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A Journey of Faith





The Evangelical Fellowship of India offers its deepest condolences to the family of Dr. Ravi Zacharias - Margie, his wife of 48-years; his three children; Sarah, the Global CEO of RZIM; Naomi, Director of Wellspring International; Nathan, RZIM's Creative Director for Media; and five grandchildren - and to the staff at the Ravi Zacharias International Ministry. As we celebrate his life so well lived, we see in him a champion of the Christian faith and a defender of the gospel.

Dr. Ravi Zacharias, the founder of Ravi Zacharias International Ministry, died of cancer on May 19, 2020, at the age of 74. And though he has left us, to meet his Lord, his legacy will live on – through his writings, speeches, and the organization he founded.

His first major public speech was when the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association invited him to be a plenary speaker at the inaugural International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists (“Amsterdam ’83”). Here he addressed a gathering of 4,000 other speakers. That became a turning point in his life, and he began to seriously consider the critical need of apologetics to remove the intellectual and existential barriers that had led many to question a rational and scientific basis for Christianity. Hence, in 1984, he founded the Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM).

In 1990 he wrote his first book *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism*. This was followed by many popular works – *Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message*, *Can Man Live Without God*, *The Grand Weaver: How God Shapes Us Through the Events of Our Lives*, *Walking from East to West: God in the Shadows*, *The Lotus and the Cross: Jesus Talks with Buddha*, *The Lamb and the Fuhrer: Jesus Talks with Hitler*, etc.

Though the mantle that Dr. Zacharias carried was no novel an idea, yet he gave a new dimension to the motto that St. Anselm of Canterbury formed – “faith seeking understanding.” His life reminded us of the task that early Christian apologists like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, etc. undertook. While we know less of the persona of these early Christian writers, Ravi's messages – writings, travels, speeches, and debates – have been extensively recorded. Millions have been impacted through his life, his books, his videos, his podcasts, and his personal interactions.

What was endearing about his delivery of a message was the fact that in his effort to engage with philosophy, he was never divorced from the practical. While he poignantly drew a sermon to a close, every bit of the logic and philosophy would make sense to the audience. No wonder, RZIM's Michael Ramsden candidly said of him, “Ravi saw the objections and questions of others not as something to be rebuffed but as a cry of the heart that had to be answered.”

Dr. Zacharias was laid to rest in Georgia on May 21 in a casket built by the prisoners of the Louisiana State Penitentiary, widely known as Angola Prison. He had ministered at the prison many times over the years including 11 months ago in June 2019.

He holds a special place in the hearts of Indian Christians who will forever remain proud of him. Born in Chennai and raised in Delhi as a cricket loving boy, he remained lovingly connected to the land of his birth. He often stated, “Mein Hindi walahoon” (I am a Hindi man). He was a good friend of Evangelical Fellowship of India. We will miss him.

In his obituary to Nabeel Qureshi, Dr. Zacharias had quoted Wadsworth Longfellow. These words ring true for him too, who has now entered an eternal rest, from a tiresome, yet passionate journey:

*Life is real! life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal.
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.*

He is with his Lord, about whom he so passionately talked about. May his legacy live on.

contents

A monthly publication of EFI Publication Trust

Editorial Rev. Vijayesh Lal4	Molech Is Still Around Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy43
Child Labor - Disdaining New Commandment Bishop Dr Joab Lohara7	Fathers who imitate the Son Rev. Dr. David Mende48
Parenting in 21st Century Mr. Hansraj Jain12	Let Us Not Chill When It Comes To Children! Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj52
A Happy Father's Day 2020 Chacko Thomas17	Faith or Fate Ms. Rachel Shristi Jacob55
World Day Against Child Labour Mr. Guithuilung Daimei21	Playing Flute in Beirut Ms. Jessica Joel57
Father - A love letter from God Mrs. Vinita Shaw25	Radical generosity Rev. C B Samuel59
World Day Against Child Labour Mrs. Aashima Samuel30	Torture and the way of Jesus Dr. Shantanu Dutta.....63
Why do we care for God's creation? Mr. Salathiel Nalli.....33	He loves the foreigner residing among you Mr. Jude Simion66
Understanding our Times - The Hidden Crisis - Internal Migration Mr. John Amalraj37	Father's day Mr. Hansraj Jain.....70
	Prayer76

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Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

Covid has not peaked; the threat to children has

The world is reeling from the shock of the COVID-19 epidemic. Even as entire countries are on lockdown, the numbers of the infected continues to grow. This is also true for India. As this is being written, the number of confirmed cases of infection in India has crossed the figure of 1,50,000. We have lost close to 4500 lives to this pandemic which has the world worried.

The major impact of the economic shock due to COVID-19 would be on the poor and the vulnerable. Unfortunately, this also means that children may be one of the worst sufferers of the aftershock.

The impact that COVID-19 and the ill managed lockdowns in India have had on the poor and particularly their young is for the world to see. One cannot forget the image of the exhausted little boy asleep on a suitcase as his mother pulled it across a deserted Agra road on her

way from Punjab to Jhansi. Or the video footage of the girl child limping and crying because of injury but trying to keep up with her family as they made their way from Delhi to Kanpur. A recent heartbreaking twitter video from @azizkavish, a journalist with the Amar Ujala newspaper, shows a child at the Muzzafarpur railway station in Bihar, trying to wake up his mother by playing with her, not knowing that she has already passed away.

The story of the 13-year-old Jyoti Kumari who cycled with her injured father as the pillion rider for more than 1100 kilometers, from Gurugram to Darbhanga in Bihar, did capture national attention and resulted in some token praise from politicians and mainly photo ops , but any concrete action to address the problems faced by such children during this pandemic remains to be seen.

The real crisis may be in the making as the poverty resulting from this pandemic may push tens of thousands of vulnerable children into child labour. According to the International Labour Organization, “Already, there are an estimated 152 million children in child labour, 72 million of which are in hazardous work. These children are now at even greater risk of facing circumstances that are even more difficult and working longer hours.” For children who may be orphaned by this pandemic to those who would be forced to drop out of school, to those whose guardians may hand them over to traffickers who often lure with smooth talk about opportunities of education or work, the number of child labourers could multiply.

A full 90% of India's workforce is part of the informal sector. According to figures released by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's (CMIE), the urban unemployment rate has already escalated to 30.9 % because of the impact of this pandemic. The same figure was 8.21% in March 2015. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), as many as 400 million Indians, including migrant workers and daily wage earners, are at risk of being pushed deeper into poverty because of the covid-19 pandemic.

All the above can spell doom for the future of the children whose parents when impacted by the harsh

conditions and not having enough reserves or support from the government, may be forced to push their children to work for survival.

Even though India has seen a decrease in child labour in the last two decades, there are still an estimated 1,26,66,377 child labourers in the country. Uttar Pradesh is the state where maximum number of child labourers are found i.e. 19,27,997 or almost 20% of all child labourers in India. The other states where the problem of child labour is rampant are Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

This, in a country that has laws that aims to protect children below 14 years of age from child labour. The Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act was passed in 1986 and was amended in 2016. The amendment was criticized by experts in the field who felt that the child labour act was being diluted. The employment of children below the age of 14 in factories, mines, and other hazardous employment is prohibited under Article 24 of our Constitution and free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 is promised by Articles 21A and 45. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) was passed in 2009.

And despite these laws, it is disappointing that the violators of these laws often go scot-free.

According to a written reply by the Indian government in February 2019 in the Parliament of India, only 10,826 cases of violation of the Child Labour Act were reported across the country in the preceding four years. Of these, only 56 % cases (6,032) went to the stage of prosecution and only 25 % ended up convicting violators.

One must be careful how to define child labour. Normally, it refers to any activity that can harm children and is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous or interferes with their education by depriving them of the opportunity to attend an educational institution or requires them to combine their education with excessively long and heavy work.

As a result of the lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some newspapers have reported a “reverse trafficking” of child labour in India. As buses and trains have resumed operations but factories remain closed, “traffickers are returning hundreds of children, who they had earlier trafficked to be used as child labour in sweet shops, back to their villages,”

At least 58 children were caught from Madhubani, Bihar and parts of Rajasthan, with fake Aadhaar cards, by authorities and activists. Interestingly, not a single trafficker was arrested. Tragically, none of these rescued children will be eligible for government

compensation, as they will not fulfill the technical definition of being bonded labourers. As per the definition only children rescued from their workplaces are entitled to receive state compensation. Unfortunately, once the industries start again, the traffickers would take these children back to the same condition that they were in.

What would the Church do to address such an enormous issue in the post COVID-19 scenario? This is a question that must trouble us and move us to prayer and action. God has called us to, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”(Proverbs 31:8-9).

While the Church has been intervening to address this issue through many initiatives, it is time that the worldwide Church including the Church in India joins hands in a global effort to eliminate the root causes of child labour and slavery, poverty being the chief cause.

