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From the Editor



Addiction: The Index of Human Alienation

Addiction: What image does this word conjure in your mind? Do you picture a man working at his computer late into the night or a woman stumbling along the road, reeking of alcohol? Both of these images may identify different forms of addiction; workaholism and alcoholism, one condemned by society, and the other glorified. The man and the woman are trying in vain to numb the emptiness in their lives and find the best substitute for love they have yet to experience. Life experiences have left them susceptible to addiction, and their brain circuits have been impacted in a way that it does not know how to be in “neutral” position; “when the obsessive or addictive thought occurs, obsessive or addictive action follows” (Mate, 2010, p. 375).

The Christian faith is inspired by God’s call to bring peace and wholeness

to people leading fragmented and anxiety ridden lives. When God is not the one calming out anxieties, people often turn to drugs for solace. I am not talking about drugs used for medical purposes, but drugs that enslave and destroy. The thirst for liberation which may drive one to drugs becomes an insatiable bondage, revealing we are not at home with ourselves or our environment. We will better understand the disastrous consequences of drugs through this true story; the name of the person has been changed.

Raj Kumar was thrilled to have cleared his class twelve exams at the age of twenty. Now, he thought, he would finally fulfill his dream of supporting his poor parents who had toiled to provide him with an education. Raj, a well-loved man, approached the MLA of his constituency saying, “Sir, I have

always voted for you, and worked for your party, now that I have passed class twelve, please help me find a job.” Instead of helping Raj, the MLA invited him to walk through a door leading to ruin, “Raj,” he said, “I don’t have a job for you. I suggest you start your own business of making illicit country liquor. Be assured nobody will catch you or stop you from doing so, plus you will make big money.”

Raj was aware of the gap between what he had asked for and what had been offered to him. Powerless, though he felt, he tasted the bait of power under the protective shadow of his political boss. The invitation to tread the forbidden route, without immediate consequences, trapped him. Visions of large stacks of rupees set on tables before him, danced before Raj’s eyes. Tired of waiting and wanting money, he seized the opportunity and off he went, down the slippery slope of bondage. Soon poverty would be a thing of the past, and respect would be his, and comfort would be his. Making, selling and drinking liquor characterized this young man’s post high-school life.

Raj produced liquor, and employed young children to sell it on the road side, along with fish and chips. These kids earning around 50 rupees per day were soon not interested in attending school. They were now bread winners for their families, which education, as in the case of Raj, did not guarantee.

Raj’s story does not have a happy ending. This young man ruined his life, but consumption of illicit alcohol in his neighbourhood also left many widows in its wake. This true story of a Christian boy occurred in Punjab, where a large number of the state’s population lives in bondage to drugs and alcohol.

Understanding Addiction

People often talk about developing a relationship with the substance or process to which they are addicted. Based on a Christian worldview, we

Our deepest longing for acceptance, worth, competence, are only met in God.

know that God created human beings to be in relationship with Him. There is nobody other than God who is always a secure base and our safe haven. Our deepest longing for acceptance, worth, competence, are only met in God. However, not all of us enjoy a close and loving relationship with God. While we all have relationships with people, these are often less than satisfying. As we go about life, we find our dignity ignored and often violated; instead our sinfulness becomes highlighted and yet we fail to see it. We begin disconnecting from God, ourselves, and others in our desire to be self-sufficient. As we

go through life we are getting hurt and being wounded; we start believing lies, and vow to protect ourselves from further hurt. When faced with difficulties, over reliance on people may provide momentary relief, but leaves us unsatisfied. Feelings of shame follow, as we are disappointed for having trusted someone who failed to meet our needs. Thus, the safest way to cope appears seems to trust in oneself. Eventually, we fail and the ugly head of contempt drives us to performance in order to continue functioning. The hatred for ourselves and others leaves us empty inside and we cover this up through addictions of various sorts. One chooses his laptop while the other alcohol (Masterson, n.d.).

How to be Helpful?

Many of us do not want to get our hands dirty or associate with addicts. When we look at Jesus' ministry we see that He associated with those whom others would avoid; He was not worried about His reputation. As His followers we are called to do demonstrate the same unconditional love as Jesus. Telling your friend to quit smoking may be a helpful gesture, but is unlikely to be effective. We need to develop a compassionate understanding of a person's life. If a man with crutches comes to a doctor and the only help he receives is having his crutches taken away, the man will fall. If you really want your friend to

quit smoking, what is the replacement you are offering? What we have to offer is our love and acceptance and more importantly, Christ. Thankfully, while impoverished relationships can cause damage, healthy and meaningful relationships can bring healing. This is where we can make a difference (Maté,).

While most of us are not trained in treating addictions, we can all still be helpful. The best medicine we can offer a person is a loving and non-

When we look at Jesus' ministry we see that He associated with those whom others would avoid; He was not worried about His reputation.

judgmental atmosphere. As you show love to a person, the person may learn how to love themselves. It does not help to condemn the person or lecture them about how they are hurting their family. If it was so easy to quit, addiction treatment facilities would not be in such demand. The best gift you can offer is a glimpse of God's heart towards that person. The Bible clearly demonstrates that His heart is full of love and no condemnation. Jesus always addressed the pain of the heart before addressing the sin of the heart. Do not be quick to jump to people's sin if you do not have

the time to listen or empathize with their pain.

It is important to be aware of our own attitude towards people with addictions and to rectify our biases before attempting to help. Nouwen (1972) offers helpful advice. He suggests that we work as “contemplative critics,” who are aware of their own weakness as well as that of others. As a “wounded healer” we can “make visible in daily events the fact that behind the dirty curtain of our painful symptoms there is something great to be seen; the face of Him in whose image we are shaped” (p. 44). It is also important not to condemn in our attitude, towards people based on the type of addiction they have.

Within our society, people addicted to drugs, alcohol, sex, or pornography would be viewed with more condemnation than someone addicted to their work or to social networking. When we are acutely aware of our own worthiness and the universal status of all humans as sinners (saved by grace) we will be most helpful to people condemned by society (Romans 3:23; McVey & Quarles, 2012).

Drugs: A Search for the Divine

The word addict is derived from the Latin word *addictus* which means to deliver the self over to something. The need for relationships is one of the basic human needs; God created us for connection. In urban settings

where individualism is of prime importance, relationships become increasingly mediated by money. Primary relationships such as family ties become replaced by goal-oriented, secondary relationships. In such a context, it is not surprising, that people often lead lonely disconnected lives, finding love and acceptance in

People struggling with addictions often talk about alcohol and drugs taking the place of God in their lives or being their most important relationship.

addictive substances alone. People struggling with addictions often talk about alcohol and drugs taking the place of God in their lives or being their most important relationship. They are controlled by drugs, their body demands the addictive process or substance, quitting is no longer a question of mere will power.

Many people consider use of intoxicating drugs as a pathway to liberation. Drugs are also advocated by some to achieve higher state of contemplation, ecstasy or union, as a way to escape from the challenges of this life. When drugs are presented as gateway to divine, or a way to discover the divine within ourselves, their

attraction increases, and use thereof, is justified.

God created human beings to enjoy a relationship with Him and with fellow humans. Our deepest longing is to be in loving relationship with God as only He can meet our deepest needs, ease our desperate longings, and give us enduring purpose and peace. A search for the divine within us will lead to disappointment as there is no good in us apart from the good that God bestows on His creation. One look at the newspaper is sufficient to reveal the evil prevalent in our world. If there is no external divinity apart from us, we are really terrible and immoral

gods in desperate need of a God to save us! It is only the LORD who can meet the emptiness within people's lives, heal our ugly scars and cleanse us from sin.

