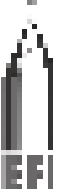




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AIM is published monthly by the EFL PUBLICATION TRUST, 803/92, Deepali, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110 019.

AIM Annual Subscription for India, Nepal & Bhutan Rs. 100/- (other countries \$ 20). Send your Subscription to: THE TREASURER, EFL PUBLICATION TRUST, 803/92, Deepali, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019. Phone 26431133; Tele/Fax: 011-26285350, E-mail: aimatefi@gmail.com, website: www.efionline.org

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From the Editor



# THE BEST FOR THE LEAST

Vijay, while talking with a poor Dalit, said to him, “We all are created by one God and we all have equal dignity and worth.” Looking into his friend’s eyes, he said, “You have equal worth and dignity like any other high caste person or human being anywhere in the world.” Vijay was shocked by the response he heard. “Please do not cause me more pain, leave me in my condition as I am,” said the Dalit boy.

This is the story of billions around the world; people beaten down and trapped in deprivation due to age, gender, race, caste or class. More often than not, these people have internalized a false and negative sense of self, fed to them on a regular basis and characterized by a sense of powerlessness.

## **Powerlessness and Hopelessness**

We are used to linking sin with pride and lust for power, but often forget that sin is also linked with powerlessness; in this world, where inequalities

of power are broadly imposed and institutionalized. Moltmann contends that the other side of pride is hopelessness, resignation, weariness, timidity – all of which amount to falling away from the living hope promised by God. The Dalit boy in our story was leading a life trapped in then shackles of hopelessness. As evident, the practice of caste, race, gender and economic class, systems and ideologies play an overpowering role in shaping and structuring, allowing and disallowing certain relationships. This was equally true during the days when Jesus walked the earth.

## **Use and Abuse of Power**

Within Scripture, we hear Jesus asking us to stop abusing power in self-referential, repressive, imposing, and one-sided ways. Instead, he challenges us to quit being complacent and engage in partnership and embrace one another. Power, he says, must be exercised in collaborative, creative,

relational and constructive ways. Showing his seriousness about the concern at hand, Jesus offers a set of warnings (seven woes!) for people who enjoy systemic advantages at the expense of the disadvantaged (Matt. 23:13-39).

Creating space for others, for the marginalized in particular, is not just a demand on the generosity of the leadership, but also a demand for justice. The sin that most profoundly threatens us is not the evil we perpetrate with power, but rather the good that we fail to do with the power we have.

I challenge you to consider whether you are using your power to dominate or to empower others? We should give our best to the least by raising them up as our equals.

### **Jesus' Understanding of Power**

A stark contrast appears when we look at Jesus' understanding of power in the kingdom of God in comparison to popular culture. As a rule of thumb, the Gentile rulers made sure their power over their subjects felt their full extent of their power. People in authority, whether openly or tacitly, enjoyed the sense of fear they were able to instill in others. Jesus' disciples were no exceptions in their lust for power to dominate over others. This was visible when they questioned Jesus and implored him to decide who was the greatest among them.

### **Power not for Domination**

Jesus answered his disciples' question about greatness in Luke (22:24-27). The Gentile leaders, he said, use power and authority to abuse or exclude. Among his followers, however, the greatest becomes like the youngest and the leader like the one who serves. We see that Jesus called attention to two of the most excluded people in his social context; the child (the youngest) and the slaves.

**C**reating space for others, for the marginalized in particular, is not just a demand on the generosity of the leadership, but also a demand for justice.

### **Solidarity with the Least**

The Gentile leaders considered the person seated at the table, greater than the servant. Yet, we see Jesus identifying himself with the excluded groups, saying "I am among you as one who serves;" as one of the excluded slaves (v. 27). Ordinarily, the tables were served by slaves who had been bought, sold, and traded on the auction platform.

### **Power to empower others**

Continuing the conversation, Jesus said: "I confer on you, just as my

Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table” (Luke 22:29-30). Even though this conversation occurred with the disciples, its eschatological perspective of the kingdom makes it applicable to the excluded groups of child and slave; the group with which Jesus identified. He conferred on the excluded groups a kingdom so that they may eat and drink “at the table.”

In contrast to the dominant status quo, where authority was located with those already at the table, Jesus relocated authority, along with dignity and respect, among and within persons presently excluded; now they “may eat and drink at my table” (v.30). The best example of the least being lifted by the best is none other than by God himself! God invites us all to the table as co-equals; an important lesson for us to learn and practice.

When we think of leadership, the thought of power generally comes hand in hand. Conceptualizing power as “power over” implies that relationships characterized by

domination and subjugation are desirable. In contrast, the church ought to shape its understanding of power guided by the teachings of the Scripture: We are dependent upon God and interdependent upon one another. Thus, the narratives of our life should tell a tale of interdependence, and not domination. Churches should be a place where differences and similarities are celebrated, instead of a place where you find power solely vested.

God has given us the ideal example of the use of power. The Almighty God came into the world and became like us, in order to die for the ungodly, so that God would raise us from our fallen state and seat us with him at his table. We must imitate our Lord in raising as equals those whom the world considers the least. As Paul says, “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).

*Rev. Dr. Richard Howell*

In our manner of speech, our plans of living, our dealings with others, our conduct and walk in the church and out of it—all should be done as becomes the gospel  
(Phil. 1:27).

—Albert Barnes

# LIVE THE STORY BEFORE YOU CAN TELL IT

Living with Jesus is something similar. He reminds us that there is more to life than a huge collection of 'thank-you' cards

Namrata Achowe

The night before the crucifixion, the disciples have two questions on their mind. One, who will betray Jesus? Two, which of them was considered to be greatest?

When Jesus was asked to pay taxes, he complied, saying that we ought to render unto God what we owe to God, and to Caesar what we owe to Caesar. Now, the word 'betrayal' means that we give the things we owe one man to another. For instance, a husband owes faithfulness to his wife, but he decides to give this same faithfulness to another woman, he is betraying his wife by robbing her of what belongs to her. Thus, betrayal is the act of willfully depriving a person of what essentially and rightfully belongs to him or her.

That night, it was also a question of survival for the disciples. Betrayal meant elimination and elimination meant fewer competitors.

Even as they asked the question, little did they know that they had answered it themselves. In their attempt to identify the unfaithful among themselves, they ignored the significance of that night.

This was the night before the crucifixion. This was the night before Jesus would be led to a brutal death on the cross. This was the night that was going to change history. This is the night that was going to change you and I.

It was the night they should have wondered at the plan of God. It was the night they should have proclaimed

the might of God. It was the night they should have encouraged Jesus. It was the night when Jesus's heart was breaking all by itself, and he had no one, absolutely no one, to tell him that it was going to be fine and he was doing the right thing. It was the one night when he didn't want to be left alone. Yet, they deprived him of their praise, their encouragement, their friendship, and above all, their company that night. They left him all by himself on that hill, crumbling in silent desperation before the Father.

**T**hey betrayed him much before Judas handed him over to the authorities.

The second question makes me laugh. Jesus is about to lift the burden of mankind, fulfill all the prophecies of God, and redeem all the people of the world. This is his moment of glory. If anybody had the right to ask that question, it was him. But, here are twelve men who are, at that point of history, nothing more than glorified sidekicks, discussing their future glory with unbridled passion.

Centuries have passed, yet mankind doesn't know the answers to these two questions. We are still asking one another – Who will betray Jesus? Which among us will be considered the greatest?

The answer is simple. Whoever asks these questions betrays Jesus and his message.

It is easy to get distracted by these questions. The desire to be acknowledged and appreciated is inherent in human nature. God knows and understands this about us, and He promises us a seat at His table in His kingdom. When a man marries a woman, he promises her many things, some of which she can see for herself, some of which she can't. She enjoys the things she can see, but for those that she can't, she has to trust and believe in the competence of the man she married. Living with Jesus is something similar. He reminds us that there is more to life than a huge collection of 'thank-you' cards.