The Church must use her voice to give inputs into policy especially in the fields of education and labour laws so that the future of the children may be protected, and justice and equality would be facilitated. This would be a good goal to strive for in a post COVID-19 world.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal



Child Labor Disdaining New Commandment

Bishop Dr. Joab Lohara

While visiting the mighty pyramids of Giza near Cairo, Egypt a few years ago, I asked my friendly guide if there was any evidence in Egyptian history about the Hebrew slaves building these pyramids in the days of Pharaoh.

He paused and shrugged off a response.

The guide was wise in avoiding conflict. No sensible person would be interested in digging into a reproachable past to his own chagrin.

It would be the same case with child labor. Since the Government Act against Child Labor is in force, no employer would ever reveal his indulgence in the act of enslaving children.

But the International Labor

Organization states in its World Report on Child Labor (2013), that there are 265 million children in the world under the age of 18 – some as young as 5 – who work as laborers because the survival of their family depends on it. Of these children, 126 million are involved in works that are dangerous to their safety and health.

In our country, Campaign against Child Labor (CAC) study reveals a record number of 12,666,377 child laborers. Most of these children work in textile factories, Dhabas (wayside restaurants), hotels, or as domestic workers. Conditions at some workplaces, such as firecracker and matchstick factories, are quite hazardous.

Many a society working for the welfare of children has difficulty differentiating between a child at

work and a child laborer. According to UNICEF, children around the world are routinely engaged in paid and unpaid forms of work that are not harmful to them. However, they are classified as child laborers when they are either too young to work or are involved in hazardous activities that may compromise their physical, mental, social, or educational development.

Most of the child laborers work full-time. The worst form of child labor includes slavery, prostitution, bonded labor, drug trafficking, child trafficking, and recruitment for armed conflict.

According to the Child Abuse Publication of the Government of India (2007), two-thirds of the child laborers have been the victims of physical abuse. About 50% of them have faced sexual abuse and are broken emotionally.

Some sections of the society have dealt with children in cruelty and meted out ill-treatment in a downright uncouth manner. But the nation has not been a mute spectator. In addition to the constitutional prohibition of hazardous child labor, various laws such as the Juvenile Justice (care and protection) of children Act-2000 and the Child Labor (prohibition and abolition)

Act-1986 have been enacted to provide a basis to identify, prosecute and stop child labor in our country.

But apparently, the laws alone cannot do the job. The innate nature of man often stands out in disdain of the law to satisfy his own interests. When a man becomes self-oriented, he cares little about the consequences of his own action.

As you may be aware, there are more than one thousand commandments in the Holy Scripture, over and above the Ten Commandments. Man is expected to keep these commandments to be right before God. But he is so fragile that he is totally incapable of meeting the divine standards.

Therefore, Jesus set before us a new commandment which is also known as the Great commandment. He said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). The newness of this command is immeasurably way beyond the old command – "Love your neighbor as yourself." The new commandment directs us to love our neighbor, not as ourselves but as Christ has loved us.

Matthew 22:36 points to the other part of the Great Commandment,

“You should love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

Jesus further said, on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. In other words, if we kept these two commandments, it would equate the fulfillment of all of God's law.

Human civilization has passed through radical changes in most parts of the world. If the civilization of man is founded on these two principal elements – LOVE GOD, LOVE ONE ANOTHER – there would be no human slavery, the least the slavery of children.

Man would realize that his fellow man is created in the same image of God in which he himself is created. He would cultivate human dignity and refrain from abusing them. He would esteem others equal with him. He would not withhold his blessings from others and would not hesitate to identify with fellow humans who are less fortunate.

It is disheartening that even Christian citizens are not free from the guilt of enslaving children. It is time to look around and see who is helping in our homes, in our offices or factories at the cost of their childhood, education, and dignity.

As Nelson Mandela once said, “There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

I remember working among street children in the city of Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh in the 80s. I would visit the railway station at night and find hundreds of them sleeping anywhere they could lay their heads on: parking lots, platforms, staircases, tunnels, etc.

Early in the morning, I would go and buy them breakfast. They would receive those food supplies like hungry wolves.

I have talked with them about their daily routine, their food, their education, and their difficulties in life. Sometimes, they would get angry with their parents; they would resent being bullied by hooligans. But I have never seen any child that I have talked to who felt sorry for leaving home. Alas! Streets have become better homes for them than their own homes.

Their deepest inner bruises have taught them some finer elements of life in a strange way though – Never cry for a person who hurts you; just leave them behind, thanking them for giving you a chance to find someone better than them. In this

case, a street under the open sky, safer homes for millions of children.

On one of my visits to Kathmandu, Nepal a few years back, I found a group of street children rummaging through foul and toxic trash.

Their clothes were dirty and torn. They had no warm clothes in that bone-biting cold season. I visited their street home every day for a week and bought them food and clothes and woolen blankets. They cheered up every time they saw me go up with packets of food. I have engaged in discovering their tales of woe. Their sorrows cannot be easily measured. The context of them choosing streets for mostly everybody is a broken home, poverty, or abuse.

Some children have been pushed out of home because another man that married their mother would not allow them to be nurtured in his home.

What a tragic diversion from the Great Commandment of Christ!

I am afraid, the sin of banishing stepchildren is committed by Christian parents as well. Everything from another culture is not adoptable but loving and caring for stepchildren is something that fills my heart with admiration every

time I travel in the West and witness it in Christian homes. Not only stepchildren, but these families have adopted some other children with full legal coverage.

I know of a friend in the state of Illinois, USA who adopted a girl from Bhubaneswar, Odisha. She went to the USA at the age of 6. She has now graduated from senior high school, a beautiful teenage girl, loved and cared for by the McFarlanes in the same way their other children are nurtured. I happened to meet with this young girl, Lily, last July. She has forgotten her mother tongue, Odia, but her American English is perfect and sweet to hear.

What a beautiful reflection of the new commandment – Love your neighbor as I have loved you! If only 12 million people of the 1.3 billion people in our country take this commandment seriously, there will be no child labor. The throwaway, destitute little ones will find a better world – free from slavery and child abuse – to live in.

As the Psalmist says, “The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty” (Ps.74:20). The adverse conditions wherein children are put to labor damage their development—physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and

spiritual—and deny them of their most fundamental human rights.

They are abused, despised, and deprived of once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: just to be kids. As Theodor Seuss Geisel says, “A person is a person, no matter how small.” We must show them love, respect, and dignity as Christ has demonstrated.

As followers of Christ, we must not ignore the injustice of child labor or remain apathetic.

Children are a reward to the parents and a heritage from the Lord, sang the Psalmist joyfully (Ps 127:3). A heritage is not to be dumped into the trash. A reward is not to be discarded on the streets. They are precious!

If our family values are founded on

the firm base of “Love God, Love your neighbor”, the hurting children would find rest in the comfort of our homes. Neighbor-loving society would make provisions for child laborers to grow in love and safety at a time when they need it most – The Childhood.



Dr Joab Lohara
is a Bishop in the Free Methodist Church of India and currently serving as International President of Free Methodist World Council.

*"For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."*

Psalm 139:13-14

Parenting in 21st Century:



Mr. Hansraj Jain

Not, too long ago, when a crisis hit a friend, he went through the dumps. "I am a hypocrite and a liar. I have been anything but a good father to my children. I have failed my God*", he pronounced judgment on himself. (*Josh.24:15b)

His son went through a divorce. My friend's experience is not uncommon among us, especially those of us who make our home in the urban world. The world around us (globally), like a pandemic, is filled with broken lives and especially with devastated and broken Dads and husbands. This is not to say that women are exempt from this experience. However, in this article, we keep our focus on men.

Gerhard van Eck writing on "Dads

in the 21st Century" says, "The last hundred years have been especially tough on manhood in general, and fatherhood in specific. Men are not men anymore, and fathers are definitely not in the space they need to be with regards to the family. Apart from not knowing how to be dads, they have also largely abdicated their responsibilities as men and fathers."

How did we, men, come to this?

**E P H E S I A N S 6 : 4 c f .
D E U T E R O N O M Y 4 : 1-4; C h p : 6 .**

Well, we believe that Paul's instruction to the fathers provides us with a glimmer of light. Paul, exhorting men said, "Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them... [Instead], "take

them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master", (Eph.6:4 - The Message).

The New International Version of the Bible reads: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord".(Eph.6:4).

PARENTING PER SE!

Parenting children is the most significant human experience. This is one relationship that demands of the parents their very best, and more. Sacrifice, perhaps, is the word that describes it well.

Paul's instructions in Ephesians 6:4 is precise. It is to the fathers. They are instructed not to exasperate their children.