The ultimate need for love and acceptance in our lives is only met in God our Creator. No amount of meditation, mindfulness, or accumulation of good works can ease the gnawing ache in our hearts. Armed with this knowledge, we must share the love of Christ, the only antidote to pain, with our fellow human beings as we journey through life.

Rev. Dr. Richard Howell

Institute of Languages and Linguistics, Dehradun, is delighted to announce a new course titled, "Language and Culture Learning course" from July 29 to October 11, 2013.

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But I say to you.....

We are to examine our times, discover what God is saying to our generation and declare without apology, unequivocally proclaiming what we have heard.

Sanjiv Ailawadi

'You have heard it said.....but I say to you!' When someone proclaims this to a large group, you might suspect he isn't just a sweet benign soul making a grandfatherly suggestion. You may imagine he is out to subvert, to confront the status quo and challenge the very roots of a system. This sort of pronouncement demands an immediate response of acceptance or denial.

'But I say to you.' He proposes something different, opposing what is currently there. Only people desperate enough would consider moving out of their comfort zones. Most prefer slavery in a secure Egypt more than wandering in a free but dangerous wilderness. Such an outrageous proposition is akin to casting aside a luxurious soft six inch spring mattress on a king size bed for one of thorns. What he says will have to be tested, preferably by someone else.

'You have heard it said.....but I say to you.' Some who have made this kind of declaration have something mysterious that excites, an unbridled passion that sets a region ablaze. They offer radical outcomes that seem impossible, out of this world, unimaginable even in our wildest fantasies. They are persuasive enough to make the absurd sound real, the power of their outlandish suggestions only finding root in willing soil dissatisfied by the barrenness of the present state.

Reformers, rebels or seducers: they use similar words all the time. The devil said it to Eve (in not so many words): *you have heard it said* that you will die when you eat of this tree, *but I say to you* that you will be like God. Adverts do it too: tempting with features that somehow slip past our reason and rationality to engage our innate desire to experiment, to seek

adventure, enticing the naive to go into deep debt for the sake of gadgets that promise nirvana.

Moses claimed he had heard God, to a people who had not heard His voice for ten generations over four hundred years. His passion ignited a million people to be dislocated from their homes to move with him towards a dream he carried in his heart. *You have heard it said* that God has deserted us, *but I say to you* God loves us and will set us free.

Joshua was foolish enough to command the sun to stand still: by what stretch of imagination did he even consider this was possible? The sun, blissfully unaware of our innate post-modern cynicism, complied and stood still for 24 hours, while Joshua routed the enemies of Israel. *You have heard it said* it is inconceivable for the sun to stand still *but I say to you* it will obey me as I obey God.

Evil men like Hitler swayed an entire country to worship him and caused untold damage and destruction to the entire world with his Aryan dream. Gandhi liberated India from 300 years of the Raj, with an impossible yet godly strategy of non-violence and non-compliance. Like others, the words '*you have heard it said... but I say to you*' echoed in their message making impossible promises that suddenly appeared eminently achievable.

Jesus came into a time when there had been no prophet for four hundred years. The nation had been in slavery for much longer. Malachi, the last prophet, accurately described their state after a culmination of thousands of years of rejecting God. The very fabric of their belief system was in tatters. The institution of marriage perverted, ungodly children, corrupt leadership, robbers of God, self-pitying victims who blamed God for their sorry plight. People followed a law that bore little resemblance to the spirit of what God had given Moses.

The creators and keepers of this law were revered and treated like gods. Pharisees and Sadducees who jealously guarded their power. The law was precious: not because it was godly, but because it gave them their position. The ability to control an entire nation, and remain in the seat of political and religious power. A striking similarity, one might say, to leaders today?

You have heard it said...but I say to you. **Jesus questioned the very roots and the spirit of this system.** As He does, even to this day. Words like these coming from the mouth of one considered illiterate - a self-proclaimed Rabbi, an ex labourer with a scraggy band of questionable followers, some illiterate, ex-oppressors, ex-terrorists - did not meet with a warm welcome from the Pharisees.

Unfortunately, this Rabbi was backed up by authentic miracles: He healed

the sick, restored limbs, gave sight to the blind, fed thousands with food that came from nowhere, and to top it all resurrected the dead. These were performed on the Sabbath, which contravened the law: He used ordinary filthy mud and spittle to restore eyes, instead of the holy and purified articles in the temple, consecrated by the priests. To add insult to injury, He had not sought their permission. This at its core amounted to a shift of power in a direction away from the leaders of the day. Extremely threatening.

They tried to discredit him: *'He has a demon'*; they lamented: *'the whole world has gone after Him'*; they conspired: *'for the sake of the nation, Jesus must die'*; they cheated: *'false witnesses who did not agree with one another came forward to testify'*; they endangered the people: *'give us Barabbas'* – a known murderer was permitted to go free while the beloved of heaven went on the Cross. This Rabbi was a threat to their power, and so He just had to go. Whatever the means, even if these were underhand, they played dirty and perverted the ways of the very God they proclaimed. Just to retain their power.

Following this Man is not just a matter of good character, keeping the ten commandments, reading our bibles, having a quiet devotion every morning, going to church, paying our tithes and attending church programs. Nor is it even to preach, heal, prophesy, plant

churches, and to run church programs. If this is all there is to it, we are just another religion doing our stuff while the rest of the world go about doing theirs.

Like Him, we are to proclaim an alternate and radical culture opposed to what is prevalent. We are to speak into a dark, barren, dry and despairing world, a message of hope. We are to bring light to people who have been seduced into selling their eternal souls for temporary and fleeting pleasure. Our *'speech and preaching are not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power'*, to role model life. We are to take stands which carry His message *'you have heard it said...but I say to you'*. We are to examine our times, discover what God is saying to our generation and declare without apology, unequivocally proclaiming what we have heard.

As with Jesus, there will be opposition. Ayn Rand, the great proclaimer of rugged individualism and the author of the philosophy of objectivism, called CS Lewis a *'cheap, awful, miserable, touchy, social-metaphysical mediocrity'*. She was upset because his godly world-views stood in sharp contrast to hers. She described him in unprintable profanities damning his views, just because they threatened hers. We could expect the same, if not more.

Jesus naturally threatened the powers that be. We are His body, the church. *'It is through the church that the manifold wisdom of God is made known to powers and principalities'*. He said that the church would carry His DNA *'I will build My church and the gates of hades will not prevail against it'*. If we truly do our task, seek to follow, permit ourselves and our churches be built by Jesus, we too will be a threat. Oppressive power systems and perverted mindsets will be in opposition.

Though we may find that before we point the finger, we need to look at ourselves. Before we tackle world systems, we might consider our church systems. Are we just mouthing empty words while conforming to the patterns of this world? The cheap politics, the petty rivalries, the insatiable greed, the mediocre mindsets? Are we like the world system, impotent to act, unable to say anything new? Living out of the same values, are we the salt that has lost its flavour? *'Judgement (will always) begin with the house of God'*.

It is only when we overcome that we can proclaim alternatives with passion and integrity to others. When *'we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by living out the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord'*.

Not just mouth empty powerless words, but announce a lived out transformation that catalyses people to encounter God. We can then challenge current cultural assumptions and become a liberating force, saying *'you have heard it said... but I say to you'*.

Sanjiv Ailawadi leads the New Generation Church in New Delhi, a church involved with sex workers and rescuing trafficked minors.



Close to God, close to man

What kind of influence do we have in our homes?
Is it negative or positive? Do we appreciate the
positive influence?

Joyce Davis

“SSLC failure drives 15 year old boy to suicide. Consumes pesticide, rides dad’s bike till he collapses and dies.”
Deccan Herald page two headlines.

On the inside page different people talk about the boy. A police inspector who knew the boy said, “... He was fascinated by our uniform and police force. He listened to our advice. But we can’t believe he killed himself.”