**God has called us to serve the people.**

And, we will not serve them by simply increasing church membership and attendance. There is more to the gospel than filling pews. My father always tells me that Christians comprise 3% of the total population of India, yet the top schools, colleges, hospitals are run by Christian organisations. We are the salt of India. But we are losing our saltiness by getting into who's the saltiest of them all.

India is no one else's business, it is yours and it is mine. We have to set our house in order. We owe it to this nation. If we wish to be citizens of a developed nation, we have to think beyond applying for American or European citizenship. We must participate and collaborate in the democratic processes of our country. We need

to know what the men in power are thinking and planning. There is a need to engage local legislators and leaders in the plans and programmes of the church. We need more schools and colleges. We need doctors and engineers and teachers. We need our new generation to be interested in more than gospel music and attending youth meetings.

Let us not forget that we are still in this world. Therefore, it is my request that we should stop behaving as if we are already in heaven. And, this is my personal appeal to each reader, let us stop pretending that corruption is the exclusive franchise of politicians and bureaucrats. We may sin differently, but we sin all the same. Let us stop disguising our apathy as our refusal to be involved in dirty affairs.

We are the light of the world, but we need to go to the places of darkness in order to be effective. We cannot afford to be complacent, and wonder about the great stories we will tell Jesus when He comes back. Live the story before you can tell it.

Last but not the least, stop asking yourself who will betray Jesus. And, trust me, it hardly matters if you are the greatest of us all.

We need favourites, God doesn't.

Think again!

*Namrata  
Achowe Editorial  
Consultant,  
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# Creating heaven on earth

God is not like us. Our judgements of Him are based on this premise found in Ps 50: *'you thought that I was altogether like you'* and so we judge Him by our human standards, from our limited human perception . . .

Sanjiv Ailawadi

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Master, why does God, being good and loving, and with all power, permit so much suffering?" Jesus knowing what was in their hearts answered, "A man called his son to himself and said, 'I have cultivated this land all my life, now take it and tend it for yourself'. His son took the land and was faithful in the first years, but when he became rich gave himself to prodigal living and gambled his land, family and himself into the hands of his neighbour." And Jesus said to them, "whose land was it, the father's or the son's?" And they replied, "the son's". Jesus then asked "who was responsible for the land being sold into slavery, the father or the son?" And they replied "the son". And He said

"Is it not written, *'The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men'* (Ps 115:16). So then, since God has given this earth to man; who is responsible for it, God or man?" And they answered Him not a word.

You will not come across this story in the gospel for the simple reason that it's not there. The scriptures quoted do exist, and emphasise the point of this fictitious parable.

For centuries, people have debated why a good God permits so much suffering and pain. He just couldn't be good, or He would never allowed it. He cannot be powerful or He would have stopped it. Theologians have theorised, hundreds of books have beenwritten, thousands of debates have raged. Bart

Ehrman, a well known theologian turned agnostic, says *“Suffering increasingly became a problem for me and my faith. How can one explain all the pain and misery in the world if God – the Creator and Redeemer of all – is sovereign over it, exercising His will both on the grand scheme and in the daily workings of our lives?”* Ehrman went on to question why God didn’t stop starvation, droughts, or answer the prayers of Holocaust victims, during an open debate with NT Wright, another renowned theologian.

While debating the problem of pain and blaming God, we have continued to wage wars, to fight, to destroy, to oppress, to exploit, thus causing more pain. In the last 5600 years of recorded history, an estimated 14,500 wars have taken the lives of 4 billion people: a staggering average of almost 2000 people each day. In the past century, governments have killed 262 million people in their own countries. The outcome of wars, social injustice, genocide, among other self-inflicted disasters, have led to ecological catastrophes, massive refugee movement, and disease: 100 million deaths from the 1918 flu pandemic facilitated by close troop quarters and massive troop movements made World War 1 the deadliest conflict in world history.

We have sought after magical cures, quick fixes and short cuts. Peace talks, the United Nations, treaties have been

negotiated, armies sent in to stop civil wars, human rights watches set up all over the earth. Conflicts, instead of decreasing, have only increased. Greater communication, mobility, technological advances have helped us find better ways to destroy and kill one another. All the while accusing God of not doing His job, petitioning Him to fix us with a wave of a magical cosmic wand. We are like spoilt children who throw tantrums blaming their parents

**T**he outcome of wars, social injustice, genocide, among other self-inflicted disasters, have led to ecological catastrophes, massive refugee movement, and disease. . .

after deliberately destroying the gifts they gave us. Our search for peace has been similar to playing football in a minefield; in the words of a song, we *‘run and run and run to catch up with the sun’*, but we’re *‘shorter of breath and one day closer to death’*. What a mess!

Being made in His image, we understand justice and are able to comprehend fair play. But, God says: *“What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth, seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you? When*

*you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother...*"(Ps 50.16-20). We have no right to judge God, when we have done evil ourselves. When writing about corrupt Chief Justices of India, Tehelka asserted that '*Rudimentary logic demands that the highest chairs must have the soundest legs. By that measure, judges ought to have impeccable moral character.*' Before we begin to judge God, as Bart Ehrman, the distinguished theologian does, we must ensure that our morality is above reproach and superior to His.

God is not like us. Our judgements of Him are based on this premise found in Ps 50: '*you thought that I was altogether like you*' and so we judge Him by our human standards, from our limited human perception, with our flawed human character. *His thoughts, however, are not our thoughts, and His ways not our ways .... as the heavens are higher than the earth,* so is He different from us, not just quantitatively or qualitatively, but from a completely different dimension of the Spirit.

Contrary to our complaints about God being inactive, indifferent and uninvolved, a state we are ourselves often in; He has done something. For the son in the fictitious parable to be

freed along with his family and his lands restored, someone would have to foot the bill. Someone would have to offer a price so high the neighbour would be too tempted to refuse.

Jesus did just that. He offered a price that the devil just could not refuse: Himself. The devil was cast out of heaven when he sought after and fought for the throne of God. He longed for an occasion to destroy God. Jesus opened up the opportunity as offering Himself as a price for all mankind. The devil flung the entire cohorts of hell against Jesus on the Cross, but he had grossly miscalculated the power of God. Jesus

**T**he power of Sin was defeated on the Cross, the power of death in the resurrection. *This power is available to all of us.*

won the war having '*wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us....and nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*' (Col 2.14,15).

The power of Sin was defeated on the Cross, the power of death in the resurrection. *This power is available to all of us* (Eph 1.19,20) and we, too, if we believe, have the capability of destroying the works of the devil.

God is looking for a community of people who will join Him in this task: *a royal nation, a holy priesthood* (1 Peter 2.9). *God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, has given us the ministry of reconciliation* (2 Cor 5.18). The task is to end suffering, to bring in His love in the pain of our world. When Jesus engaged, He was wounded: compassion is expressed when the healer is wounded with the wounds of the wounded. When we engage in a similar manner, we too will suffer, but for a cause; we will be wounded, so that others may live. *When I go up*

*there, the Big Judge will say to me, 'Where are your wounds?' And if I say 'I haven't any', He will say, 'was there nothing to fight for?' (Alan Paton).*

**Jesus did not come so that we can just get to heaven: He has called us to help Him create heaven, here on earth.**

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



A man sometimes goes from home,  
and sometimes he does not quite leave his house.  
There is much difference between those two.  
If a man leaves his house and comes no more, then he  
carries away all his goods. . . . But though a man ride a  
great journey, yet he may come again; and ye say,  
“Surely he will come again.” Why?  
Because still his goods, wife and children are in his house.  
So if Christ rejects a man and go away finally,  
He carries away all His goods, spiritual gifts, graces and  
principles. But though He be long absent,  
yet if His household stuff abide in the heart— if there  
be the same desires after Him, and delight in Him, and  
admiring of Him—ye may say, “Surely, He will come again.”  
Why? Because His household stuff is here still.  
When did Christ ever forsake a man in whose heart  
He left this spiritual furniture?