TWO PERSPECTIVES:

There are two ways to respond to this. The 'traditionally', and contextually, it would be appropriate to read Moses' instructions to the Fathers in Deuteronomy 4:1-4 and the entire sixth chapter alongside Paul's teaching in Ephesians. Paul rightly reminds of the importance of being Father to our children. Gerhard van Eck, as quoted above, reminds us that the fathers in the 21st Century seem to have abdicated that

responsibility to the mothers, caretakers, relatives, and grandparents. They are too busy making a living - a comfortable life which will give them recognition, prestige, honour, power, privileges, and influence. Perhaps, they hope that contentment would follow, naturally. Nothing could be further from the truth and realities of life. But then the 21st Century is nothing but chasing after our mirages!

While Paul's instruction has hit the nail on its head, there is a converse side to this teaching. That is to ask this question: "Do the kids not exasperate their fathers (and mothers)?"

Viewing it from our 21st Century perspective, one wonders if Paul's suggestion would align with modern Freudian thoughts.

Modern psychology built on Freud's thoughts promotes human behaviour theory that speaks of non-directive parenting. Unfortunately, it totally negates Biblical perspective in discipline and corrective steps. It calls Biblical view as being primitive and archaic art of parenting.

So, what gets children's hackles up with their parents that they feel exasperated by their parents?

DEFINING THE TERM:

It is appropriate at this point that we look at this term "exasperate" for it means. 'Exasperate' is a mid 16th century: from Latin 'exasperat'- 'irritated to anger'.

The term 'exasperate' implies: to annoy, provoke, irritate, or to cause an increase in the intensity of violence to ones' feelings.

Modern psychological thought would analyse behaviour born of exasperation as being non-aligned to behavioural-sciences and methods as being directive, stifling, controlling, and power-playing. They would have parents know that today children are exposed to the modern, scientific and secular, (read as Freudian human behaviour norm), thinking and living.

These modernist would reason and say that modern children need to be handled in a contemporary way. The parents, by-and-large, need to unlearn in order not to exasperate their children.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN REALITY FOR PARENTING?

Instead, they ought to be more freedom driven encouragement, non-directive, independent choice

and decision-making process by the children. Never say 'no' to your child. Do not correct a child by telling him that he is wrong. Mistakes are great teachers and trainers. If you feel that they are about to do something wrong, let them learn by experience. Withhold or withdraw from giving advice to your child. Instead, encourage and leave the child to decide for self and learn from experience.

All negative communication is seen as restrictive, suffocating and smothering of the spirit of adventure, and experience. Directive form of teaching a child is considered as a no-go form of child-rearing. Such a format, even if done by a teacher, is interpreted as controlling, stifling the child's growth in their thinking, learning and creative abilities. Experience is considered as the most potent form of education and healthy growth and the best way of parenting our children.

The target group are the Christian parents in particular. The Christian parents are being challenged with the need to learn to assimilate our information base in line with the modern behavioural pattern constructed on the science of psychology. This pattern applies to work-place, marriage, friendships, communities, and of course, in

parenting our children. Biblical information needs to be dispensed with as being archaic and non-relevant today.

Examining the tone of the instruction that Paul gives the Fathers, it appears that the atmosphere is one of conflict between the Father and the children. There is nothing new here that would make us frown. However, if we read Paul aright, then it appears to highlight that it is the Children who are the source of this aggravated parental behaviour. The children, by default, then become its recipients too.

The Fathers are exasperated by the children. As a result, it appears that the Father's response is one of a driven father to his unwarranted aggressive behaviour, offending, violent, and perhaps abusive angry outburst and adult's intrusion into the lives of their children.

Here, we need to stop and consider if we need to ask one's self (and be ruthlessly honest with self), this question: "what cause has brought about a breakdown of communication between Fathers and children? Why has this been allowed to result in aggravating the situation and turning it into a conflict? Could the two parties (Fathers and their children) have resolved the issue at

stake without turning it into a feud, if not a mini-war between them?

There are several common aspects involved when conflicts take place between parents and children. Some of these include expectations, presumptions & assumptions, poor communication of precise instructions, distrust, domineering and controlling or indulging and poor listening abilities on the part of both the parties involved. In our case, the two parties are the parents and their children.

As for children, they need to discover that manipulating the trust, generosity, and indulgence of their parents is no license to that would ever justify their rebellion and wilful defying the limit of the boundary set by mutual consent. The children also need to know that they cannot be inconsistent in keeping to their promises, thus repeatedly testing the limits of the parental patience, demand their trust without expecting consequences when they indulge in such antics.

As it so often happens, fathers often display aggression and intimidating behaviour when they feel threatened or challenged. The atmosphere becomes alarming and disquieting because they go into a rage driven by their hearsay, ego and face-saving

mode, presumption, assumption plus their feeling to reassert their authority and leadership.

Unfortunately, children's behaviour is no better either. They choose to respond to their parents with anger and rejection thus making themselves incommunicado!

It is a tragedy that rejection, putting down and belittling by both the parents and children against each other, continues to line up the stream that flows out in torrent out of their open gutter like mouth.

Speaking to Fathers, Paul is basically saying, "please, fathers, do not act from those emotions which are a product of presumptions, inconsiderate, opinionated, stubborn, or plain dictatorial, biased perspective, unverified accusations. They only help drive children away from home and especially from you, Fathers."

That's why, we so often hear the children feel exasperated when they tell us saying, "My, Father (and mother), they just do not understand me, or want to understand me or will ever stand me."

A QUERY: RELEVANCE?

Is the above a reality today and does

the above correctly describe why today our children are living double-lives – one before their parents and another when among their friends? Whatever be our answer, it would make Paul's directives to Fathers meaningless if not downright lopsided, if we did not spend some quality time studying God's word, modern reality in which we are growing our children and together building a healthy, strong, and godly home where Jesus is Lord of every life by choice.

As for the passages given above, we have not done justice. For true justice to Pauline instruction to Fathers in Ephesian 6:4, we need to dig deeper with an open mind, prayerful spirit and a teachable heart that prays, FATHER GOD, MAKE ME MORE LIKE YOUR SON, JESUS. PLEASE.



Mr. Hansraj Jain
*is the Managing Director of
Inheritors, Nagpur*



Chacko Thomas

A Bible verse that needs to be widely circulated throughout India (second only to John 3:16 for me) is Matthew 7:7. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

How I wish someone had told me that “being a father is a tall order, ask your heavenly Father for guidance and help.” Although I prayed fervently for my children, I never prayed for myself as a father. I struggled a lot on the inside. Let us admit it, we need help, we need it from God, from our respective wives, from our children, and from friends. And how we need to be continuing students of “fatherology” all our lives.

Mothers, teach your children to honour their Father. Some years ago, I was in Kathmandu for a season of ministry. At the end of the visit,

my hosts, a young American family, and I went out for a meal. In the car, their four-year-old son quickly jumped into the front seat. But the father said to him, “Sit in the back seat”. I interrupted the conversation by saying, “That is OK, let him sit in the front, I can sit in the back.” But the mother said to me, “No, Chacko, he has to obey his father.” Then, she told the son to sit on the back seat. He climbed down, without any drama, and went to the back.

Of course, fathers must also return the favour and teach the children to obey their mother (Exodus 20:12). Children are not to be used to settle scores between a husband and his wife. It is healthy for children to watch their father respect their mother. “Respect” is one word that summarises all the Ten Commandments. This makes for a God-fearing family.

Fathers, God is our model. "Father" is God's favourite designation for Himself. It is a little embarrassing for us, failing fathers. Please look up the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7) to see how many times the term "Father" comes up. I was surprised. I was even more surprised to see how the Lord referred to God as "Father" in one evening. (John: 13-17.) An astonishing 67 times in both sections. A mess age that the Lord does not want us to miss is that "God is a Father." Knowing God as our Father must be the first step in becoming a good father.

Fathers, God has not left us alone to our devices. Just as trees are planted in soil and depend on it or as fish are created to live in water, so God has created human beings to live in Him and depend on Him. "In Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28). We are dependent on him, not only for our life but also for our responsibilities. Pray about everything.

Remember the first leadership "course" I was given when I was asked to lead an OM team, way back 1968. I had no idea that I would be ever be asked to lead. George Miley, the Leader for the area covering UP, Bihar (including Jharkhand), Bengal and Orissa, told me that "... I want you to lead a team." When I protested, he said. "Just stay close to God, so that He

can tell you what to do and you can cry out to him with your needs." I never had a better leadership course than that.

Why not ask, seek, knock for God's help in the role of a father to your children. Is it a matter of providing for our children? Has He not told us to ask Him "for our daily bread"? (Matt. 6:11.) Is it for a supplement you need for some areas you lack as a parent? I needed that. I thank God for a Filipino couple who had no children of their own, who took special interest in my children. We were serving together in South America, on the OM ship Logos. They often took my children and my wife for picnics and sightseeing. God is not only our model, but also our help in being a father. He loves our children.

God gives children to parents. God has appointed us fathers as their pastors. One of our roles is to impart Bible knowledge. See Deuteronomy 6: 4-7. Children are specifically mentioned here (and in many places in the Psalms.) God is interested in the next generations. My wife and I had a practice with our children. It was a short time of prayer in the morning and the evening. My main interest was that they would get to know God and love Him. During the day I would pray and keep my eyes open for an appropriate Bible passage for the next morning's

reading. Usually it was a short reading.

