lifted high, and



people would have a high view of God.

**10 SATURDAY** World Suicide Prevention Day. Pray for those who are struggling with mental health issues. Pray that the Gospel of Christ would dispel suicidal thoughts and bring hope and peace in their hearts. Pray for those who are working in this area.

**11 SUNDAY** Pray that you and your Church would desire imitate relationship with Christ and would not settle for anything lesser than that.

**12 MONDAY** Pray for Chhattisgarh today. Pray that the Word of God would reach every nook and corner of this state. Pray for God's protection and provision especially for those who are working in the tribal belts.

**13 TUESDAY** Pray for Haryana. Pray for peace and prosperity for this state. Pray also that God would draw the hearts and minds of the people to Himself.

**14 WEDNESDAY** Pray for the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Pray that the Lord would use this state mightily for spreading the Gospel to the neighbouring states.

**15 THURSDAY** Pray for Goa. Pray that Jesus and His Words

would impact the lives of the people in a new way. Pray that more and more people would encounter Jesus in a personal way and establish relationship with Him.

**16 FRIDAY** Pray for Telangana. Pray for the gospel to be effectively preached and lived out by believers in this state. Pray that those who have heard the Gospel would put their faith in Jesus.

**17 SATURDAY** Pray for Mizoram. Pray for the people of Mizoram to be alert spiritually and be firmed in their faith. Pray for sound doctrines to be taught and followed in Churches. Pray that they continue to be a blessing to people around them.

**18 SUNDAY** Pray for hunger and thirst for God's Word to increase. Pray that every believer would be equipped with the knowledge and power of the Scripture.

**19 MONDAY** Pray for the state of Bihar. Pray for the upliftment of people who are economically and socially backward. Pray for the protection of tribals. Pray for equality for all the people in all areas. Pray also that God's love may reach everyone in this state.

**20 TUESDAY** Pray for the state of Gujarat today. Pray that the land would flourish both physically and

spiritually. Pray for those who are spreading the Word of God to be encouraged and strengthened.

**21 WEDNESDAY** International Day of Peace. Pray for the peace makers. As we celebrate the International Day of Peace, pray that there would be peace between God and man, and also between man and man.

**22 THURSDAY** World Cancer Free Day. Pray for God's comfort and peace to those who have lost their loved ones to this disease and also, those who are suffering themselves. Pray for their full restoration physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

**23 FRIDAY** Pray for Uttarakhand. Pray for God's Spirit to work mightily in this state. Pray that God would meet the people in the place of their need.

**24 SATURDAY** Pray for Himachal Pradesh. Pray that God would raise many Christian workers to reach all the remote places in this state. Pray for receptive hearts and willingness to turn to God.

**25 SUNDAY** Pray for spiritual awakening for people in your Church. Pray that God would use you to touch people's lives with Christ's love and concern.

**26 MONDAY** Pray for Assam

today. Pray for growth in all areas. Pray for political leaders to govern the state with integrity, love and understanding. Pray that the Assamese people would be a source of blessing to the whole North East region both economically and spiritually.

**27 TUESDAY** Pray for Sikkim. Pray that the Holy Spirit would move people's hearts and minds and draw multitude to Christ and His Word. Pray for the strengthening of the Churches in this state to be the salt and light in their communities.

**28 WEDNESDAY** Pray for West Bengal. Pray for spiritual renewal and strengthening of the Churches in the state. Pray that they would be the agent of change. Pray that the state would flourish and be a blessing to many people.

**29 THURSDAY** Pray for the state of Uttar Pradesh. Pray that development would reach the most inner part of the state. Pray for the political leaders to work with the best interest for the people. May God shine His face towards the people of UP and show His unceasing love for them.

**30 FRIDAY** Thank God for His persevering love toward you and your family.

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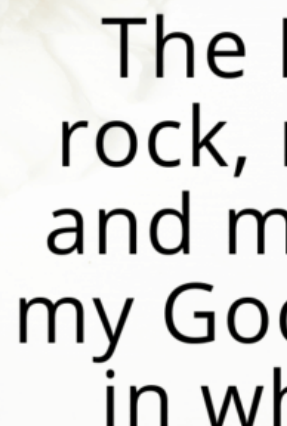
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The Lord is my  
rock, my fortress  
and my deliverer;  
my God is my rock,  
in whom I take  
refuge, my shield  
and the horn of my  
salvation, my  
stronghold.

## **Psalm 18:2**

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