—William Bridge

# Is living by Kingdom values my lifestyle ?

In India today much of school work is considered business. Is it business with ethics or without ethics.

Joyce Davis

**A**pex Academy (Name changed) was situated in the mountains in the midst of a natural garden. High mountains could be seen on all sides with clouds resting on it like icing on a cake. The river flowed through the town and added to the beautiful spectacle.

Into this school came chaos and turmoil that morning as students, teachers and the management awaited the arrival of the inspection team. A lot depended on the result of this inspection. It had taken six years to reach this stage because the no objection certificate took that long to pass through the many state government offices. No money was given to get the job done so naturally it took long!

Now the inspection team from the education department at the center would visit the school and tell us if

we were up to the mark. The records in the school were true and honest. The teachers received the salary that they signed for. The land papers were genuinely owned by the people related to the school. The library genuinely stocked books that the children read and it was not the books given as samples to the school freely by the publishers. The computer laboratory had computers that were used by the children and it was not a show piece so also the science lab.

The school had grounds for playing games like basketball, throw ball, badminton but not cricket. It was not possible to make a cricket ground high in the mountains.

The first inspector was very happy to see the school and said so. The second inspector was a very different story. The principal of Apex Academy was

chewed about every aspect. Nothing was good enough! At the end of the inspection the school management invited the inspectors for lunch. This was the last straw for all at the school. Now the accusation was “Do you want to bribe me?” It was a surprise to have hospitality taken for bribe. Therefore the inspectors left without even a glass of water.

When the parents heard of this incident it led to many suggestions of how they could have taken care of the inspectors. Firstly, take them for an outing, then give them some drinks and follow it with lunch and local craft work given as a gift.

The management of the school was firm in believing that they had done everything honestly and would stand by it. They could not be dishonest themselves and teach children ‘values’. It was a painful episode but also a victorious one because this group of people had the courage to live out their ideals.

The story does not end here for in a short while the school was recognized by another board who appreciated the work that was being done in making education relevant to children who lived a fairly isolated life from the rest of the country.

In India today much of school work is considered business. Is it business with ethics or without ethics.

Research in the field of business ethics by Nitin Nohria, from Mumbai and the first Asian dean of Harvard Business School, was made much of because in our world today it is not usual to combine modern day business with ethics.

In the article ‘We choose people who are entrepreneurial’ written by Joyce Lau in New York Times but also appeared in Deccan Herald, Monday April 1 2013 page 13 writes about her interview with Nitin Nohria. One of her questions is “Do you teach

**The corporate world in India is crying out for ethical standards for functioning for that matter all of life is crying out. Is the church hearing this cry?**

ethics?” Mr. Nohria replied saying that they have a full required course called “Leadership and Corporate Accountability”. He gives the example of selling 100% apple juice but actually it is flavored water could put a person in prison.

The corporate world in India is crying out for ethical standards for functioning for that matter all of life is crying out. Is the church hearing this cry? Is the church in India seeing the condition of its people both in the church and outside?

I am sure that the cry is echoing in our hearts and we are all pained by the situations. How do we treat the people who work for us? How do we work for people who employ us? There is an individual cry to count the cost and live up to the highest and best of kingdom values. You might have to lose your job and be on the roadside or lose the friends that you have. It is better to have the savior beside you. The church as a corporate body has to count the cost too and make straight its path. We as a church in many instances would have to repent of

our ways in following the world: the easy way. In some instances we have given importance to that which has no value land, building, bank balance and forgotten the people for whom our savior died.



*Mrs. Joyce Davis ,  
Education  
Coordinator,  
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# Watch your Words! They have power for life & death!

Glaring as these words may be, the fact is that from time to time our emotions rob us of all our sanity. We speak words that we later want to recant.

Hansraj Jain

“Shut your mouth”, came the shout. “You shut YOUR mouth”, returned the retort. Before anyone had a chance to intervene, fists and loud cuss words were flying about.

We are not strangers to the above scene. All of us at one time, or another, have encountered them. As a race, we humans have become increasingly short-tempered and ready to express our anger openly. We even allow our feelings and emotions to get the better of us. Now when that happens we seek to escape responsibility and so seek for a scapegoat. That goat could be our childhood experiences (often labeled as abuse), horrid parental experience (who actually would have been most caring, loving and even indulging the whims and fancies of the now adult

‘child’), and even psychology where we pretend to be unaware of our behavioural conduct. Life we have managed to make complex, as we have done of our society.

By the way, did you watch your television recently? Did you react to the news that the Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra Mr. Ajit Pawar offered, when confronted about draught causing severe shortage of water, urine to fill the dams and then release it to quench their thirst and to irrigate their farms?

Ouch! That hurt.

Glaring as these words may be, the fact is that from time to time our emotions rob us of all our sanity. We speak words that we later want to recant.



Sadly at that stage all expressions of regret and apology sounds trivial and lame.

Someone described the spoken Words as a club in our hands. With it we can beat out the dust in the carpet or club the hell out of someone who dared to cross us. Our words wield the power to cause grievous wounds, leave people reeling in pain, and even destroy them forever or lead them “to paths of righteousness”!

### **Hurting & Wounding Words:**

What kinds of words leave people wounded so badly?

“Shut up” is an often spoken phrase. When spoken in anger to a child it sounds to the child that he is not worth being heard. Yet, when he delayed in speaking the parent took him to the specialists wondering why still could not speak. Now it is being told to ‘shut-up’.

“You are useless” is another. It not only evaluates a person but helps undermine them. It is phrase that expresses rejection and dismissal. The result is often shattering with long-term impact.

“I hate you”, “I wish you were never born” or “I wish I had given birth to a still baby than to you”, “get out of my face/life”, “I never want to see you again”, “I wish you were dead” are some of other most powerful phrases that we speak to those for whom we

express our love and care. These phrases in actuality communicate rejection, unwanted, judgment, and absolute hate. The tongue lashing with these has the power to leave a person’s psyche damaged for their lifetime and that in turn has the power to influence and produce deviant and rogue behaviour. Such people struggle with deep desire to feel wanted, needed, loved, accepted, and appreciated. Failure to receive appropriate response can result in violent behaviour or depression leading to suicide.

**O**ur words wield the power to cause grievous wounds, leave people reeling in pain, and even destroy them forever or lead them “to paths of righteousness”!

### **Spoken words have power to give life and take life.**

James the wise wrote this for us in his letter to scattered Jews living in exile saying, (and I quote in full),

*...the tongue is a small part of the body, yet it has great pretensions. Think how small a flame sets a huge forest ablaze. 6 And the tongue is a fire! The tongue represents the world of wrongdoing among the parts of our bodies. It pollutes the entire*

*body and sets fire to the course of human existence - and is set on fire by hell.*

*7 For every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and sea creature is subdued and has been subdued by humankind. 8 But no human being can subdue the tongue; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse people made in Gods image. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. These things should not be so, my brothers and sisters. (James 3:5-10)*

The Bible has some amazing things to say about our spoken words and to caution us as to how we use them. Our words once spoken are like shooting arrows that cannot be recalled. It always has consequences following its use – to heal or to devastate.

Here are a few.