I remember reading Psalm 103 one morning, and my seven-year-old looked interested in that Psalm. So, I read it again the next morning. That day, he walked past the ship's clinic, and saw an American young man coming out of the clinic with his fist all bandaged up. In answer to his enquiry the young man replied, "Sunil, I was so angry, that I hit the ceiling with my fist." Sunil, replied, "I think, what you need is Psalm 103." The young man went to his cabin and read that Psalm, later testified, how the Lord used the Psalm in his life.

Proverbs.22:6 is a proverb, not a promise. Only God knows how our investment in our children would bear fruit. That famous verse about training up a child is no guarantee. I have met more than few grieving parents. Invest though, we must. God expects it of us. Do not leave this pastoral role of our children to our church or Sunday School. Church has its own role. They can, however, build on the foundation we lay in our children.

A Fathers' Day Sunday! I think God would like that. He created the father-to-be first. Adam and Eve were mature human beings capable of ruling (governing, shepherding) when He created them. They were

given the government of the world, which would have included shepherding their family. Would God give a task without being available to help us with it. We can look to him for help with parenting.

The other side of the coin is that, since Adam failed God, and sinned against Him, we must contend with the devil in all our tasks, including the task of a father. It is interesting to note in the Garden of Eden, the devil defied the role of husband. How? He by-passed the husband and went to the wife. He tried to turn their roles around. But God would not have it. When He came down to reclaim them for His own, He went straight to the husband. He re-established his role at home. We can trust the Lord against the enemy. How I wish that I knew this in the 1980s.

Parent- child relationship is important to God. It is more than a social matter; it is a spiritual matter. God even promised to send "Elijah" to turn the heart of the fathers to their children and the heart of the children to their parents (Malachi 4:6, the last verse of the Old Testament). Fathers are specifically told not to exasperate their children (Ephesians 6:4) and children are commanded to honour and their parents (Eph.6:1-3), in the Lord. (there is another side to this coin, they are to love the Lord more than their parents. This is equally

important.) Children, please respect your father, if not for his character, but for his position as your father.

God wants a society made up of mutual respect. I mentioned honour and respect earlier. The Bible commands, "honour all people" (Romans 12:10.) Respect people, as persons made in the image of God. This is important to God. It is not about respect for the person's state according to the Indian society. We are part of a bigger story.

Our Lord Jesus is a good example. He grew up in a society much like ours. But for Him, there was no out caste or untouchable. His society had them all, but he resisted such norms. Touching a leper did not make him unclean, rather it made the unclean, clean. He healed them. May the Lord grant us all grace and blessings.

Fathers, mothers and children, let us trust God for our respective roles in life. Family is God's idea. The 'father' for children is God's idea. It is

also equally the case of mother and children. We need to demonstrate the difference our faith in the God of the Bible would make on our distinctive roles. Let it begin with us fathers. We are weak, but He is strong.



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**"While you have the light,
believe in the light,
that you may become sons of light.'
When Jesus had said these things,
he departed and hid himself from them."**

John 12:36



World Day Against Child Labour

Mr. Guithuilung Daimei

In 2002, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) established June 12 as the World Day Against Child Labour to highlight the crisis of child labour, projecting the need to overcome any form of child exploitation. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is the United Nation's agency whose mandate is to advance social and economic justice through setting international labour standards.

One of the most important aspects of a human being is building our society, and presumably raising children is the most essential key as these children will become our next generation. Developing social skills in children prepares them for a lifetime of healthy interactions. Building and improving social skills is an inherent constituent to improve society. Empathy, expressing genuine concern for other issues, as well as helping to solve them, ability to express effectively with others, respect others, ability to listen and

being considerate are some crucial social skills. "A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous." Psalm 13:22(NIV). I am not delving into this verse theologically, but one thing is very clear, that the verse talked about the future generation. The Bible is concerned about the future generation, and they are children.

God gives us the responsibility to train up children for the future. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." (NKJV). We don't need to limit ourselves to only children of our immediate family, or we might even be completely blank about raising up responsible children; there are many institutions and organizations that cater to need of children deprived of family environment. You can be a part of these groups which will enlarge your contribution in various

ways – skills, encouragement, praying, monetary, volunteering etc.

According to data from the 2011 census, the number of child labourers in India is 10.1 million, (1.1 crore) of which 5.6 million are boys and 4.5 million are girls. A total of 152 million children – 64 million girls and 88 million boys – are estimated to be in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide.

That's a whopping 1.1 Crore children in our own backyard itself being deprived of their childhood, rights to education, proper nutrition and never had chance to develop their social skills. Do we call ourselves Christians and Believers and not concern about these children?

I might disappoint many of us to bring up the fact that helping others is going to involve a lot of inconvenience, difficulties, sacrifices and sometimes even threats. Any organization working for the poor will agree with me; that to help the poor, we request, we beg and we run from pillar to post. I still remember that during the Super cyclone 2009 relief response in Odisha, we had to request and beg the authorities and leaders to allow us to help the affected people. It was my first assignment in social work, and I was thinking “it doesn't make any sense that we have to request and beg so many leaders and authorities in order to extend help, shouldn't

they be welcoming us?” I realized that those who have power control what we need to pass through in our endeavour to serve. Didn't our Master go through the powerhouse of the leaders of his time? “Tell us by what authority you are doing all these things,” they said. “Who gave you this authority?” (Luke 20:2).

Kailash Satyarthi is a Nobel Laureate of 2014 and also a founding member of Bachpan Bachao Andolan, an organization with a vision to end child labour in India. “People asked me whether I've ever felt like giving up on my mission. But I asked them if they would expect me to wait even for a day if my son or daughter was kidnapped, before swinging into action. How can I ignore the pleas of a mother who has asked me to rescue her child?” asks this Nobel Laureate who won the peace prize in 2014.

It is crystal clear that child labour is a huge issue everywhere. We need to be concerned and respond to this problem. Some may think that there are more pressing issues in the church. We need to understand that working against child labour should not be just within the confines of a legalistic framework but should stem from genuine care and concern for the well-being of children. Psalm 127:3 says, “Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him.” The word “heritage” refers to something handed down from the past. God gave us heritage

in the form of children. It doesn't matter if a child is mine (biologically), children are God's given heritage: shouldn't we take care of them?

The term “child labour” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

It refers to work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, and
- Interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

In our country, identifying a child seems to be a confusing task. We should be clear with the legal term “minor” and “child.” Both the terms are almost the same, but the Indian law defines according to the situation and needs:

- Child Labour (Prohibition And Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 Of India 15 June 2017, a complete prohibition has been imposed on employment of child labour (i.e. a person below the age of 14 years) in any establishment whether hazardous or not. A child is permitted to work only to help family, in family enterprise or as child artist

after school hours or during vacations.

- Matrimonial laws such as Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006: It states that a male cannot attain majority until he is 21 years of age and the corresponding age for a female is 18.
- The Motor Transport Workers Act 1961 defines a child as a person who has not completed 14 years of age.
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000, any person below the age of 18 is considered as a child.
- Section 2(d) of The Protection of Children from sexual offences Act, 2012 states that, “child means any person below the age of eighteen years.” This Act simply aims to protect the children from sexual offences and harassment.

So we see that “child”, as we know, seems to take quite a complicated turn. This is just another example that shows how we thrive naturally in the fuzzy world of thoughts, but if we want to achieve something we will have to be precise. Grey areas will have to be replaced with precision. It will be best for us to stick to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which defines a child as an individual who has not attained the age of 18 years.

The underlying cause of “child labour” is poverty. History has

shown us time and again that when we are faced with a life and death situation, we can do unimaginable things, even cannibalism.

“So, we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give up your son so we may eat him,' but she had hidden him,”(2 Kings 6:29). Sometimes, it is easy to blame the poor parents- why do they allow their children to work instead of sending them to school? We need to empathize with them. We also have to recognize that desperate circumstances can lead people to engage in desperate acts—acts that we consider dreadful. In this fight against child labour, there are two pronged approaches – preventing child labour through poverty alleviation & education, and rescuing & rehabilitating those children who already are forced into child labour.

The important point for us is to remember the meaning of “child labour,” and we need to actively engage in helping children to experience their childhood and their development. As we observe World Day Against Child Labour, let us take a step to take care of our inheritance we received from God. We need to look and act beyond family, relatives, community,

religion and region if we want to build a better society, we will have to help those who are struggling.