The boy’s father said, “More than the fear of punishment it would have been humiliation that drove him to suicide ...” Then he broke down.

Brinda one of his classmates said, “A suicide was the last thing I expected when he did not return my call. He was so cool and calm before the results that we can’t believe he killed himself.”

As we read about this incident we recognize that during those hours when

this student began the process of taking his life he must have experienced anguish of heart and soul. He must have felt a sense of aloneness and isolation that he was unable to cope with his emotions and his life.

James Cummins says that “the number one cause of student failure is alienation”.

This sense of alienation could be mild as in when friends don’t speak to you or severe as was in the case of this student who committed suicide who could not think of even one person to whom he could talk.

Students are not the only ones who face extreme stress and alienation. Adults face it too and so the suicide rate seems to be growing. There was a time when we said that listening to the radio would isolate people. Then it was watching the television and now

it is the mobile. In today's world much has been said and done to improve communication but very little in terms of building bonds.

The basic cry of today is the cry of wanting to relate meaningfully to other people has not changed. Imagine a latch key kind who returns home after a bad day at school. He was punished his teacher was unpleasant, his friends shunned him. Now that he is home he recognizes that his parents will not be home till quite late. The key is in the flower pot. He takes it out and opens the door to let himself in. Once inside the house the silence is loud. He pours himself a cup of milk and puts it into the microwave. Heats it and drinks. The unpleasant day continues. He finds himself alone not able to tell anyone how awful he feels.

The remedy to alienation is affiliation, achievement and influence. Let us understand the first one which is affiliation. Affiliation is a sense of belonging, of warmth and acceptance. a place of unconditional love. The place where human beings first experience it is in our homes.

May we never say” Get out of this house.” “You are useless”. May our words bring healing and not hurt.

There are challenges and for some of us huge challenges in following this principle of affiliation I want to encourage you by reminding you that

we are not alone in these challenges. The teenager who has given into drugs, the one who did not attend school and deceived his parents, the alcoholic husband who has been unable to give up his habit, the shrieking wife who has never got enough money for all her needs. These and many other challenges face us. How can our homes become inviting, safe places, loving and accepting homes? The Holy Spirit is with us and helps us to live the impossible. He guides us into all truth. Let us look for the truth

We are expected
to create homes
where unconditional love is
shared and experienced. Is
your home such a home?

diligently. We are expected to create homes where unconditional love is shared and experienced. Is your home such a home?

The second remedy for alienation is achievement. Not all students would be rank holders in the schools and colleges. Not many of us have won sports awards. But all of us can succeed because our loved ones who are watching us see success in what we are becoming. More like Jesus day b day more of his character in our lives. It is good to speak about this growth we notice. We need to applaud that child who is becoming a caring

person and shows a more responsible behaviour.

A teenager stayed back after school each day to tidy up her class room, put the furniture in place and swept it too. No one had asked her to do this work but there was something in her heart that caused her to do this work very quietly without anyone observing her. But her teacher saw this and one day during assembly she was called up to the platform and the whole school clapped for her.

Marks and sports prizes are not the only talents that we need to recognize. How is it in our homes? Is only the child who scores high valued but what about the others who might be clearing up the dining table everyday/ who do we consider as achievers?

A word of caution, whatever we notice and commend should be true and genuine and not flattery or empty, hollow words to please.

Every person is unique and made in the image of God. (Gen 1:27) So dare we belittle any one?

Teachers in a particular school had been told to write at least one positive comment about the creative writing that the class V students did weekly. The teacher was at his wits end to know what to write about one composition in particular. It was full of spelling mistakes punctuation mistakes lack of vocabulary and hand writing needed deciphering. But the teacher suddenly

saw it. A wonderful imagination! It meant a lot to that child. This was genuine recognition and brought the child close to his student.

The thirdly we can counter alienation is the need to feel that we can influence others. We can make a difference in the lives of others. Have you played with little children? Even one as young as a year old! Have you tried to have a conversation with the one year old? It

Have you tried to have a conversation with the one year old? It is an exhilarating experience and you will come away refreshed from that play.

is an exhilarating experience and you will come away refreshed from that play. That one year old can influence you and make you feel refreshed after a tiring day.

There is a need to recognize that people influence us and honestly appreciate that input. People can influence us negatively too.

If you are driving to some destination and your friends influence you to have some drinks along the way then the influence has been negative. So influence can be both negative and positive.

Let us go back to the home. What kind of influence do we have in our homes? Is it negative or positive? Do

we appreciate the positive influence? A young person influenced her family by getting the Bible and the devotional book out in time so that the family could gather together after dinner to pray together every day. Here is an influence that would have an impact for eternity.

So far we have looked at alienation between man to man. But there is another alienation between God and man. God through Jesus Christ has stretched out his hand to us. Have I put my hand into his and closed that wall of alienation? Have you? (Col 1: 21-22)

(I would like to acknowledge that the above concept is taught at the Adolescent Health Education, Teachers' Training Workshops of ASHA Foundation, Bangalore.)



*Mrs. Joyce Davis,
Education
Coordinator,
ASHA Foundation,
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The weekend warriors

Elder members of the species affirm that happiness is the ultimate goal and achievement of existence.

Namrata Achowe

Gone are the battlefields and the maharajas, make way for the weekend warrior. Dear reader, a weekend warrior is a rather peculiar creature, a 21st century invention.

On weekdays, it is seen moping around in buses and traffic jams, head crowned with worry, and eyes staring vacantly into the head of the man/woman/vehicle ahead of him. It lives inconspicuously during the week days. You will find its behaviour marked with considerable timidity, and its humour quite insipid. However, come Friday, it marches with the vigour of an Arabian steed.

But, during the wee hours of Friday, its diet, attire, behaviour and life undergoes swift and radical changes. Its shifts to an entirely liquid diet, which is supplemented and sustained by consumption of large quantities

of hydrogenated fat. However, this does not hold true for all members of the species. Due to varying stages of evolution within the species, a certain section of males and females no longer subscribe to the benefits of liquid intake in isolation. These members of the species may, at times, partake of two or three or a combination of two or three different types of liquid, depending on the individual level of satiation.

On other occasions, it has been observed that some members refrain from all liquid intake and participate in a unique mental-levitational exercise, known in common parlance as smoking pot. This ritual demonstrates the complex division of labour as well as the resulting bonhomie in this sub-species. From the hustling to crushing to the rolling, each member participates with

vigour and is, in turn, given an equal share in the results thus achieved. However, with the advance of modern science and flagrant flouting of laws, much of the traditional crushing and rolling has now been replaced by newer and faster levitational devices such as pills and papers and more. (citation not needed)

Thus armed, the weekend warrior assumes his altered identity. Remarkable changes have been noticed once under the influence. For instance, its typical timidity is overcome by a determined garrulousness, and its ability to narrate laughter-inducing anecdotes is found to be enhanced greatly. The behaviour has been observed in both male and female of the species. Further it is compelled to contort the body and produce short jerky arm and leg movements. It is believed to be a nascent form of an emerging neo-post-meaning dance.

On the sartorial front, there seems to be a great deal of unanimity in the choice of attire. The male of the species is usually found clothed in knee-length trousers and open-toed sandals, suggesting deep relaxation and non-conformation to authority. The female of the species typically wears miniatures of the male clothing, with a slight difference in tailoring in order to project independence, membership of gym, and non-conformation to authority.

Mating is not exclusive. It is open to opportunity and chance. No established ritual has been discovered till late. Most observants have concluded that the rules are far too many, and on many occasions rendered vague by a severe lack of knowledge as to how these rules were formulated in the first place.