18 A quick-tempered person stirs up dissension, but one who is slow to anger calms a quarrel. (Prov.15:18)\*

1 A gentle response turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath. 2 The tongue of the wise treats knowledge correctly, but the mouth of the fool spouts out folly. (Prov. 15:1,2)\*

7 The lips of the wise spread a knowledge, but not so the heart of fools. (Prov. 15:8)\*

Better to be slow to anger than to be a mighty warrior, and one who controls his temper is better than one who captures a city. (Prov. 16:32)\*

11 A persons wisdom makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. (Prov. 19:11)\*

A gentle response turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath. 2 The tongue of the wise treats knowledge correctly, but the mouth of the fool spouts out folly. (Prov. 15: 1)\*

9 Do not let yourself be quickly provoked, for anger resides in the lap of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7:9)\*

Interestingly Jesus too cautioned his disciples on the use of their tongue and the words when he said,

22 But I say to you that anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to judgment. And whoever insults a brother will be brought before the council, and whoever says Fool will be sent to fiery hell. (Mt.5:22)\*

Let your word be Yes, yes or No, no. More than this is from the evil one. (Mt. 5:37)\*

### **Conclusion:**

Let's stop for a moment. Reflect with me on the day we have just spent.

How would we evaluate our words that were spoken from the moment of waking to the time of going to bed? Would majority of those be classified as words of positive and up building in nature? Would they have contained words such as appreciation, acknowledge goodness, express love to my loved ones, thank those who extended kindness, goodness, gentleness, express acceptance, offer encouragement, tenderness, care and forgiveness? Or were the words used an antithesis of all of the above?

Shall we pledge to ourselves to work to watch and empower our words with power to heal and extend life rather than, to club people to a pulp –

especially our spouse and our kids?

“Father forgive us for using our words as a club to beat people, especially those whom we love dearly.” AMEN.

(\*Scripture quoted from the New English Translation Bible)



**HANSRAJ JAIN**  
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## *Colloquium - 13*

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# “Ghar Wapsi” and the not so veiled threat of the Sangh

The church has so far not woken up to this argument, and priests and pastors at the grassroots level have not been educated to challenge the thesis. They are also ignorant, if not entirely impotent, in how to respond the Ghar Wapsi movement.

John Dayal

**A**t a meeting in April in Samantwadi in Maharashtra, a resolution was passed by about 6,500 persons in the ‘Hindu Dharmajagruti Sabha’ organised by the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti (HJS) a resolution was passed “to establish Hindu Rashtra for elimination of anti-nationals and anti-Hindus; to stop attacks on Hindu Dharma; even if they have to sacrifice everything.”

This could be passed off as a one-off attempt by some lunatic fringe, goaded by its Islamophobic leaders, to articulate its angst. But in a said the same thing as they boasted of their growth in recent years, even under “friendly” Indian National Congress regimes.

Sangh Parivar chief Dr. Mohan Bhagwat said conversions will be “reversed”, a challenge he has knowingly thrown to the Christian church in India. The Sangh added they have indeed made as many as 200,00 Christians, mostly Dalits and Tribals, into Hindus, a process they call “Ghar Wapsi”, a Return Home in the mistaken belief that all Dalits and Tribals are anyway Hindus.

The HJS itself has by its own accounts organized more than 870 ‘Dharmajagruti Sabha’ and “created awareness amongst more than 11,00,000 Hindus towards “Dharma”. The 7<sup>th</sup> April 2013 was interesting also for the participation of organisations people may not have heard of before

– the Hindu Rashtra Sena, the Sanatan Sanstha, and ‘Ranaragini’, apparently a gender focused group.

The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, the parent organisation, now works through perhaps as many as 125 to 150 different organisations working at the grassroots under various disguises targeting groups as different as Dalits and Tribals on the one hand, professions such as engineers and doctors, all the way to the organised and unorganized labour.

Even as genuine data on the growth of the RSS remains hidden in the records of the Intelligence Bureau, information shows phenomenal growth in the subsidiary Sangh agencies. The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh had crossed the One crore mark by 2009. According to the last official count by the labour ministry in 2002, the BMS had 62.2 lakh members while the Congress-affiliated Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) had 38 lakh and the Communist Party of India’s AITUC, 33 lakh. The Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, which faces tough competition from other Other Backward Community and peasantry groups in North India, claims One million people.

The Rashtriya Seva Bharati, an important and silent agency that does grassroots work for the Sangh in towns and villages, now as 1,57,776 members. The students wing active in universities, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad which has now penetrated

even the Left wing Jawaharlal Nehru University student politics and which boasts the senior leader Arun Jaitely as its brightest alumni, claims a membership of 19 lakh in major universities and colleges

The most alarming is the growth is in the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, which works in the tribal areas of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa, including Kandhamal, grows at the rate of a 1,000 units a year and now totals close to 14,500 by its figures disclosed for 2009. Kripa Prasad Singh, joint general secretary of the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram in his interview with the Telegraph said, “Congress governments have never harassed us because they appreciate the services we render to the Tribals,” Singh said. “Even the CPM government in Tripura has been friendly.”

The biggest challenge to all church groups is from the so called Ghar Wapsi movement, particularly by militant groups in Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. It is also a challenge to the State because conversions, and the logical conclusion of the progress of evangelisation and propagation of faith, is a guarantee enshrined not just in the Constitution but upheld by the Supreme court. Interestingly enough, the courts are silent on Ghar Wapsi and do not treat them as conversions, much less forcible conversions despite the massive evidence of violence in the Sangh campaigns.

The RSS has long been calling for a national law against conversions. It wants the so called Freedom of Religion Laws of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and several other states, extended to the entire country, putting in place as strict regime that can make it all but impossible for Christian pastors to either preach directly or baptize any convert without the permission, sometimes prior permission, of the civil and police authorities of the state.

“Hinduism doesn’t accept conversions. Hindus try to reverse conversions,” Bhagwat has said. Calling for a new law to stop religious conversion, he said the Scheduled Tribes, who convert into Christianity, should be debarred from the benefits of reservation. The RSS has long held it against the Christian community that those who convert cut themselves off from local saints and holy places, or events, there by also cutting themselves from the local culture and the community at large.

The church has so far not woken up to this argument, and priests and pastors at the grassroots level have not been educated to challenge the thesis. They are also ignorant, if not entirely impotent, in how to respond the Ghar Wapsi movement.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, an adjunct of the Sangh, claims over 200,000 Christians had been converted to Hinduism by 2011, for which they

released data earlier this year. The Ghar Wapsi has been through Andhra and the Tribals states of Orissa, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh, even Maharashtra. The VHP has succeeded in preventing about 50 lakh Hindus from switching over to other faiths in last 10 years,” VHP’s international general secretary Praveen Togadia claimed.

What happens at these rallies? Here is an account from one account of a function held at Mothi village in Algona district of Andhra Pradesh the VHP Dharma Prasad Samiti “around 500 children were presented the locket of Hanumanji and all those who returned home were gifted new clothes.”

I have had occasion to document Ghar Wapsi events in various villages of Orissa, and not just in Kandhamal, where the process has involved shaving off the head of men and women, their purification through a mixture of cow dung and cow urine, the chanting of mantras around the fire, and wherever possible, the burning of “alien” books such as the Bible. Colleagues who have documented the Ghar Wapsi organised by former BJP minister and strongman Dilip Singh Judeo speak of how his armed cadres – armed with bow and arrow as much as with modern guns – would surround the place and keep watch while he “initiated” the Christian into the Hindu fold.


My own observations after field studies are of Ghar Wapsi as a movement that uses armed force and violence, and cannot be called a home coming because the Tribals do not accept Hinduism as their default religion. The 2011 census was slightly better than the 2001 census in allowing some space for indigenous religions to have their voice heard as opposed the past when they were all routinely lumped under the Hindu label. This lacuna still remains in law and the BJP ruled states list all so called “Indic” religions as Hindus. The matter needs to be taken to one of

the superior courts in the interests of constitutional provisions for freedom of faith and belief guarantees every Indian citizen.

The Ghar Wapsi is a threat to peace. The State must wake up to it.