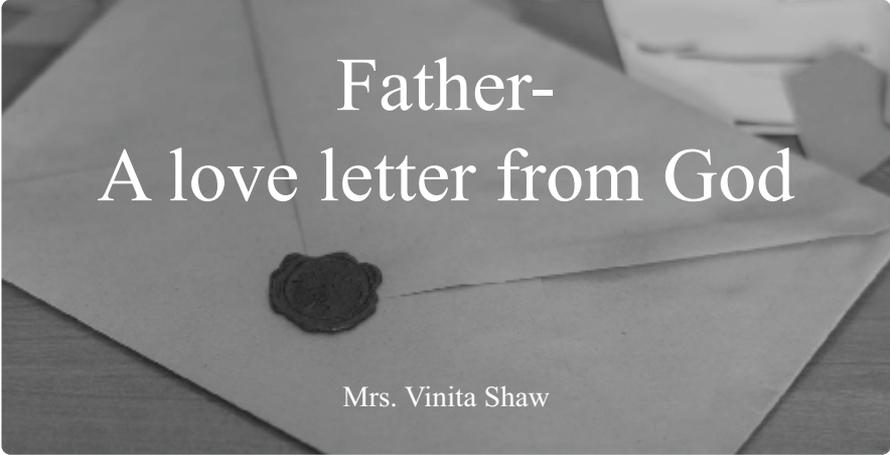
“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (James 1:27)

We should form alliances with secular and other faith groups as long as the objective is for the well-being of children. It is pretty much a choice that is in our hands -- whether we want to preserve our God- given inheritance or not. But collectively we need to do our bit if we choose to preserve it.



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Father- A love letter from God

Mrs. Vinita Shaw

Extended time of quarantine following national lockdown due to COVID-19 has forcibly pushed us into time alone zones, away from the excruciating work schedules, agonizing travelling and demanding socializing. We can actually have uninterrupted family times of talking, cooking and eating together. During these days of extended silence, when the pleasant sounds of birds has been louder than the clamor of traffic and human activity, I have found myself often taking a walk down memory lane.

Each day surprises me with a collage of fresh memories that come forth from the hidings of the crevices of my brain's memory bank; some to make me laugh and others to make me cry.

If something has taken the lion's share of my fun filled happy memories, it is the memories of my

late Father. A teacher turned writer, it is from my father that I have drawn much as I have parented and mentored many young ones over the years.

It is a well-known fact that there are vices and gifts that we inherit from our Fathers while others that we choose to acquire/not acquire as we grow into adulthood and have families of our own.

“The apple does not fall very far from the apple tree” or “Like Father like son” are adages that have come down generations which is why the role of a Father is crucial in raising Godly offspring.

In the world that we live in today, we see/hear of men who coerce abortion on the woman instead of taking responsibility for the unborn, so the child does not know who his/her father is or are wounded because

their fathers abandoned them in childhood. There are other Fathers who are occupied with their personal ambitions or excuse their long absence for providing for the family needs.

Either way, one wonders if they are aware of the exponential damage they are inflicting on an entire generation.

The result is evident in broken people who perpetuate damage on to the next generation, with more and more young folks shying away from life-long marriage to a person of opposite gender and having children.

The tragedy of our times is that the world's culture has entered the Church instead of the Church influencing the world.

Similar absent and irresponsible fathers abound in the Christian ministry world as well; those who hide their personal ambitions behind the garb of ministry. We are losing more and more of our young to the world as we helplessly quote the story of the prodigal son.

Where are we failing is the question, I believe God wants to ask of us as the mandate has been given to the Church in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, pray and seek my face and turn from their

wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will heal their land.

I share below some Bible verses, which I saw my Father live out in his daily life, all through my growing years.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding-Proverbs 3:5

My Father was what those in ministry would refer to as a “secular person”. A professional, he used to write for a leading national daily very well known in his days.

Tall, big built and muscular, he sported a big moustache giving the impression of someone to be feared, yet his heart was tender, and he had a child-like faith in God.

Whether it was losing his mother at the tender age of seven, the partition, the wars, the communal riots, national emergency, cardiac arrests followed by surgery- he had seen it all. In spite of having had his share of disappointments, stumbling blocks and setbacks, he did not allow himself to be drawn away from his steadfast faith in God or allow frustration and bitterness to dampen his smile and love for people. He led us in prayer times, along with our mother.

He took us regularly to Church where we actively participated in Sunday school, youth fellowship,

vacation Bible schools and volunteered at Church just as he did the same.

We saw him smile and laugh often, forever looking for opportunities to lead us into fun times – indoors and outdoors.

Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)

My father's gift of the gab made him a great conversationalist and he could chat over any topic under the sun, thanks to his being very well read. I never saw him boast or show any kind of pride or attitude that he was better than someone else.

From the maid, to the vegetable vendor, to the postman, the neighbours, the young and the old, with a warm happy smile and a wave of hand, he had a good word of say to anyone and everyone, he came across.

My father was far-removed from manipulation, scheming and politicizing. He was a simple, straight-forward person who preferred to mind his own business and take care of his family.

He was there to guide us through every stage of life; never pushing his

personal ambitions on us. Gently but firmly, he would discipline even as he taught us to respect all people and by demonstrations taught us good etiquette.

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers- 1 Peter 3:7

My father was a one-woman man. He remained committed to my mother till he passed away. He loved her and cared for her.

He was our Provider and in a responsible manner, managed the resources along with my mother. They took joint decisions.

Whether it was household chores or teaching us, never did I see him shy away from household responsibilities. Whether it came to feeding, bathing, teaching us—he was doing it all equally.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

Our Father treasured us; his three daughters. He demonstrated gender equality.

He gave us who listic life skills – He taught us himself, very patiently and

cultivated our love for English language and honed our God-given gifts into skills.

During summer vacations, he would send away the maid so we would be trained in all household work (so we would learn to clean, mop, wash, fetch groceries, vegetables, cook, budget, pay bills and do bank work).

In those days of no television, his story telling skills kept us entertained while they also taught us lessons for life. Early in life, he began to teach us Christian ethics which included being faithful, just, kind, trustworthy, hardworking and honest.

My paternal grandfather lived with us, till he passed away and my maternal grandmother often came for long durations to live with us which is how we learnt to love, honor and take care of our elders.

Our extended families and friends were often in our homes for meals and spending holidays, which gave us strong teaching of family bondings, and Christian hospitality.

Our father also taught us to keep short accounts- to forgive and move on. One day we would see him getting upset, and the next day, it would be forgiven and forgotten like an innocent child. We never heard/saw him bearing a grudge

against a person, even those who willfully wronged him.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.- 1 Peter 5:8

Our father was always alert and watchful. A keen observer, he understood human nature very well.

Be it the young boys who came loitering around our house, keeping an eye open for a glimpse of us or be a nosey neighbor or a church member who would come to visit each time Father was not home- he was alert and ensured that we were well protected and guarded.

My father believed that friends have a great influence on children, which is why he ensured that we invited our friends to our home so our parents could meet them.

He taught us how deceptive people can be, borrowing from tales from his own childhood.

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.—Ephesians 6:4)

Encouragement is oxygen to the soul and the antonym of exasperating our children as fathers usually have the habit of doing. In our family prayer,

he would often say, “Thank you Lord for giving us good children.”

I believe that prayer went a long way in encouraging us on Godly path.

It was when my Father almost died and God did a miracle and extended his life by nine years, that we all encountered Jesus at a deeply personal level.

I realized how much my father has role modelled God the Father by always being there for us, providing for loving us through all the stages of life, protecting, disciplining, guiding and totally dependable and trustworthy.

Yet, my father never preached a single sermon. He was God's love letter to his family which we read each day.

Such is the legacy, my father left behind that not a day passes, when I do not find myself quoting him to some child or a young struggling parent.

At this age that I am today, I know he must not have been the perfect man that he seems to me. He must have had his failures and shortcomings which I am not aware of. What matters is the wonderful memories etched in my mind and the rare legacy, he left behind.

It's with a purpose that God arrested us in our homes with our families during this time of COVID-19. Fathers, take a long hard look at your handiwork which is visible in your children and while there is time, make amends. Do not lose heart.

There is always room for introspection and repentance.

It's not always the prodigal to be blamed.

Sometimes, it could also be the Father's absence that turned the child into a prodigal.

It is time to consider what legacy one is leaving behind.

I pray your children's memories of you would be as happy as my memories of my Father are, and may they continue to guide your children long after you are gone.



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Every year on June 12, the World Day Against Child Labor is observed to raise awareness of the plight of child laborers world-wide. Hundreds of millions of girls and boys around the world are affected. What is Child Labour? Child labour is an exploitation of children through any form of work that deprives them their childhood and affects their mental, physical and social needs and performances. Children are

forced to work under the threat of violence or death.

States with highest number of bonded labourers rescued from till 2019 are given below:

Many of them were children. Children who are expected to attend educational institutions are forced to work in hazardous sectors and many are abused as a commodity (child trafficking).