The species believes in charity to self, and adheres to it firmly. Evidence can be cited of the large number of weekend warrior sightings at various centres of mass consumption during the week. Research conducted to determine the

It is convinced that death is ideal and highly desirable in youth, and it becomes a drudging bore when one is old and quite ready to die anyway.

religious worldview ascribed by the species has led to inconclusive results. It seems that their notions and ideas are based on their notions and ideas developed during hours of inebriation, which are, thereby, unable to retain any significant hold on their conscious minds.

The species also has peculiar views on death and life. It is convinced that death is ideal and highly desirable in youth, and it becomes a drudging bore when one is old and quite ready to die anyway. It must be noted that

all the members who die young are immediately canonised, and their words are held on to, like a woman holds on to a grudge.

Elder members of the species affirm that happiness is the ultimate goal and achievement of existence. However the absence of happiness does not make them unhappy. In this respect, their resourcefulness is quite unparalleled. They have developed an extensive range of remedial measures which can guarantee temporary happiness, as a stop-gap measure. Retail therapy, celebrity-endorsed chemicals, visits to the spa and the local shrink, ice-cream and movies, triple-distilled-white-oak-barelled-cognac. The list goes on. However, the shops close at midnight on Sunday.

The weekend warrior returns to its desk on Monday. And we can see it moaning about in the streets, vacant eyes, et al, longing for the Friday drums to roll.

When asked about the church and Christ, a few members of the species refrained from comment in parliamentarian-style secrecy. Some professed love for all gods, including Aphrodite and Tom Cruise. We have not included, for the sake of brevity, the blank stares and dirty looks given to the author during the course of study. It seems that God and the presence of an all powerful, all knowing Being dulls the weekend spirit. Topics preferred

are next imaginary vacation, my boss is such a moron rant, women are better than mankind, creative usage of profanity (very popular), stress (real and imaginary), where is the food, and the world is such a rotten, big, bad place.

It is emphatic in its proclamation that it does not need a sermon, it has access to Youtube or some such similar sermon-producing mechanism. It simply needs to be told that it is not going to die with only a seven-foot tall double door refrigerator for company. It needs to be set free from the unnatural, idiotic goals it has borrowed from the lives of the rich, the psychotic and the fabulous, but is too embarrassed to admit it. It needs to be understood and held and loved, but is too grown up and macho and corporate-y to accept it. It needs to be saved, before it is lost to waves and waves of depression and desolation.

The preservation of this species depends on you and me. Who will be the first one to reach out and let them in?

I believe Jesus would like to know the answer to that one.

*Namrata
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Students & Faculty group picture

“GOOD-OL-DAYS”

‘Say no to drugs’ is what usually fearful parents, concerned teachers and non-drug users wear on their t-shirts. It creates a neat distinction between ‘us the sorted’ and ‘them the distorted’.

Joshua John

Back in high school we made ‘Bisleri-Bongs’. A hookah made out of a plastic water bottle and an umbrella pipe to smoke some local hashish. The down side of ‘smoking-up’ was when my turn came to dispose off the contraption. I would be reeling with paranoia. Other than that it was quite a pleasant and relaxing experience.

Nearly a decade later, out of the eight in that room, I was the only one who had quit. One got in touch on his way to Europe. Among other things we romanticized about the ‘good-old-days’ and how life was a breeze. He later confided that he was smuggling enough ‘Manala-Cream’ to fund his next six months.

Seven years down the line, three out of the eight were on heroin and hallucinogens. All seven feel that

smoking pot is permissible and beneficial to stay sane in our post-post modern world. They believe I have found a cheaper, more socially acceptable opiate in religion.

In hindsight there were a combination of reasons why I started on urban India’s favorite drug, hashish. A testosterone charged teenager wants to belong. Belonging to a peer group involves proof of eligibility. In my case, it meant getting a girlfriend, experimenting with alcohol and drugs and breaking as many boundaries as possible. Everything to boost one’s pride and image.

There is also a correlation between kids from dysfunctional homes having a greater tendency towards substance abuse to cope with a sense of rejection; especially when parents are consumed with ‘ministry’ or career

or are overbearing and controlling. I had no such family issues but others did so the majority won. Pot smokers have a camaraderie that can be thicker than blood.

The peer group gives space, seems non-judgmental and usually has a taste for the same kind of music. Bob Marley and psychedelic Goa Trance were our trip partners but these days the choice is wider.

Some quit because they got a fright or made sober friends. Most replaced it with another addiction they were more susceptible to like pornography or non-stop work. Pursuing one degree after another. Seminar hopping, collecting medals and certificates and getting 'high' on people's applause. Adrenaline junkies, academic junkies, or just plain junkies are all ultimately affirmation junkies. It brings a sense of value and identity that they are otherwise missing.

'Say no to drugs' is what usually fearful parents, concerned teachers and non-drug users wear on their t-shirts. It creates a neat distinction between 'us the sorted' and 'them the distorted'. We can help you because we have more self-control, experience, success and vision for our lives than you do. Then they try to 'inspire' you through fear tactics or fun distractions. Nothing is more awkward for the youth than to bear with well-meaning teachers, parents and NGO volunteers trying to

entertain them with a moralistic skit or video. If the message has to hit home it has to be presented compassionately, honestly, creatively and consistently.

The duplicity of many who speak against substance abuse is what disheartens young people. Seldom does anyone share at a school assembly "at your age, as you experiment, everything is thrilling!" That was the truth for me. I did not want to change. It was more fun than watching others having fun on TV. Unless the deeper longing of the heart is met, the search for a 'magic drug' continues.

Deep down I knew drugs and alcohol were the counterfeit and if I tasted the authentic I would be free. The question for me was "What is truth and why am I here?" Not everyone asks this question at the same time. It can be a teenage angst, existential crisis or mid-life crisis, but it happens. The answers they get, makes all the difference.

The most raw and real deal available for kids today is the drug deal. While Christians over-promise and under deliver, drugs are a quick fix and an easy escape. Add a bit of club scene and they're away. The verse quoting, the pat answers and 'just believe' are more patronizing than helpful.

In my 'crisis years' the Christian agenda seemed to be about making 'nasty' people into 'nice' people who maintain a regular church attendance in neat clothes and who pull their life

together with their own two bootstraps. So when I read Jesus' promise "See I make all things NEW!" I was acutely aware that my heart was sick and aged. There is a sense of weariness that is consistent in all those who are seeking a 'high' through whatever means at whatever age. I had gone from smoking pot to pornography to collecting certificates. I did not need a 'service' I needed to be made 'new'.

People permanently quit drugs because they find something or someone better to worship. I changed after most of my experiments misfired or backfired. Like the quintessential prodigal son there was nothing left but to look around at the mess I had made by being my own savior. Not everyone has to hit rock bottom, but everyone has to realize to what degree he or she is helpless and destined for disaster without their Maker. Too often we are pumping kids with how 'great' they are. How 'special' and 'valued' they are with super human 'potential' and we withhold speaking the truth in love.

Self-made men and women who are proud of their own intelligent formulas will not really help kids. They can

impress them, they can intimidate them but they won't ignite their imagination to wonder and to want their true Lover. They need humble role models who say 'but by the GRACE of God I stand'.

Those who realize how much they are forgiven and how much grace is lavished upon them, are the ones who choose the 'better deal'. They are the nutcases who pour a years salary on Jesus' feet and are known for being extravagant worshippers of God. Such people tend to leave a lasting fragrance that leads people to their Messiah.

On the other hand a committee could be formed and funds raised so that mineral bottles and umbrella's are out of reach for boarding school boys. Better still we can home school all our kids and plant tracking devices on their phones to ensure they don't stray too far from home.



*Joshua John pastors
FUSION church in
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Paradigm re-aligned

There are a variety of ways to face life. One way is to view life challenges as a bother, a hindrance and a source of destruction of faith.