Dr. John Dayal  
Member of National  
Integration Council





**Exciting News**  
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We are pleased to announce that RHEMA Bible Training College – Nagpur, India has expanded its duration to **5** (Five months).

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**School Calendar**

1. **Minimum Educational Qualification:** 10<sup>th</sup> Pass or Matriculation pass
2. **Duration :** 5 Months (Five months) **15<sup>th</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> December 2013**
3. **Age:** 18 – 60 years.
4. **Fee Structure:**

Registration & Application Fee .....	Rs. 150.00
Books .....	Rs. 1,700.00
Tuition, Lodging & Book Fee .....	Rs. 6,500.00
Total Fees .....	Rs. 8,350.00

**Last date for submitting all the application form is 15<sup>th</sup> June 2013. We will not accept any applications after 15<sup>th</sup> of June.**

5. **Travel Expenses:** All students must pay for their own transportation to and from Nagpur, Maharashtra, India.
6. **Accommodation:** We provide food & housing for all students. All students are required to stay in the school dormitory for the duration of the Bible school. Bedding will be provided, however students must bring their mosquito net, Warm clothes, blanket & purchase their own toiletries.

# The great divide

As I scanned the Scriptures, I tried to catch glimpses of the heart of God for the deprived, and the manner in which our world could be radically revamped, if we all faithfully captured the heart of God for the downtrodden and the destitute.

Jacob Mathew

A few years ago, a few of my closest friends and I decided to meet up at Café Coffee Day. It was special for two reasons. One, we were no longer based in the same city, so it was wonderful to connect after such a long time. Two, CCD was a relatively new concept in those days, and it felt good to experiment with something different.

A few moments into our ‘wonderful’ and ‘novel’ experience, one of my friends saw something outside that triggered an unpleasant conversation, right outside the glass walls of this café were two small boys begging for food.

Inside was the most obvious illustrations of the India which had arrived at the world stage of development, outside was one of the most heart-rending

examples of the India with no plans to leave the era of deprivation. And, all that stood between them and us was a wall of crystal-clear glass.

Emotionally stirred, my friend felt uncomfortable at having made CCD our rendezvous. We were moved too, but felt that the bigger cause of the bond of friendship deserved the current venue of celebration. Our coffee arrived, served by the smiling CCD personnel, and the conversation resumed. We listened to the realities of each other’s lives and comforted ourselves; unaware that mere glass walls shielded us from the cries of a world in scarcity.

What I have narrated is a squirmy battle you and I face daily called ‘The Great Divide’. And, most of the time we are on the other side of the glass walls,



enjoying the pleasures of development. Very rarely do we step outside to feel the pain of deprivation.

The street where my office is located is a classic example of 'The Great Divide'. Majestic malls and expensive restaurants coexist with pavement dwellers and impoverished children begging for food. The security and sanctuary of our air-conditioned offices with sound-proof padding, the tinted glass of our personal vehicles and even the healthy team dynamics of our life's clique keep us sheltered from perceiving the real nature of a world in deprivation.

When we open our Bibles, it seems that the authors inspired by God Himself, present before us illustrations and possible responses on what to do in the face of 'The Great Divide'. As I scanned the Scriptures, I tried to catch glimpses of the heart of God for the deprived, and the manner in which our world could be radically revamped, if we all faithfully captured the heart of God for the downtrodden and the destitute.

Given below are few commitments towards bridging the 'great divide'.

### **PERSONAL DECISIONS**

Exodus 23: 10 -11 *"For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals*

*may eat what is left. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove."*

If I understand what this passage invited the people of Israel to do, it was simply this – once in 7 years, allow the poor and underprivileged to enjoy the fruit of your hard-earned labour. Imagine if every Israelite had made a decision to do it once in 7 years. It would have made a huge difference to bridge the divide. What does it mean to you and me in the 21st Century? Simply this – **Your small personal decisions make a big public difference.** Mother Teresa captured this well, when she said 'If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one.'

### **LEADERSHIP CHOICES**

The fifth chapter of Nehemiah is worth reading to experience the heart of a man who used his position well to defend the destitute. Firstly, the cries of the poor break the heart of Nehemiah (v.2-5). Secondly, an angry Nehemiah calls for a public meeting to deal with the problem (v. 6-11). Thirdly, the community responds positively to bridge the 'great divide' (v. 12-14). Finally, we see a few personal initiatives made by a rich Nehemiah, to uplift the poor (v. 14-19).

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a few people like Nehemiah among us now? Men and women who could use their influence to bring change into our world. What does this mean to you and

me in 21st century? Simply this – Pray for influencers to live significant lives and make powerful changes. However, though prayer is a good starting point, we have an important role play in being an influencer, which means living significantly and standing up to make powerful changes.

Even as this article is being written, the Catholic Church has just voted in their 266th Pope – Pope Francis. Within 24 hours of becoming the most powerful influencer for the 1.2 billion Catholic followers, he illustrated the need for servant-leadership. The first Jesuit to become Pope picked up his luggage and paid his hotel bill, though he is, now, in charge of the lodge. He declined a throne-like chair while the cardinals pledged their obedience. Less than an hour later, he shunned the papal limousine and boarded a bus. The more the influence, the greater are your choices to serve.

## TRANSFORMED COMMUNITY

The scripture passage that held me in its grip lies in Acts 4: 32-37.

*“All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring*

*the money to the apostles to give to those in need.”*

This is a unique community – a community transformed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. A community committed to make three things happen. Firstly, this community is passionate to proclaim Jesus Christ regardless of the risks involved. Secondly, this community is zealous to love fellow-believers regardless of the differences of lifestyle or personality. Finally, this community is single-mindedly selfless to serve the deprived among them.

**Imagine the consequences, when there is a transformed community on every street of India.** It will achieve what billions of rupees, countless conferences and innumerable strategic task teams have failed to accomplish. But it starts with you and me experiencing a personal transformation by encountering the reality of Jesus Christ.

## THE GLASS SHATTERS

However, to return to the story I began earlier, we had our coffee, enjoyed our precious time together, and moved on with life. But the glass walls remain. They exist on every street of India. Our education progresses, and so does the deprivation of the Indian soul. Our expertise, wealth, technology and networking should have shattered those glass walls long ago, but they continue to haunt us.

We have focused on strategy, policy, procedures, plans, and campaigns. But, we have forgotten that to shatter these glass walls, something needs to shatter within us.

Bill McChesney, is a young American Jesus-follower killed at age 28 in the Congo Uprising of 1964. Before he went to Congo, he had a similar 'glass shattering' experience - an experience which is the first step towards bridging the 'great divide'. He wrote the following poem which captures this moment.

I want my breakfast served at  
"Eight,"  
With ham and eggs upon the plate;  
A well-broiled steak I'll eat at  
"One,"  
And dine again when day is done.  
I want an ultra modern home,  
And in each room a telephone;  
Soft carpets, too, upon the floors,  
And pretty drapes to grace the doors.  
A cozy place of lovely things,  
Like easy chairs with innersprings,  
And then I'll get a small TV-  
Of course, "I'm careful what I see."

But then the Master I can hear,  
In no uncertain voice, so clear,  
"I bid you come and follow me,  
The Lowly Man of Galilee."

"Birds of the air have made their  
nest,  
And foxes in their holes find rest;  
But I can offer you no bed;  
No place have I to lay my head."  
In shame I hung my head and cried,  
How could I spurn the Crucified?  
Could I forget the way He went,  
The sleepless nights in prayer He  
spent?  
For forty days without a bite,  
Alone He fasted day and night;  
Despised, rejected – on He went,  
And did not stop till veil He rent.  
A Man of sorrows and of grief,  
No earthly friend to bring relief-  
Smitten of God," the prophet said-  
Mocked, beaten, bruised, His blood  
ran red.