State	No. of bonded labourers identified and released	No. of bonded labourers rehabilitated
Karnataka	66,281	60,029
Tamil Nadu	65,573	65,573
Odisha	51,441	48,313
Uttar Pradesh	42,279	42,279
Andhra Pradesh	38,141	31,687

Child labour and exploitation are the result of many factors, including poverty, social norms condoning them, lack of decent work opportunities for adults and adolescents, migration and emergencies. One of the emergencies are the times we are living in today. These factors are not only the cause but also a consequence of social inequities reinforced by discrimination. Child trafficking is also linked to child labour and it always results in child abuse. Trafficked children face all forms of abuse-physical, mental, sexual and emotional. Trafficked children are subjected to prostitution, forced into marriage or illegally adopted; they provide cheap or unpaid labour, are forced to work as house servants or beggars. Trafficking exposes children to violence, sexual abuse and HIV infection.

2020 has been a year of challenges and emergencies. COVID 19 has sprouted more problems for people living both in rural and urban settings. The lockdown 4.0 has put a hold on the economic growth. As now, 80-130 million people go back to villages and reverse migration happening that have little resources and in any absence of any form of social security being available for them, we will very

soon, see exploitation of lives as traffickers. Getting cheap labour is expected to push-up the growth of the country without providing enough services to these people. The trafficker will be waiting to exploit the situation and the most affected will be the children who will stand to be abused and exploited even more, and will be sold for cheap labour as the demand of cheap workforce will increase and the voices of the weak and powerless mostly in the rural area will be squashed.

We as a church, can contribute and stand together to free the country of India from child labour. We do not have the law in our hands but what is important is to be able to identify and have the courage to report such a crime.

1. Let us begin with ourselves: Let's accept that the people who employ children at their homes or places of work in the name of giving them an opportunity to earn a living and sustain themselves need to be outed. They benefit greatly from the children they look upon as nothing more than cheap labour.
2. We need to educate ourselves on law.
3. Use the fear of retribution for good : Bringing awareness on the penalties laid down by law, for the

protection of children, has a better chance of keeping people from destroying childhoods.

4. Be vigilant and report abuse: Be aware of any kind of child abuse or exploitation happening around you. REPORT!! One can approach NGO's and call up on helpline numbers listed out.

5. Keep interacting within the church and communities: Keep learning and spread awareness.

Your prayers count.



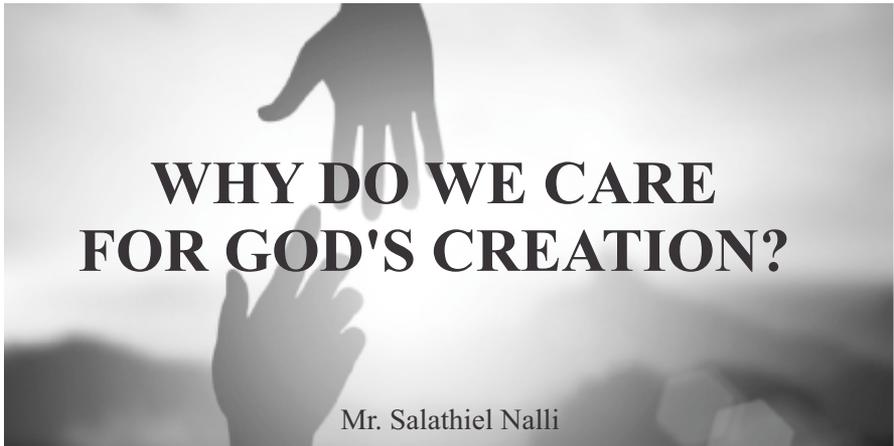
Aashima Samuel
National Director
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WHY DO WE CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION?

Mr. Salathiel Nalli

The World Environment Day is being celebrated around the world every year on 5th of June. This year the environment day will be unique, as the earth started showing signs of healing, while mankind was locked inside their homes due to the scare of coronavirus. In this context, as global environmental debate gets hotter, its important for the Church to understand why Christians need to care about these issues.

'Environment' or 'Eco-friendly' are the favorite words for everybody-Christians and non-Christians, rich and poor, student and an executive. For many, environment means- no plastics, water saving, switching off lights, no littering, organic food, tree plantation and many more. For scientists, it is about climate change, ozone hole and raising sea levels. What is it for Christians?

Of course, 'Environment' encompasses all these- animals, birds, trees, oceans, mountains and atmosphere- which are passionately

created by God. Hence, instead of environmental protection, we lovingly call it as 'Creation Care'.

Why is the world worried about?

With the ever-increasing per capita consumption rates, the earth's resources are depleting faster than ever. Keeping in view of the current consumption rates, it was estimated that the earth has capacity to feed 10 billion people only. In just 35 years from now, the world population is estimated to touch 10 billion, pushing its inhabitants to fight for survival. Indiscriminate use of earth's resources significantly degrades the environment, leading to various ecological issues.

Though we exactly don't know how many species exist, it is estimated that every day, up to 150 species are becoming extinct due to severe changes in the earth's ecosystems. In the next 20-30 years, 34,000 plant, 5,200 animal, 1/8th of bird species will become extinct.

On the other side, we have already destroyed half of our forests, and continuing to do so at the rate of 7.3 million hectares per year. Desertification and land degradation are threatening nearly one-quarter of the land surface of the globe. Over 250 million people are directly affected by desertification, and one billion people are at risk.

Not only the land, we are destroying our oceans also. Around 9 million tons of plastic enters oceans every year, meaning one garbage truck each minute. This plastic waste takes thousands of years to degrade, causing severe harm to many aquatic creatures.

Indiscriminate release of pollution into air through motor vehicles, burning, industries, coal firing is causing severe air pollution across the world. Nine out of ten people in the world are living in areas with high levels of air pollution, which is responsible for the deaths of 7 million people.

Due to the release of harmful gases into the atmosphere, earth is becoming hotter day by day. It is estimated that the earth is hotter by around 1 degree Celsius compared to pre-industrial era and would be 3 degree hotter by the end of the century. This increase of temperature results in around 2 mm of sea level raise per year, making low lying areas to gradually submerge. An estimated 2 billion people may become displaced from their homes by 2100 due to climate-driven sea level raise. That amounts to roughly one-

fifth of the world's population.

The global warming is changing in climate, which is responsible for increasing the frequency and magnitude of natural disasters, erratic monsoons, cyclones, floods, affecting millions of people. As we are not protecting our planet adequately, we need to reap the negative consequences of the same.

God saw it was 'Good'

Creation story is repeated with the word 'good' five times and summarized with the word 'Very Good' (Gen 1). Everything which God created- the animals, plants, birds, mountains, seas, rivers- and the profound relationship between them is, very good. What God sees as good, mankind who are made in God's likeness, would also see it as good.

God is neither part of creation, nor equal to the creation. He is the creator who toiled and meticulously constructed, beautifully designed, with so much of fervor and love. Scientists keep discovering how ecosystem works in a fascinating way, and how living and nonliving beings of the universe are delightfully interrelated to each other.

However, this good creation suffers due to the mismanagement of its caretaker- mankind. It is currently groaning with pains and is waiting for its redemption along with the mankind (Rom 8:19-21)

Creation Care is God's Command:

Many people in the world are involved

in the conservation and protection of environment. Some of them are passionate advocates, and sincerely demonstrate environmental principles through their firm lifestyles. As Christians, do we also need to spend our precious time on this?

Creation is very important for God, as we see that the Bible itself begins with an account of creation. Though God is separate from creation, he is deeply involved in it.

Mankind is part of creation, but they are unique and special creation of God, who are made in God's Image and Likeness. Along with the special status, mankind got a special responsibility to care for God's Creation (Gen 2:15). Mankind is not equal to God but possess his character of Love and responsibility towards creation (Ps 8:4-8). They alone are created in the Image of God, and they alone are given the authority to rule over the creation.

Creation Care and Eschatology:

Many missiologists who are not convinced about God's call to creation care point out that the earth is going to burn away (2 Peter 3:7,10), hence question the need for creation care.

Yes, God is going to make everything new (Rev 21:5), new earth, new heaven, new Jerusalem (Rev 21:1,2), even glorified human bodies (Phil 3:21). However, that doesn't nullify the present responsibility towards self, our family, our society and the creation. The uniqueness of Christianity is that we have the

knowledge of the past, responsibility for the present, and hope for the future.

The three ecological world views

Most of the environmental negotiations at the global level are centered around economic and social impact on human beings. For example, the annual economic cost due to global environmental damage is estimated at \$6.6 trillion. This world view called 'Anthropocentrism' considers mankind as the supreme being in the universe, while the whole creation is designed to be used exclusively by humans, and to serve the needs of humanity. The people who believe this view are encouraged to care for the environment, because it is beneficial for us, for our lifestyles, our livelihoods and for our children.

From a moral dimension, anthropocentrism explains that, any harm to the environment can cause severe damage to the communities, especially the poor and the marginalized. Hence, for the welfare of the mankind, especially the poor, this planet needs to be cared for.