Hansraj Jain

Wow, what a ‘heavy’ Breakfast that turned out to be!

For the young lady and for us as we listened to her, these were serious concerns and challenges that have potential to not just impact our faith convictions, but also our professional life perspective and life that we live seek to live as people. The entire situation challenges us to think carefully, may be to think outside of the box. Would we make a shift in our paradigm because of it? What would Jesus have thought about it all and how would He have advised us to move ahead? Would He, too, have sought for an out of the box solution?

This encounter at Breakfast reminded me of an event that took place in Ludhiana several years ago.

I was invited to speak to first and second-year medical students on ethics, values and morality. In the course of our interactions one of the students had asked saying, “Sir if you had to choose between serving the Bible and serving the poor, whom would you choose to serve?”

The zealots prodded, “The Bible”. The Orthodox and other Christian students nodded in agreement to that chorus. That was about 30% of the students. The 70% watched and waited for my response. I could hear muffled laughter that told me that they were enjoying my discomfort. They were right. I was in a bind. I was baited and now I was trapped. However, they

contd. on page 28



Participants at the Evangelical Fellowship of India Annual Conference, held at U



Evangelical Fellowship of India Union Biblical Seminary, Pune

contd. from page 25

had underestimated my companion – the Spirit of the Lord. To my own surprise, believe me, out came the answer: “The question and the issue is flawed. While the issue is juxtaposed as two independent identities– the Bible and the Poor Man and placed in two separate boxes, to me that assumption is faulty. For me they both belong in the same box.

First of all, I confess that I am not a humanist. Neither am I controlled and driven by my feelings. I make willful choices. Secondly my firm decision to follow Jesus Christ also means that I agree with His philosophical perspective and teaching on life and life-values. It is that understanding that enables me to see my fellow humans as creation of God just as I consider myself to be one too. So, whether the person is poor, ill, or in a disaster, male or female, I respond to each of them with equal intensity and view.

My response to meet their need is not driven by my humanistic convictions but by my faith understanding of who they are in God’s sight. My feelings become subject to my convictions and my conviction drives my response irrespective of how I feel, view, or am emotional about it. All of these are anchored in the Bible that Jesus read”, I concluded. Shocked, the class went deathly silent, as if the cat had got their tongues. Then the Student who

had posed the question rose to his feet began clapping his hand. Before long the entire class was standing and following his lead.

Parenting Paradigm: Wisdom, Discernment and Perceptively

We live in a pluralistic society. We move among people who hold various views on faith and life perspective. Each of us carries life values, ethos, moral and ethical conviction as they are provide by our guardians. The query that begs our response asks us if we have given our children the skills called “dos and don’ts” or have we equipped them with ability to make decisions from true to life faith belief tested in the school of life experiences? Or have we given them laws that are good to talk about but impossible to live out as a daily life-style?

This is where paradigm shift becomes a must. Jesus, we believe, lived and faced real life challenges such as the young lady mentioned above. He was neither a coward nor easily intimidated. He was wise. He was discerning. He was courageous but never fool-hardy and egotistic.

There are a variety of ways to face life. One way is to view life challenges as a bother, a hindrance and a source of destruction of faith. Alternately the same could be viewed as an opportunity to first hand learn, experience, and discover the unknown for self – In this case faith beliefs and how they are

viewed, practiced and demonstrated. In fact, our limited understanding of their faith becomes our license to ask questions, enquire to know and learn. In line with our discovery we then assess our own faith belief and discover our own faith's uniqueness and common denominators, if any. As a result when opportunities come our way to explain our reason for our faith and conduct, we shall be able to do so with confidence and humility.

“So Mumbai is God’s training school for you to discover, learn, and equip yourself to make your faith understanding more dynamic”, we suggested.

We present the alternate way – the Jesus’ way, which otherwise, our world

would never know or hear about. Our values and convictions are our assets, let’s put them to good benefit by making the most of the given opportunity (even controversial ones!) and not run away from it because that is easier to do.

This is wisdom, we believe – to firmly ground our families in the Word and the Spirit of God of the Bible.



*HANSRAJ JAIN
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BJP's ignominious retreat from South India

The demography of Karnataka with its mix of upper castes and the Konkani belt along the western coast, which is influenced partly by the religious politics of neighboring Maharashtra, seemed a suitable “gateway to the South”, as party ideologues termed it.

John Dayal

The ignominious rout of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] in the elections this week to the Legislative Assembly of the state of Karnataka has implications far beyond provincial boundaries; and the political detritus that the government leaves behind will continue to impact religious minorities, women and the cultural world for a very long time to come.

When the votes were counted, the BJP had lost 70 of the 110 seats it once held, winning a mere 40, yielding space to the Congress which overcame dissidence and its usual chaotic functioning to win 121 of the 223 seats in the house of 224 seats. One election was called off following the death of a candidate. Former chief minister and leader of the Janata Dal secular HD Kumarswamy won a

surprising 40 seats mostly appealing to voters of his own caste, while Mr. Yeddyurappa, another former chief minister who broke away from the BJP managed a mere 6 seats. The results are a major political embarrassment and setback for the national leadership of the BJP.

The party had since inception remained limited to North and Western India, and was non-existent in the four populous states of South India – Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala- for six decades. The demography of Karnataka with its mix of upper castes and the Konkani belt along the western coast, which is influenced partly by the religious politics of neighboring Maharashtra, seemed a suitable “gateway to the South”, as party ideologues termed it. The rapid growth of Hindu right wing

extremist groups under the umbrella of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, or the Sangh Parivar as it is generally known, among youth and upper caste groups brought the party to power five years ago, touted as the beginning of the BJP's eventual conquest of southern India.

With this defeat, the party has once again shrunk to the northern states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and partly in Punjab and Bihar where it is the junior partner in coalitions with the Akali Dal and the Janata Dal United respectively. The Congress returns to power in the state after seven years and has the onerous task of not only cleaning up the mess left behind, but making sure it does not itself fall prey to corruption at a time when its national leadership is itself in deep trouble on the eve of the General elections in 2014, with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and several of his ministers accused of corruption in areas as different as the railways and the coal sector.

The results themselves come as no surprise. In the five years the party was in power, the BJP changed its chief ministers three times in a desperate attempt to undo massive corruption on the one hand and open rebellion on the other. Karnataka's capital Bangalore is the silicon valley of India, its economic boom creating a vast market in real estate, which attracted a group of daring entrepreneurs who bought

political influence and then used it to circumvent the law with impunity. Often they became politicians themselves. Two of them, known as the Reddy Brothers, who in fact became ministers in the government, carried on their business of mining for iron ore with such audacity they tunneled under state boundaries to dig deep into the ore veins in neighboring Andhra Pradesh, breaking just about every national law.

They were eventually trapped, sacked, arrested and sent to jail. Not every guilty person faced such retribution, and corruption, which impacted on the common man, soon made the regime very unpopular, and its continuance untenable. In the end, neither the call to the hyper nationalism that is the Sangh's forte, nor rapid changes in the office of the chief minister could save the day.

For the Congress, the task is not just cleaning up the corruption and ensuring that its own ministers do not dip their fingers in the state exchequer, but to cleanse the education system, the police and the village panchayat or local self government apparatus which have been heavily penetrated by Sangh elements in the last five years. The State currently tops the list of provinces with the highest incidence of persecution of Christians, especially of independent pastors. After Orissa's Kandhamal area, Mangalore and other parts of

Karnataka saw massive violence in 2008. In a People's Tribunal held last month held in Bengaluru by the All India Christian Council, 80 of over 200 persecuted pastors, including women, deposed of violence they had faced, often by goons in connivance with the local police and village systems. Some estimates put persecution figures at over 300 every year. Cultural police and thugs have disrupted cultural functions, sometime in colleges and churches, attacked young couples and artistes, and launched campaigns against Love Jihad, the so called organized wooing of Hindu young

women by Muslim men. With the social and cultural landscape often under siege of such "patriotic and nationalistic" elements, restoring civil liberties and freedom of faith become priorities for the new government once it assumes office.