If He be God and died for me,  
No sacrifice too great can be  
For me, a mortal man, to make;  
I'll do it all for Jesus' sake  
Yes, I will tread the path He trod,  
No other way will please my God;  
So henceforth, this my choice shall  
be,  
My choice for all eternity.

Ps. Jacob Mathew serves as the Assistant Pastor with the Assembly of God Church especially involved with youth and care groups ministries of the church.

# Intimacy, Closeness Warmth & Security

Just about eight months later she graduated from life on earth to life with Jesus. Her memorial service was a grand celebration. Her home-going service brought a sweet sense of anticipation for heaven to many of us.

Lareau Lindquist

In the last issue of ENCOURAGEMENT, I re-introduced you to my signature text, Isaiah 41:10. Listen to the Lord as He speaks to you. Here it is again . . .  
*. Don't be afraid and don't be discouraged. I am with you. I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you I will hold you.*

This text has two exhortations . . .

**Don't be afraid.**

**Don't be discouraged.**

And there are five promises . . .

**I am with you.**

**I am your God.**

**I will strengthen you.**

**I will help you.**

**I will hold you.**

Today I will focus on the fifth and last promise . . . ***I will hold you with my righteous right hand***, as stated in 41:10. This phrase gets even more meaningful as we couple it with another phrase in 41:13, where He says . . . ***I will take hold of your right hand***. Both verses state that He **holds** us. Do you see the picture? Don't miss this.

- 41:10 He says that He holds us *with His righteous right hand*. And . . .
- 41:13 He says that He takes hold of *your [our] right hand*.

What an unusual picture. But also, what an amazing picture. He takes hold of your hand with His hand. But it gets even better than that.. With His right hand, He takes hold of your right hand. Grasp this picture that is presented by Isaiah. When His right hand takes hold of your right hand, we are face to face with Him. We are eye to eye. Don't move from this picture without allowing this truth to be forever planted in your memory. When His right hand takes hold of your right hand . . . WOW, too much to grasp. This picture speaks to me of INTIMACY; and CLOSENESS; and WARMTH; and SECURITY. Perhaps other words come to your mind.

About one month ago, I was one of three pastors that officiated at the funeral service for a very dear friend of ours. Annette was a classmate with us in college. Her boyfriend and I became great friends. We were part of a college quartet that traveled and ministered around the United States. They were participants in our wedding and we were participants in theirs. Both of us couples had daughters, born during our first year of marriage. Our families enjoyed a close relationship. Annette's first husband passed away when he was in his mid-thirties. Later she married a fine Christian. About ten months ago she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Just about eight months later she graduated from life on earth to life with Jesus. Her memorial service was a grand celebration. Her home-going service brought a sweet sense of anticipation for heaven to many of us.

Just moments ago, I returned to my office after having lunch with her husband, her daughter, my wife, and another couple. We spent several hours together. I asked her daughter, "How are you doing? Is it tougher or easier than you thought it would be?" She responded with this comment . . . "It's not as bad as I thought it might be. I miss her a lot. I have a good 'cry' now and then. But the Lord has brought me large measures of His grace. Yes, His grace has been totally "sufficient," as He promised to the Apostle Paul. He has been everything He promised He would be. So I must say, 'I am doing well.' He is holding me up." She is a living example of enjoying Isaiah 41:10. No doubt I will bring this verse to your attention again and again. I am praying that it will become one of your favorites, even as it has captured me. This text might also be a springboard to other great texts in the Scriptures.

*Be encouraged, Lareau Lindquist  
Founder, Senior Associate*

## STUDY - 2



# Being in Christ by the Holy Spirit

Reflection on St. John's passion narrative

Dr. Saphir Athyal

“Remain in me and I will remain in you.” John 14:15-26, 15:1-10, 26-27, 16:5-15

### **John 14:15-26**

15 *If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. 17 This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You*

*know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you....*

18 *I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father,*

*and I will love them and reveal myself to them.' 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?' 23 Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. 25 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.*

*John 15:4-9*

*4 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.*

This discourse of Jesus using the powerful metaphor of 'vine and its branches' should be seen in the larger context of John chapters 14 and 15. In these chapters there are several cardinal teachings on different aspects of our discipleship of Christ and intimate relationship to the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. **This relationship produces fruits that bring glory to God.** The bond of God with his people is fundamentally crucial for God's mission in the world.

When Jesus said, "I am the true vine", what is implied is that Israel was to be the vine of God, but they failed. Vine was the most favorite and important symbol of the nation of Israel. The porch of the temple had an emblem of golden vine on it. So also, it was imprinted on their coins during their freedom struggles. Israel is described as God's vine in several places in the Old Testament. Psalm 80, for example, pictures Israel as a vine brought from Egypt and planted in Canaan driving out the nations there: but it was cut down and burned in fire as it totally failed God. Prophet Isaiah in chapter five of his book gives a lengthy song on Israel as the vineyard of Yahweh who did everything for the select nation, but it yielded only bad fruit, and so God would destroy it.

Jesus is the true vine, and God's purpose for all nations is now to be fulfilled through Jesus in bringing

salvation “to the ends of the earth”. We as his followers are to remain in him like a branch on its vine. The basic characteristic of a follower of Christ is being in Christ and dwelling in him.

What is our chief identity in a country where we are a small minority? **It is not our name ‘Christian’, but our relational bond with Christ. And that is what makes us Christian.** The term “Christian” is often misrepresented and misinterpreted. In some countries the term does not have a good connotation. It reminds people of the dark colonial past with its blemished history. However we should remember that early colonizers though they were Christians in name, were totally opposed especially in India to Christian mission work and Christianization.

The term has communal overtones where Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and those of other religions live together along with a minority of Christians. Communal feelings and hatred are much on the increase now.

Many people wrongly believe that Christianity is a western religion that was imported into Asia and Africa by the westerners during the colonial period. We should correct this notion. Just like the other major religions Christianity originated in Asia. Jesus was as ‘Asian’. All the books of the Bible were written by Asians. Christian faith got rooted in India way before

much of Europe became Christian, and some 14 centuries before the local natives of America ‘discovered’ Columbus and the Spaniards.

The term ‘Christian’ is often identified with the undesirable aspects of globalization and modernization: In some circles Christians are falsely accused of associating with CIA and the foreign policies of USA. Also, they are viewed as having relatively loose morals as people see in Hollywood movies.

The preferred New Testament term for Christ’s followers is not ‘Christian’. The only three places where the term is found they are used by, or in the context of, people outside the circle of the followers of Christ. It was coined by the public in Antioch to refer to them. Possibly it was used then to make fun of them as was in the case of the origin of the word “Methodist”. The followers of Christ described themselves in the New Testament by terms such as “disciples”, “believers”, “saints” and “people of the way”.

**How do we truly know Christ as our Savior and our Lord, and have a living real relationship with him while on earth?** The New Testament gives a number of metaphors or pictures to describe how we can be united with Christ and be in him like the branches on a vine. Our interest in seeing a select number of them is this. Many of us think that being redeemed



by Christ is a life-long process, and we can never be sure whether we got it right. We assume that we gradually get 'saved', and therefore can never have the assurance and joy of salvation and the hope of heaven while on earth.

**We do not become true Christians by life-long efforts of following our religious duties, studying of the Bible, being morally good, and by faithful church practices and pious beliefs.** Of course we do not suddenly become perfect and be like angels. But all of us can have a right start in getting bonded with Christ, know him intimately, and start to live with his life and power in us. But it is only a beginning, and with this right beginning we have to be transformed and grow into maturity.

In all the following pictures we see (let us take note) that **starting our journey with Christ is a definite event and a defining experience. It is the central turning point in life.** This event is real and personal. In all of them we see that the initiative is taken by God. God's expectation from us is that we make a willful response to his invitation to be his own people.