As opposed to the above, 'Ecocentrism' considers the whole nature, including living and non-living organisms and human beings, all carrying equal importance. They believe that there is no special significance of humankind, as they have also evolved along with nature. Every living and non-living beings have some intrinsic value in the ecosystem, hence, the whole of the ecosystem gains prominence over individual entities.

Stemming out of 'pantheism', with an influence of science-based culture, this view encourages to care for creation from an ethical point of view. In case of a clash between humans and ecosystem, preserving ecosystem gains prominence. Human needs, like the needs of other creatures are secondary to the needs of the earth. For example, building a dam across the river for agricultural purpose is not ethical, as it disturbs the ecosystem of the river.

As against the anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, 'Theocentrism' stems from the biblical thought, putting God as the central aspect of the whole creation, including mankind. All Creation, including the mankind exist for Him (Col 1:16,17).

Mankind should look after the creation, not because its beneficial for them, not because its ethical, but because God wants them to do so. God wants the mankind to utilize earth's resources in a loving and caring way. For example, we conserve water, not because we will run out of water in the future, but because it is the resource God has given to us to utilize it judiciously for our basic needs.

Conclusion:

God created this universe and proclaimed that the Creation is very good. He specially created mankind in

His Image and His likeness, and entrusted the creation to his care. However, mankind is misusing God given responsibility, and damaging the creation for his greed.

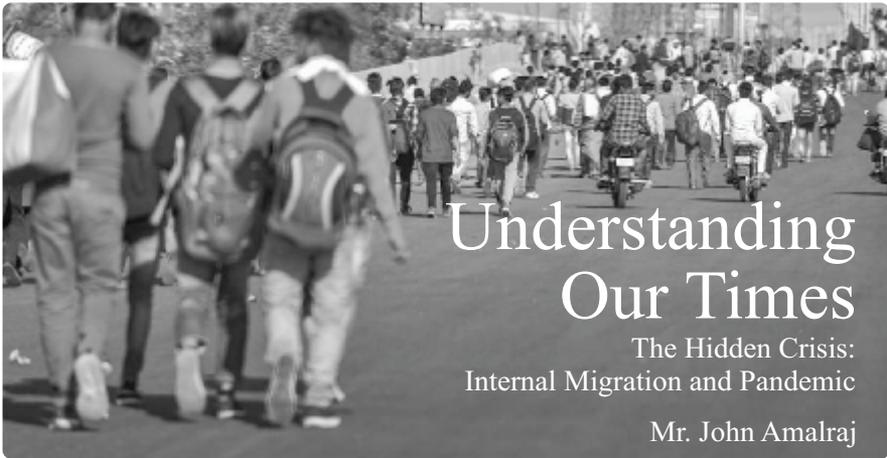
We are called to care for creation, without any relation to its advantages. Mankind should care for the earth, not for their own benefit, but for the godly character they possess in loving God's creation, with the same love and compassion, they received from God. Being said that, we should not refrain from utilizing the resources of creation, and use it in a judicious way, as a loving and caring ruler. And God will not only ask us about loving our neighbor, but also loving God's creation.



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Understanding Our Times

The Hidden Crisis:
Internal Migration and Pandemic

Mr. John Amalraj

The images of poor people along with their families walking home from the bustling cities to their villages will remain with us for a long time. During this unprecedented pandemic, most of us are constrained within the safety of our flats and walled communities conforming to the orders of the authorities to stay inside for fear of the contagious virus. We have become armchair commentators and spectators watching the news entertainment twenty-four hours. If the reports of people run over by the trains or the overcrowded truck with women and children killed in a road accident and the police mindlessly using force to beat the desperate crowd does not move our hearts, nothing else will.

COVID 19 Pandemic and the response of the government through

a strict lockdown has brought to the surface the inherent socio-economic structural governance issues that have never been addressed due to lopsided priorities for many decades. More than anyone else, the pandemic has hit the poor, vulnerable, disadvantaged, rural people who had migrated to the cities serving the aspirations of the middle-class urbanites.

From the perspective of these poor people, they are as fearful as the rest of us are about the unknown virus and ignorant of the consequences of the pandemic. These simple-minded people have just one desire and they say: “We want to go back to our home village and be with our families.” Having migrated from their villages to the cities, to provide for their families, they now have no job, no source of income and no

guarantee for the future as the lockdown seems to be extending aimlessly. Being homeless and hungry they are desperate, willing to risk their lives by, defying the lockdown orders, negotiating the police with the anxiety of finding their way home by walk, cycle, trucks, bus, train, or any other means in the blazing summer.

Statistics on Migrants: The current estimated population of India is 1.38 Billion as of April 2020, while the Indian Census 2011 reports that there were 453 million migrants, with a 44% decadal growth during 2001-2011. Extrapolating these figures – the migrant population today could be around 650 million or more. One of the scholars analyzing this comments that the importance of migration as a livelihood strategy contradicts official statistics such as Population Census that, underestimates migration flows such as temporary, seasonal, and circulatory flows, both due to conceptual and empirical difficulties (Srivastava 2016,14) The official census no longer reports the numbers of people who migrate because of natural calamities.

The World Migration Report a United Nations body, rates India as the third-highest among the Asian countries in terms of displacement of

people due to disasters and conflicts with around 2.7 million only in 2018. The report cautions that India is one of the countries that declines to provide information on internally displaced people. It is interesting to note that Indian census gives us statistics of the reasons why Indians migrate internally – which corresponds with the popular perceptions such as education, employment, and business while marriage is another major factor (a cultural trend as women move to their husband's home), while ignoring all other socio-economic factors.

Who Are They? In the past, when we talked of internal migrants, we assumed them to be college students, professionals, government employees, army personnel, traders, and business persons. The pandemic unveiled the hidden crisis of the invisible migrants who are the poor unskilled workers, trafficked women, and street children among a few others. The unorganized sectors include workers like the electricians, plumbers, carpenters, taxi/cab drivers, construction workers, grocery workers, courier/delivery boys, security guards, maids, cleaners, cooks, restaurant servers, barbers, beauty salon workers and many more. The migrant women are usually domestic help, construction

workers, and the sex trade. The street children are usually seen in city traffic junctions, railway stations, bus stations selling flags, tissue boxes, colouring books, and snacks. The unskilled laborers are unofficially estimated to be around 80-100 million of women and men (Srivastava 2016,14). The trafficked women are unofficially estimated to be around 1.25 to 3 million women. The street children are unofficially estimated to be more than 1 million. A recent BBC report estimates that every eight minutes one child is being trafficked in India ending up in forced labour and sex trade and some of them on the city streets (Vaidyanathan, BBC, 2020).

Why is this the Hidden Crisis?

There are three major factors to this hidden crisis. The first is about ethnic identity. These invisible people are the marginalized untouchables, and the lowest caste groups in rural India. It is rather unfortunate that there is widespread xenophobia – the darker their skin colour, they are associated with those among the untouchables (Myambo 2019). There is a growing indifference to the needs of the poor untouchables among the affluent people who generally seem to be occupy a higher position in the hierarchical caste system. The ugly head of the caste system has raised

its head again in a new India, that has become divided on communal, linguistic, and ethnic identities. The response to the pandemic by the government, the media, and the public have fallen on these fault lines.

Second, it is about people's socio-economic status that is linked to ethnicity. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened beyond anyone's imagination. Since these people originate from rural areas, they have little or no formal education or skills. The neoliberal globalization of production has created the informal sector in the industrialized cities that attract cheap labour from rural areas (Haas 2014, 256-258). The green revolution in the agriculture sector and the recent economic woes of farmers suffering from huge loans drives them out of their villages to seek seasonal temporary employment in cities. They become part of the unorganized sector and are the floating population having no identity documentation. They are most vulnerable as their working and living conditions are poor and they have no access to basic protection, amenities, or welfare schemes. They have no insurance, health care, social security, annual leave, minimum wages, or any other protection from the labour laws.

They work long hours and suffer long term health issues from work hazards. They have no permanent employment and are under the mercy of the contractors who are politically networked and are only interested in making more money. These people are living in a modern system of slavery.

The third and critical issue in the discussion on factors related to migration is that of governance. In a globalized world where neo-liberalism is fast spreading, the ideology of less involvement of the state seems to be more of a theory (Robbins 2017, 105). Robert Munck in an article suggests that migration has become a global governance problem (Munck 2008, 1227). Even though globalization requires a free flow of capital, the irony is that the state imposes restrictions on the movement of migrants on various spheres. There is a policy paralysis on understanding the issues related to internal migration. Security has become the focus in governance as the resident population feels insecure when they see a stranger in their midst (Munck 2008, 1232). In the last ten years, migrant people have been violently attacked in different parts of the country and an anti-migration political narrative has taken center stage. The issue of security may be important in the

context of international migration and terrorism, but to translate the same sense of insecurity and fear within a national border is a political and governance issue. Politicians use these people in election rallies and campaigning and then turn a deaf ear to their grievances.