*Dr. John Dayal
Member of
National
Integration
Council*

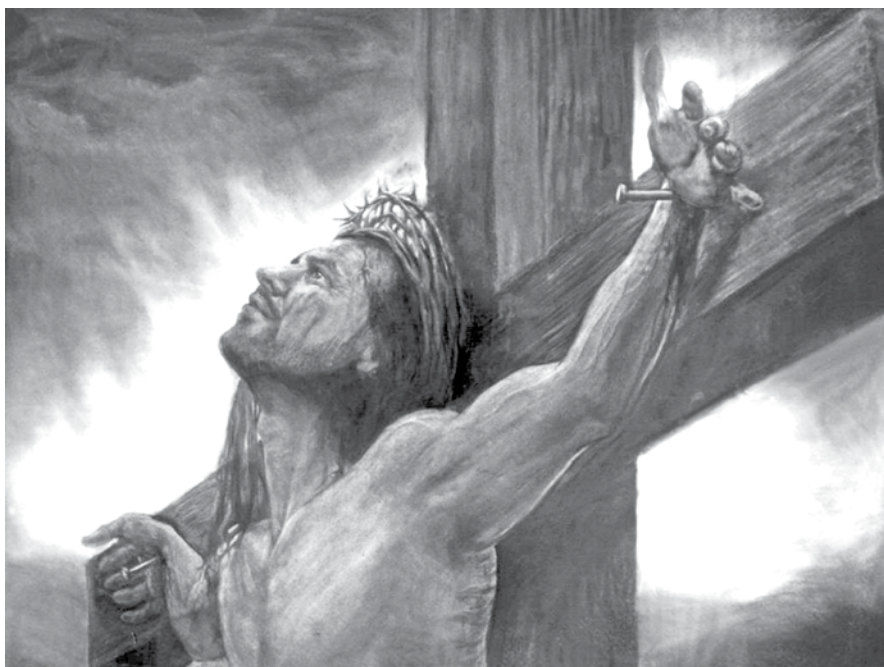


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Being in Christ by the Holy Spirit

Reflection on St. John's passion narrative

Dr. Saphir Athyal

Justified: This is the picture of a legal court declaring a criminal to be cleared of his offence. “(All) are justified freely by his grace through redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood” (Rom. 3:24-25). In the background of the sin/guilt offerings in the Old Testament, Jesus became “the lamb that takes away the sin of the world”

(John 1:29). Because of his obedience to become “the ransom for many”, God the Judge, clears those who have faith in him of their guilt and punishment, and declare them to be righteous.

Reconciled with God: “God through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;” (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). Reconciliation takes place when two people come together again to restore their earlier

relationship of love that had been broken. In reconciliation of two people one of them has to take initiative. God has taken the first step inviting us to be reconciled with him.

Born Again: This is a term used by Christ in his conversation with Nicodemus. “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3). Just as a child is physically born of his natural parents, a person who is redeemed is again born of God and is born into the family of God.

Adopted into God’s family: “You received the spirit of adoption, and by him, we cry ‘Abba, Father’” (Rom.8:15). Adoption is one’s willful acceptance of a child into his own family. Very often the child is an orphan. The ‘father’ gains nothing by the adoption. God adopts us into his family. Adoption is a one-time experience.

Entering the Kingdom: It is impossible to define the boundaries of the kingdom of God because there is some aspect of his reign everywhere. But Jesus often talked about those outside the kingdom, and the need for us to enter the kingdom. “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). We do not keep on entering the kingdom as a life-long process.

Being Married to Christ: “As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so

shall your God rejoice over you” (Isa. 62:5). In the Old Testament, Israel is pictured as the wife of Yahweh. In the New Testament the church is called the ‘bride of Christ’. Though the picture is of Israel or the church as a group, the marriage has to take place not as a mass but by personal responses to the call of Christ. Christ is called the ‘Bridegroom’. Just like one’s marriage is the most significant one-time event in life that shapes and guides a person, so also is our ‘marriage’ with Christ. But in married life there could be problems and tensions, and even separation of the partners.

Being Lighted: “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). We might say that getting to know Christ is receiving light from him.

For Apostle John ‘light’ is one of the main themes and it is closely linked with the theme ‘life’, and those who walk in darkness are invited to receive his light. While one is able to increase his/her light, being lighted itself is an event.

In all the above images we clearly see life taking a new direction and new character. Experiences of different people vary a lot. Becoming Christ’s own people is a personal experience that is real, though exact time and place may not be known. For those

of us who are brought up in Christian homes, nurture and teachings, may be God only knows the time. It is like a boy and girl who are in deep love for each other, and neither knows the time when they fell in love, but the experience of mutual fervent love itself is real, powerful and life-changing.

Knowing Christ is a significant event and a clear-cut experience that defines and shapes one's life. But in all cases we see God taking the initiative. It is he who seeks after the lost ones to bring them back to him.

The distinctiveness of the humans from the rest of God's creation is the freedom of their will and their ability to make personal choices. God expects us to use our freedom of choice to respond to his love, and come to have his life and power in us and live and grow in his joy and peace.

The repeated phrase, "in Christ", especially in the Pauline writings means that we come to a special living and growing relationship with God through Christ. This relationship makes great impact upon the way we live and serve. Let us look at the nature of it.

First, Our Union with Christ:

What make us Christian are not our Christian names, our nurture in Christian families and Christian culture. It is not our church membership

and faithful religious practices. It is not our life of Christian virtues and moral principles. It is not our sound Christian doctrines. It is not our Christian ministries, services and liberal giving for good causes. All these are essential and very important.

But central to us becoming Christ's own is our total submission to his lordship over us by our faith in him as "the way, the truth and the life". It is as John's Gospel says, trusting in the light which Jesus is and walking in the light. Faith or trust is not our belief in some biblical facts and Christian teachings. It is our total surrender to Christ.

It is the divine life coming and ruling our lives.

John in different terms explains this in 14th and 15th chapters, "I am in my father, and you are in me, and I am in you (14:20).

Jesus says, "You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you" (15:16). In those days normally people chose their gurus or teachers and not vice versa. Here God takes the initiative in us having a union with him. About those who respond to his invitation in obedience it is said, "My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (14:23). The Triune God looks for a home for him, and invites us to open up our hearts for him to make his home in us.

In Hinduism, as we know, there are teachings about union with God. But it is, as they say, what might happen after a cycle of innumerable rebirths and lives. Also in this union each person loses his/her identity as a drop of water falling in the ocean loses its own existence.

The Bible teaches us that a living relationship and vital bond with God is possible to us while on earth. With all the attractiveness and joy beyond understanding in heaven, none of us is in a hurry to get there. If I have any serious illness, my wife will spend all our money if need be to give me the best of medical care and save my life. And for what? To delay my going to heaven! If all of us would like to be in heaven rather than on earth, there would not be a place like CMC, and we all will be out of jobs. We would rather have heavenly life on earth to start with. "Let your kingdom come on earth - - as it is in heaven", is our prayer.

Second, a New Way of Life:

Being in Christ means we live a transformed new way of life. We get freedom from the principles and forces that control us. Those forces often are against God. True freedom is our inner freedom, a strength within us to do consistently what is right and good. Only those who live in God as a branch on the vine have true freedom. That inner freedom comes

from the life we receive from Christ. Like the branches of a vine get their total nourishment and energy from the vine, we get our true life when Christ's life lives in us.

Trying to live a good length of life is not enough. What is more important is to live a good width of life, and what is most essential is to live a good depth of life.