**1. Freed from Slavery:** "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). This reflects the ancient practice of people who were in debts which they could not clear, selling themselves as slaves. So also prisoners of war that were sold into slavery.

Anybody could pay the required money and free a slave. In the same way we are freed from the bondage of sin by the price that Christ paid by his life, which we appropriate in our lives not as a life-long process but at some point in life.

**2. Returning Home:** The story of the 'prodigal son' (Luke 15:11-31) powerfully portrays God as a seeking father. The father is anxious for his runaway son, the younger one, to come back home. So also he is eager that the elder son who has always lived with him get reconciled to him. There is something of both the younger son and the elder son in all of us. So also the other stories in the same chapter of the lost sheep and the lost coin, which picture God as one searching and finding those people who are lost. Getting back to God is an event and not an endless process.

**3. Opening Door for Christ:** "I stand at the door and knock. If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). Christ is pictured as one who stands at the door of our hearts seeking entrance. Only by our opening it Christ can be in us both individually and collectively. We do not let him stand at the door knocking throughout our lives.

*to be continued*

# Dr. Imchaba Bendang Wati

## GRATEFUL TO GOD FOR HIS GIFT TO US

I am very thankful to be asked to write a tribute to Dr I. Ben Wati, one of the greatest servants of the Lord in our generation. He was God's special gift to us in the work of the kingdom of God in northeast India, the whole of the nation and many parts of the world. Globally he was one of the most influential evangelical leaders. Many of us are now what we are because of his mentoring of us primarily through the exemplary life he lived before us and his teaching ministry. He was bold in speaking the truth as taught in the Bible and never made compromises in his convictions.

My close association with Ben was through our work together at Union Biblical Seminary and in the Lausanne Movement, and to a lesser degree in the affairs of EFI Executive, WEF and some other evangelical organizations.

### **Ben's Leadership at Union Biblical Seminary, Yavatmal/Pune**

All through my 15 years of Principalship at UBS, he was the Chairman of the Governing Board. He came to the campus 2-3 times every year, lived in my house a few days each time, and we got to know each other intimately, to my own enrichment. Unlike most chairmen he used to come at least two full days earlier to meetings, visit the homes of just about all the Faculty and Staff to know firsthand their needs and issues. Another thing that gave me much freedom, sense of security and confidence in my administrative work

was something that I initiated, that is, the assessment of my performance by all the teaching and administrative staff and student leaders in a form which I developed and which were directly sent to him every year. Thus there was transparency on the campus and a sense of oneness and unity of our mission. "Speaking the truth in love" was not just a motto we displayed, but by God's grace we tried to live it.

There were challenges like making UBS truly Indian in its curriculum, training methods, in the kind of Faculty we have, and in financing the Seminary. There were dissensions in the Board on issues such as adding post-graduate courses, bringing expatriate staff and Indian staff under the same regulations, and getting affiliated to Serampore 'University'. In all these Ben stood with me.

The greatest challenge was relocating the Seminary and convincing the Board that it was a critical need and also it was feasible. After two years of study and discussion on this in mid-70's, I remember the final voting day. Ben asked me, "Before we vote for Seminary relocation can you promise two things: one, seeing that this year we pass a deficit budget for next year and have no funds, do you promise to raise all the funds needed for relocation? And two, can you promise to stick with this project till we see this through once we start it". But then I said, "Ben, can you promise me one thing that you will

continue to be the Chairman till the relocation work is finished?'. Both of us stood up before about 40 members of the full Board, shook hands and made those mutual promises. Then we voted and got a unanimous vote to relocate UBS to Pune.

In a message Ben sent to UBS at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of relocation he wrote, "Principal Dr. Saphir Athyal became the prime mover of the Himalayan project and the undisputed Hero of Relocation. He prevailed upon the Board that I remain as Chairman till relocation. - - - For years Principal Athyal bore the main brunt in raising the necessary funds. At one time even I as Chairman had to accompany him to USA to convince the supporting Home Boards and prospective donors."

The Seminary moved to Pune on Oct 2, 1983, and immediately I gave in writing to Ben the Chairman my desire to be relieved from being Principal in 1984, the year when my term would expire. But Ben and the Board insisted that I should continue for another 3 years, which I had to do unwillingly. Ben also wanted to quit being the Chairman as the Relocation was completed as he too fulfilled the promise made eight years before then.

Ben's commitment to UBS meant that he took over responsibility as its Principal for a short period during its crisis years: those years he considered as some of the most difficult years he had. One time he invited me for dinner with him at his residence. There he urged me to get back to UBS and to do what I could and should to restore it. But I told him that it would be unwise for me to spend the

few active years left before me trying to do something like that, and that the Lord who planted UBS would take care of his work. Till the very end of his life he used to share with me through emails some of his burden for UBS.

### **Ben's Role in International Christian Organizations**

His contributions to what was then called World Evangelical Fellowship are well-known, his service as a member of its International Council, as its Vice-President for six years and then as its President for another six years. He worked as its Asia Secretary also. Evangelical Fellowship of India of which he was the CEO was one of the most leading ones of all the national fellowships and alliances of WEF. He was also associated with World Vision as I had. The International President Stan Mooneyham one time told me that he considered Ben as one of his most valuable colleagues.

My closest association with Ben at the international level was with the Lausanne Movement. He and I were in the Planning Committee of Lausanne Congress of 1974, and he served for a number of years as a very valuable member of the Lausanne Committee while with his encouragement I worked as its Vice-Chairman. We participated in a number of its major international events. The last time Ben and I were together was in Budapest in June 2007 where Lausanne sponsored a special Forum for the old and new leaders of the Movement. There when we walked to our hotels I carried his bag of which he wrote, "I just wanted to thank you both very much for your fellowship and

companionship, quite concerned about me and even carrying my shoulder bag - the same bag having been carried by Governor SC Jamir and MP Sangtam (of Nagaland)! I felt bad seeing Dr Ralph Winter carrying his own heavy books/papers/laptop limping all the way. May God grant helpers in your old age.”

### **Ben’s Unique Role in Shaping ‘Evangelicalism’ in India.**

None will dispute the fact that no other individual was as influential in the evangelical circles in India as Ben. He was instrumental in establishing a number of evangelical institutions (like UBS, Clark TC, Pine Brook, ETC), service agencies (EFICOR, NEICORD), missions (IEM) and publications (AIM, Pastors’ Bulletin). I served under him as a member of the Executive Committee of EFI, and followed with commitment his leadership and vision in the conduct of various programs in India. I could learn some precious lessons of leadership from him from the way he led EFI and its many activities. He was never a narrow minded fundamentalist. On the other hand he used to be in touch with, and respected by, most leaders of the mainline churches.

### **Ben as a Model Leader**

His passion for Christ’s mission considerably strengthened the cause of God’s kingdom in India and worldwide. I remember him as uncompromising on biblical convictions. He was exceptionally gentle, soft-spoken, and genuinely humble in his ways of dealing with others. He shied away from taking any credits and compliments. When it came to theology, biblical interpretation and Christian principles, he stood up like

an experienced warrior. Towards the end of his life he was doing a 3-volume autobiography starting with *Impur Chanu*. I do hope he could complete the work, and that a summary of these volumes will be made available in English.

Once out of the blue as such, I got an email from him saying, “Greetings from Oxford, UK. The other night I dreamed of you, Saphir, -just the two of us discussing issues as in the past!” This is indicative of the fast friendship we have had for several decades. We used to discuss together matters relating to not only UBS, but also the renewal of the Church in India, the challenges of missions in India, the issues before EFI and the Lausanne Movement, his Ao translation of the Word of God, and also socio-political matters. Often he wrote to me his prayer concerns such as his speaking engagements, travels, UBS and health of Nema and himself.