This is possible only in Christ who said, "I have come (into the world) that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:11).

It is as if Christ's life is grafted into us and his blood flowing through our veins and his genes and DNA in us. Sachin Tendulkar, what an amazing person with a 'century of centuries of runs', one that will always be a legend in the history of sports. They say his reflex is a fraction of a second faster than that of most others. What an unparalleled kinetic intelligence! If CMC researches and finds some technique of grafting into us his DNA, maybe we too can perform wonderfully well as he does. Having Christ in us and us living in him means our 'spiritual DNA' is his DNA and his very life.

Abiding in him means also that we have a changed new relationship with Christ who calls us "friends". We get a free access to God in prayers and in

life. Vidu my son when he was a small boy came rushing into my office one day when he returned from his school. I asked him, “Nobody comes to see the Principal without getting permission from my Secretary next door. Do you have her permission?”. He paused, reflected a moment and said, “I am your son, remember. I do not need permission of anyone to see you”.

Greatest of all benefits we have as his children is our free access to his presence without any mediators. The changed relationship with God would mean also a changed relationship with others.

Just like all the different branches are on the same vine, we all have one common base, one source of life and strength.

Third, Our Fruit Production:

That is the main focus of this passage on vine and branches. Our inward close relationship with Christ should result in the fruits we produce not for us but for God’s glory. “This is to my father’s glory, that you bear much fruit” (15:8). Secret of fruit bearing first of all is dwelling in Christ. “No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me”(15:4). The metaphor of the vine

is an apt one. The only function of a vine is fruit bearing. A coconut tree has many other uses in addition to the fruits it gives: so also a jackfruit tree and most trees and plants. But a vine apart from the grapes we get from it is useless otherwise.

A vine dresser during the wintertime cuts off all dry and dead branches, and then during the springtime he clears off and cleans useless growths on the remaining branches. Cleansing or ‘pruning’ of us by God is primarily by the Word of God as Jesus explains (15:7). It is the Word of God that “rebukes, corrects and trains us”. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

We should note at least one more teaching of this passage. Being in Christ is not a private mystical experience. It should result in our obedience of his commands, and our service of him in the world producing fruits for him. Fruits we produce for him means what Christ does through us. Look at people, events, critical needs all around us and everything through the eyes of Christ, and ask ourselves “what would Christ do?” Then ask Christ to begin to do it through us.

The three aspects of Christian life we dealt with, namely, union with Christ, power to live a new way of life and fruit production, are possible only through the Holy Spirit as Jesus has described. He said, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another

Counselor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth” (14:16).

The Trinity or the Father, Son and the Spirit mentioned often in this passage, is a teaching that we cannot comprehend. Are these three persons like three gods, one person with three different functions or three natures? All our metaphors to explain this like the unity in water, ice and steam, or fire, light and heat, or a father who at the same time lovingly cares, teaches and disciplines a child, fail to explain the Triune God. If we understand God fully he is not God.

The Father and the Son are one. Life in Christ is life in the Spirit. The Spirit is the spirit of God. The three are used interchangeably. The Holy Spirit works as the active presence with us of God in Christ. The Spirit convicts us when we go astray as he works through our conscience. He teaches us God’s Word as the Spirit himself is the author of the Bible. He is the power of God working in us. He is our helper, our counselor, our advocate and our guide.

It is the outpouring of the Spirit upon the followers of Christ on the Day of Pentecost that gave them new life and power and started off the rapid spreading of the gospel and growth of the church. The Spirit enables us to have the fruit of the Spirit of which St. Paul tells, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23).

In Conclusion, Christian faith is not basically a religious system with right doctrines, sublime ethical teachings, and great religious practices. Christian faith is fundamentally a relationship between God and us through Christ as a vine and its branches. One of the best metaphors for this bond is the metaphor, ‘bride and Bridegroom’, Christ as the Bridegroom and Church made up of us as his bride. They say the divorce rates in many countries have dropped drastically. This is because now men and women just live together for years without getting married. Without any commitment to each other man and woman shack up or cohabit together as long as it pleases them.

Do our relationships with Christ end up in this way? It is good to have Jesus around, use him whenever it serves our purpose and be called Christian after his name, but without taking him seriously.

What Christ wants of us is a firm ‘marriage commitment’ to him, a covenant with him as our Bridegroom. This is the only way we will have real life and true light for living, and find the Lord guiding us in his enabling and grace.

Most of us have a Christian background and upbringing. We know much about

God, understand the biblical teachings, and try to live by Christian values. But if we are honest to ourselves, each one of us will say, “What I need most is a stronger personal bond with God and an intimacy with Christ that is real and strong”. What Christ wants from us the most also is exactly that. All that he asks of us is our response to his love to us by our love and surrender to him.

For Self-examination and Commitment:

1. Reflect on some of the metaphors on starting our journey with Christ.

Did I ever make a willful choice for Christ to be my Savior and the Lord of my life? If not even now is the best time to pray, “My Lord, I do want to respond to your love with my total love and total strength. Please help me by your Spirit.”

What is it that hinders me from having a strong and meaningful relationship and bond with Christ? He wants something more than just my religious practices, my good works, my tithe and my piety. Primarily he wants me, to fill me with his life and the Holy Spirit.

We are only **safe**
when we **wisely** make use of all good
advantages that we have access to.
By going out of **God's ways** we go out
of His government, and so **lose our** good
frame of mind, and find ourselves overspread
quickly with a contrary disposition.
When we **draw near** to **Christ** (James
4:8), in His ordinances, **He draws near**
to us.

—Richard Sibbes



“You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood become a matter of life and death to you.” – C. S. Lewis

1 SATURDAY Praise God for taking us into a beautiful new month. Already we are standing on half way path in this year. Pray for God’s continued guidance and anointing of the Holy Spirit in all the work we do.

2 SUNDAY Let us pray for all the children who are at risk and are used as labourers in different parts of our country. Pray that they may be rescued and rehabilitated and given the opportunity to lead a healthy and happy childhood.

3 MONDAY Please pray for the National Director, Aashima Samuel and the local coordinators of EFICAR that God would give them strength and wisdom to work and speak on behalf of the poor and marginalized children.

4 TUESDAY Pray that those in power are more sensitive to the needs of the people and may work towards their welfare.

5 WEDNESDAY World Environment Day focuses attention on important environmental issues. According to the United Nations “World Environment Day is commemorated each year on June 5th. It is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political

attention and action.” Pray for the environment and humans – the keepers of the environment, that we act more responsible and caring towards it.

6 THURSDAY Pray for the growing number of diseases especially affecting the youth and children; It is a ploy of satan to destroy the young and keep them in weak shape so that they may not do God’s work.

7 FRIDAY Pray for people who have gone out on vacations, may they have a refreshing family time and also be renewed in fellowship with God.

8 SATURDAY Pray for various youth ministries, which may become more effective in dealing with the youths and their specific issues and concerns.

9 SUNDAY Pray for the worship services happening around the world. May the Lord pour out His anointing to the believers.

10 MONDAY Pray for the change in mindset of people who look and treat females lustfully and with disgrace.

11 TUESDAY Pray for all the Christians who are being persecuted in India at this time, and particularly those in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Karnataka. Pray that the Lord will watch over them, keeping them safe and providing for all their needs and grant compassion to the persecutors.

12 WEDNESDAY Pray for all ministries you know. 1 Corinthians 12:5 says, ‘There are differences of ministries but the same Lord.’ We all serve Jesus Christ. Different ministries exist because of different needs. Pray for the ministries engaged in mission fields, social transformation, literature, media and apologetics. God wants all – from the layman to the intellectual, to be in His Kingdom.

13 THURSDAY Pray for your church. Pray for the pastor, the worship leaders or the choir, the Sunday school teachers and the ushers. Pray that the Lord will add new believers to the church as it happened in Acts 2:47.

14 FRIDAY Pray that the Lord in His sovereign power will speak into the hearts of all those who are agents of violence and unmerited hatred and that the Christians will be courageous, standing firm in their faith and continue to witness for Christ. Pray also for wisdom for Christian leaders at this difficult time, that they may know how to act and what to say as they seek to persuade the authorities to take firm action to protect the Christian community.

15 SATURDAY Child marriages are still practiced in India. Despite Prohibition Act against Child Marriages coming into existence from January 10, 2007, such unlawful marriages do happen. Pray that this unlawful act may be stopped.

16 SUNDAY Day to honor Dad. No. Better still, it is a day to enjoy time with Dad and appreciate all he does for you. What Dad really wants is a healthy, happy and successful kid. And, he wants you to spend a few moments with him on Father’s Day. Today’s life

style is busy for both dads and kids. So, a little time with dad on Father’s day is just what he wants. A Father is more than the biological paternal source of our being. It is the person who cares and provides for us. It is the man who helps to set the standards, the family values and the example. So add to this group, step fathers and other men who willingly and eagerly accept and cherish their role. Whether biological, adopted or informally, if they are the father figure to you, give him some recognition today and don’t hesitate to call him “Dad”.

17 MONDAY Pray that God will grant His wisdom and favour to the missions agencies that are currently targeting the Chiru people (sub-group of the larger Manipuri people group of Northeast India). Pray that the legislation restricting the preaching of the Gospel will not hinder its spread. Pray for expedient translating work to continue on the Chiru New Testament. Ask God to call out Chiru believers whose heart’s desire to know and preach the Scriptures and share Christ’s love with their own people.

18 TUESDAY Pray for the Centre for Religious Freedom as it continues to work in the field of Religious Freedom and Advocacy.

19 WEDNESDAY Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister has allotted around 80 crore for the Sanjha Chulha Yojana for the children suffering from malnutrition. Pray that the initiative taken by the government is a success and that the children will benefit by the Yojana.

20 THURSDAY Nearly 14 years after Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons were burnt to death by a mob in Odisha, the Central Bureau of

Investigation (CBI) on Friday arrested two absconding accused in the case. A CBI team arrested Ghanashyam Mohant, 35, and Ranjan Mohant, 38, from their villages Gayalmunda and Bhalughera in Keonjhar district. Please pray for justice to take its course in the long pending case.

21 FRIDAY Pray for Children Education of Evangelical Fellowship of India (CEEFI) as they are preparing to translate the Sunday school lessons into different regional languages. Pray for CEEFI Director Rev. Noel Kotian for wisdom and God's guidance as he leads CEEFI and also for the upcoming Sunday school training programme on the Sunday school lessons. Also kindly pray for the funding of the second year course.

22 SATURDAY Pray that God will reveal Himself to them through dreams and visions. Ask God to grant wisdom and favour to the mission agencies working among the Dangs Bhil. Pray also for Dangs believers' boldness to share the Gospel with their own people.

23 SUNDAY Suspected Hindu extremists set on fire a newly built church of Friends Missionary Prayer band on February 18 in Kalalada Mandal, Chitoor, Andhra Pradesh. The church was burned to the ground. Christian leaders filed a police complaint. District superintendent of Police visited the spot and assured the Christians full investigation into the matter. Pray for the church members of FMPB in Chitoor, for strength and perseverance in the Lord.

24 MONDAY Pray for the ever growing number of cybercrimes in the country. This is a relatively new area and proper checks and balances are still to be put in place.

25 TUESDAY 5000 children under the age of five die daily in India, that amounts to three deaths every minute. India has one fifth of the world's children but the chances of survival of newborns beyond their fifth birthday is quiet bleak. UNICEF's damning State of the World's Children report ranks India a low 49 in a list of 194 countries. Please pray on this heart rendering issue.

26 WEDNESDAY Forgiveness Day - Forgiveness Day is a time to forgive and to be forgiven. The world will be a better place for this day. We as Christians need to practice it every day. Let us start today!

27 THURSDAY 12 lakh children are believed to be involved in prostitution in India. 10% of human trafficking in India is across borders. Please pray that such an evil practice will be eradicated through efforts of NGOs, who are especially working towards this issue.

28 FRIDAY Pray for those indulged in drugs, bribery, alcoholism, pornography, gambling, smoking and money slandering. Pray for change of heart and consciousness. May the love of Jesus heal them and make them quit there addiction.

29 SATURDAY Praise God that The Supreme Court of India last month ordered Delhi to provide shelter for all the city's estimated 150,000 homeless. Pray that active and immediate action will be taken accordingly.

30 SUNDAY Allow God to search your personal life and also strengthen your faith. Pray also for your co-worker that God will bless him and use him effectively for his Glory.

“I am sorry. Will you forgive me?”

Are there any words more difficult to say?

My father recalled a time in my teens when he was harsh towards me. I had not forgotten the incident, but I didn't know he remembered it thirty years later. He apologized one evening as we rode together in the car. His burden was lifted and my love for him was renewed.

A friend told of a time when she and her sister were having a big argument. She took a wire coat hanger to whack her sister's head. Just at that moment her dad appeared in the doorway. "I'm sorry!" she yelled, as with no hesitation she kept that hanger on course. I had to chuckle. But when things like that happen on a larger scale, it's not funny.

Another friend told of a time he was an attendant in a nursing home. Something happened with one of his patients. The patient was angry enough to get his lawyer involved. The attendant had not known the seriousness of the event, but when he found out he went to apologize. The patient was still very angry. However, the attendant asked for forgiveness and told him he was willing to take whatever the lawyer and family decided. The patient's attitude softened and changed. From then on the attendant was his closest friend in the home. The patient was very cooperative and could not do enough to make it easy for the attendant.

A young man remembers walking out of a mechanics shop one snowy day. He aimed a snowball at a wrecked car, missed and hit another car, breaking its taillight. He immediately apologized to the non-Christian owner, who was surprised by the offer to make it right.

With deep emotion a father told how he goes to his children when he has wronged them. He tells them he's sorry and asks for forgiveness. Children have such a wonderful way of forgiving! There is nothing like these precious times together to make things right.

The same man also has deep pain about being sexually abused in his childhood by an older boy. The older boy is now a preacher. He has never said, “I’m sorry. Will you forgive me?” It hurts. This man longs for things to be made right between them.

A young mother told of being exually abused by her brother when she was younger. When she went to tell her brother of her happy plans to be married, he immediately apologized for what he had done to her. He was deeply sorry for his wrong. He hoped he had not destroyed her future happiness. Today she and her brother are close. There are no hard feelings between them.

I have often struggled to ay ‘I’m sorry’ to my husband. All kinds of reasons pop up why I shouldn’t need to say it. But Oh! The relief, the joy that floods my heart when I can come to the point of admitting I was wrong. When I receive his forgiveness (and the Lord’s) I feel as light as a feather.

What would happen if we all could be more humble, if we could acknowledge when we have done wrong and make things right? What would our homes be like? Let’s do it!

Christians should be grave and serious, though cheerful and pleasant. They should feel that they have great interests at stake, and that the world has too. They are redeemed—not to make sport; purchased with precious blood—for other purposes than to make men laugh. They are soon to be in heaven—and a man who has any impressive sense of that will habitually feel he has much else to do than to make men laugh. The true course of life is midway between moroseness and levity; sourness and lightness; harshness and jesting. Be benevolent, kind, cheerful, bland, courteous—but serious. Be solemn, thoughtful, deeply impressed with the presence of God and with eternal things—but pleasant affable and benignant. Think not a smile sinful; but think not levity and jesting harmless.

—Albert Barnes



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