This descendant of a Naga headhunter surely got my head as well as my heart as one of his many trophies. I considered him as a mentor and a guru. From his many varied experiences and life lived intimately close to our Lord, he could learn and teach us a number of deep lessons of life. We miss this spiritual giant, mentor-guide, and close friend till we meet him again in God’s time. For many of us he continues to be a special enduring model, and we are deeply grateful to God for him and all that he meant to us.

— Saphir Athyal



MAY 2013

“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 WEDNESDAY** Praise God for his guidance last month. Pray that God will enable each one of us to faithfully serve him in the work he has entrusted.

**2 THURSDAY** Praise God for Good Shepherd community church in Tigri, New Delhi. Pray for spiritual enhancement for all the church members and also pray for Joshua David as he is leading the church.

**3 FRIDAY** Pray for all the worship meetings, home bible study groups across the country. Pray that God's name will be exalted.

**4 SATURDAY** Pray for all the believers in Malkangiri, Orrisa who have been constantly under attack since February 2013. Pray for peace and religious tolerance in the area and those who persecute them may turn to Christ.

**5 SUNDAY** Pray for the safety of women and children in New Delhi and other parts of our country. The recent brutality against a five year old child suggests evil's unhindered presence in our society. Lets actively involve in encouraging our neighbours for this cause.

**6 MONDAY** Praise God that the attacks against Christians in Karnataka have become fewer in the two last months. Pray that the Christians in Karnataka will be able to enjoy their full freedom “to practice, propagate and promote the faith in the state.

**7 TUESDAY** Pray for EFI Annual Convention starting today in Pune. Pray that it will be a time of spiritual renewal.

**8 WEDNESDAY** “How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters worship the Lord together in the beauty of His holiness.” Let us pray for Leaders, Pastors, Evangelists and

Gospel workers that God may be glorified through their lives

**9 THURSDAY** Pray for Delhi and other capital cities. That christians here will practice what they preach.

**10 FRIDAY** Internet pornography has become much more virulent and is affecting mental health. Children are becoming addicted in their teens and emotionally damaged, affecting their relationships. Pray for an end to this evil trend.

**11 SATURDAY** Pray for all the Sunday school ministries in our country that it may enable children to grow in the knowledge of God.

**12 SUNDAY** Karnataka is top on the list of places where persecution is taking place against the Church pray that God will give the pastors and the congregation to act and respond with wisdom and understanding when they are attacked.

**13 MONDAY** Pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit on every believer that they may share the Word of God bodily to their neighbours and freinds.

**14 TUESDAY** Nearly every day, Christians in India are discriminated against, beaten, tortured, and even killed for their faith in Jesus Christ. Yet the Gospel continues to be proclaimed. Pray that people will continue to hear, understand and respond to the Gospel.

**15 WEDNESDAY** Pray also for wisdom for Christian leaders at this difficult time, that they may know how to act and what to say and as they seek to persuade the authorities to take firm action to protect the religious freedom of every citizen.

**16 THURSDAY** Pray that we will be Faithful to God, in everything we do. To be obedient according to His will. To believe and hold on to the promises He has for us.

**17 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.

**18 SATURDAY** Madhya Pradesh Chief minister has allotted around 80 crore for the Sajha 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.

**19 SUNDAY** Pray for The Blessings Youth Mission as they work for reviving Churches and for sharing the Gospel in different parts of our country.

**20 MONDAY** Operation World has recorded Mizoram as having the highest number of pastor/evangelists serving the Church. Praise God for Mizoram and that God will continue to bless them and that they will continue to contribute more towards God's Kingdom.

**21 TUESDAY** Praise God for many independent churches which are growing in and around Guwahati, these churches are using CEEFI curriculum for their Sunday school children.

**22 WEDNESDAY** 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 quite 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.

**23 THURSDAY** India's farm growth has worryingly, gone negative by 0.2%, which

means that even as prices rise, income of 52% of all Indians, who depend on agriculture have fallen compared to last year's 1.6% farm gross domestic product. Please pray for this issue.

**24 FRIDAY** Nine people were convicted and sentenced to four years in jail by a trial court on March 16 for their role in the riots in Orissa's Kandhamal district in 2008. More than 25,000 Christians were forced to flee after their houses were attacked by rampaging mobs that held Christians responsible for Saraswati's killing, although the police blamed the Maoists. Please pray for EFI advocacy and lawyers of Christian Legal Association who are engaged in helping the riot victims.

**25 SATURDAY** May the Holy Spirit help us to hear the voice of God as he speaks to us.

**26 SUNDAY** There are more than 7000 churches in North East of India and all these churches will be using CEEFI curriculum. Please pray for these churches and for all the up coming events.

**27 MONDAY** 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 eradicate through efforts of NGOs, who are especially working towards this issue.

**28 TUESDAY** Let us spend some time quietly before the Lord seeking his guidance in all that we do and bring glory to his name

**29 WEDNESDAY** Pray for the Leaders of our Nation that they may rule the country with integrity.

**30 THURSDAY** Praise God for helping us to complete this month successful. Pray that we will continue to remain faithful to his calling.

**31 FRIDAY** Pray for your co-workers that God will bless them and use them effectively for his Glory.



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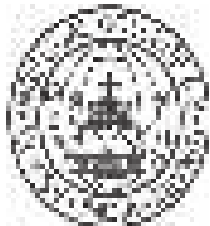
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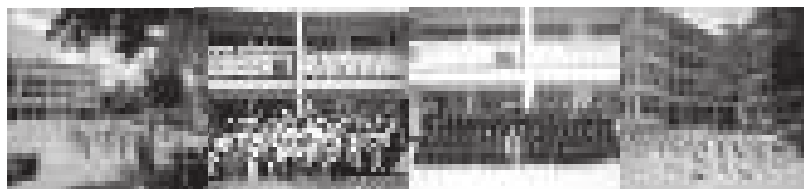
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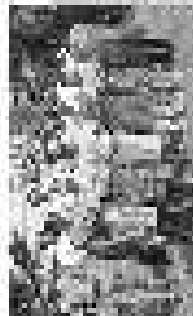
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### Admission

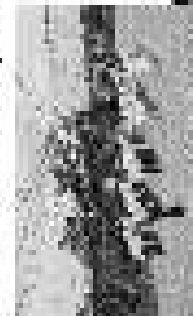
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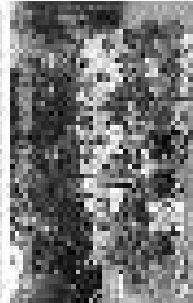
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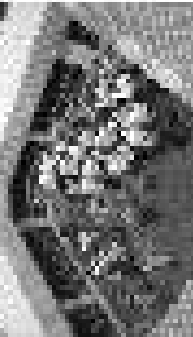
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• Develop a personal  
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• Gain a deeper understanding  
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• Explore the role of the church  
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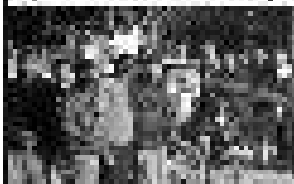


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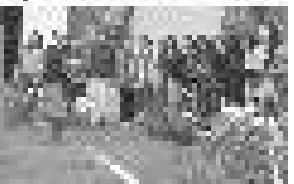


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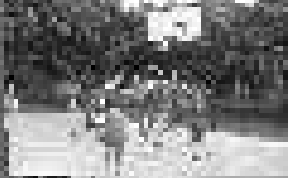
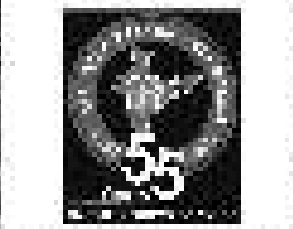
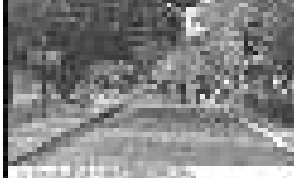
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