Wasudha Bhatt argues that migration is not free from being an uncontrolled process and is regulated by perceptions of identities given to migrants by the society and the state (Bhatt 2009, 87). She moans, the fact that even though there are constitutional rights given to people migrating, related to conditions of employment and basic living conditions these are never enforced. Bhatt further argues that most often the poor who migrate are on the lower end of the economic spectrum and are vital to the sustainability of the economy but endure the worst treatment due to lack of governance intervention. They are labelled and exploited as resources for pure economic gains.

The Indian government's lopsided policies are reflected in the budget expenses for 2018 which shows that they spent 15% of their GDP on defense procurement and less than 1.3% of GDP on the health care sector. Even as reports of these poor villagers walking back to their

homes are in the media, the government's efforts are geared to cater to serving the middle-class urbanites' interests. The evacuation and repatriation of stranded international students, professionals, and business persons from different countries seem to be a priority than the plight of the rural migrants who were instructed and forced to stay where they are. Public announcements on space projects, building projects and privatization for business are the focus rather than welfare schemes for the poor and oppressed.

The Response of the Church: It is highly commendable that the Christian community from across the length and breadth of the country has responded to this hidden crisis. Christian young people have taken to the streets, risking their lives, and have reached out to provide cooked meals, rations, shelter in churches, Christian schools, and have opened their mission hospitals to cater to the migrants and the poor people in their neighborhood. The Indian church has always been exemplary in emergency relief during natural calamities and major crises. Is this enough? The COVID 19 pandemic is not a short-term crisis. More people are dying of hunger and neglect than the virus itself. It has adversely affected the economy and impact the

common people for many more years. Having witnessed this huge reverse migration, we are not sure how many of these villagers will forgive the urban betrayal, rebuild their trust, and return to cities to earn their livelihood. It is in this context, that we need to examine the Indian church's response. Our response should not be restricted to only providing crisis relief. Building schools, hospitals and providing relief and development in remote villages and urban slums are good deeds that needs to continue. We are also called to a prophetic role to speak truth to the powers on behalf of the poor people. Who will raise the voice against the caste system that continues to keep the oppressed people below the poverty line? Who will raise the voice against unfair labour practices that exploit these poor workers? Who will raise the voice against lopsided budget policies that neglect the health care and education for the rural and urban poor? Who will raise the voice against loan sharks, human traffickers, and corrupt officials?

The invisible internal migration will continue to be a hidden crisis because it is the failure of the government's role whose priority is electoral politics. It may continue to be a hidden crisis since it is the failure of the faith community who

have lost their prophetic and compassionate voice. Prophet Micah gave a clarion call “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). Do we hear God's call to the Indian church to speak up for the disadvantaged, the poor, the oppressed?



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MOLECH ON THE PROWL

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

Have you heard of Molech? That was the name of the god of the Ammonites. More than any of the other gods of the nations that surrounded Israel, Molech was the god whose rituals demanded the sacrifice of sons and daughters to gain benefits for the head of the house and to ward off evils that might fall on him. There were other gods too, who, according to their priests, liked human sacrifices, but it seems that Molech liked only the sacrifice of sons and daughters.

In the middle of this ocean of people who thought human sacrifices were perfectly legitimate, Israel worshipped the God who commanded that they were not to sacrifice their sons and daughters (Deut. 12:31; 18:9-10).

Human Sacrifices

“Wait a minute”, you say. “Didn't

God ask Abraham to sacrifice Isaac?” Yes, but only as an extreme test of Abraham's faith and don't forget that God Himself didn't let Abraham go through with it (Gen. 22:1-19).

We do have one episode of human “sacrifice” in Israel during the period of the Judges who came after Joshua. There was a man named Jephthah, who was a terrific warrior, but a social outcast as he was the son of a prostitute. As the other sons of his father didn't want him to have a share in the inheritance they threw him out. However, when Israel needed a leader, they turned to him. After negotiating that he wouldn't be their leader just temporarily but even after the war was won, Jephthah agreed to go into battle. “Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jephthah...he advanced against the Ammonites. And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: 'If you give the

Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering” (Judg. 11:29-31). Jephthah had the Lord's Spirit. That was enough to move forward. For some reason, Jephthah felt a little uncertain and wanted to bargain and bind God to a victory by making a rash vow. The Law was very clear that if one didn't vow that was all right, but if you did, you have to go through with keeping the vow (Deut. 23:21-23). His only daughter was the one to come running out to welcome him home. According to Scripture, “he did to her as he had vowed” (v.39).

I used to think that Jephthah did sacrifice his daughter, and he was wrong to do so because she wasn't a “whatever” and he should have applied the Law that God didn't want children to be sacrificed. Nigerian Bible scholar Tokunbo Adeyemo favours a second view that “suggests that she was redeemed in keeping with the provision of Leviticus 27:1-8, but that instead of paying with money, she was required to forfeit the option of marriage. I would argue for the second position on the basis that her mourning for her virginity would be uncalled for and meaningless if she was actually sacrificed as a burnt offering” (Africa Bible Commentary, p.309). “This would explain why she spent

two months bemoaning her virginity (v.37) rather than her shortened life” (*Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible, AMG Publishers, p. 297*).

This is not to say that Israel never strayed from this commandment to not sacrifice sons and daughters. Whenever they were unfaithful to God, they did embrace the customs and practices of nations around them, including the sacrifice of sons and daughters (Ps. 106:37-38). The prophets Micah (6:7), Jeremiah (7:31; 19:4-6) and Ezekiel (16:20-21; 23:37-39) prophesied against Israel for this sin.

Cultures Against Children

Down through the centuries of human history, around the world, most cultures have considered children expendable. There is a notion that the Ancient Greeks were the epitome of civilisation, but the truth is it was a man's world. Wives could not leave their homes without the husband's permission or husband. The man dined alone entertained by slaves, while the wife and children ate separately. Sons were preferred so that they could look after parents in their old age and for the continuation of the line. Girls were married off between 13 and 16 to men who were 20 years old chosen by the father. In this Grecian world, “Abandonment of infants occurred to a greater or lesser degree throughout the Greek world from

earliest times, and in the late Hellenistic Period became, it appears, an actual menace and evil. It was legally sanctioned at Sparta in the case of deformed children. It was nowhere forbidden by law except possibly at Thebes at a late date...It was nowhere severely condemned by general public opinion and feeling, since the Greeks did not have the moral and religious scruples relative to the matter which influenced Christians and Jews” (La Rue van Hook, “The Exposure of Infants at Athens”, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/282876>).

What about our own land and people? There was no one-India in ancient times. There were only separate kingdoms all over the land that we now call “India”. Except for the matrilineal societies of India, in all of these kingdoms it was no crime to practise female infanticide and most men would have regarded their wives and children as their chattels or property to do with as they pleased.

Modern India

How have children fared in modern India? According to “Save the Children”, it’s estimated that India has the largest number of street children in the world. Among them, an astounding 79 per cent live without a legal identity, making them doubly vulnerable to their harsh living circumstances,

exploitation, violence and omission in policy and welfare schemes.

“Save the Children” also reported ,“In 2013, India was among the top 5 countries with the highest rate of child sexual abuse. A 2013 report by the Asian Centre for Human Rights revealed that sexual offences against children in India were at an “epidemic” level – citing, over 48,000 rape cases between 2001 to 2011, and a 337% increase in child rape cases from 2001 (2,113 cases) to 2011 (7,112 cases). Child sex abuse (CSA) occurs across geographies, economic levels, and even across relationships – strangers, friends, family members had all been perpetrators. In 2012, 9500 child and adolescent murders were reported, making India the third largest contributor to child homicide (WHO 2014, Global Health Estimates). One in 3 adolescent girls experiences violence (physical, sexual or emotional), from significant others.”

Further, the International Labour Organisation’s estimates suggest that there are over 12 million child labourers in India.

Denial and Conspiracy

The first reaction, especially from the government and its agencies, is to deny such findings, and blame it on the bias of Western researchers. This reaction is similar to what our

politicians do when caught red-handed for misconduct: across the board, irrespective of what party they belong to, they protest that it's just a plan of the opposition to defame them. Forget the statistics from Western and international agencies. Our newspapers tell us about children being abused, tortured and exploited daily in India. The Bible says that until we acknowledge and confess sin, the land will not be healed (2 Chron. 7:14).

In the case of sexual exploitation, the biggest problem is that there is a conspiracy of silence. *Ghar ki baath, ghar mein rahein* (let matters of the home remain in the home). That is similar to the saying, "Don't wash your dirty linen in public". I have always thought it strange that people find fault with washing dirty linen, not possessing it. And so, abusive fathers, brothers, and uncles get away with crimes against young girls. The Bible never covers up the sins of its heroes. It reports that David committed both adultery and murder, and that there was incest and fratricide in his family. David's dirty linen got washed and he was restored to being a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) willing to repent of sin and do what was right (1 Ki. 15:5).

When children run away from home it is because conditions at home have become unbearable. Sometimes

such children are "rescued" and placed in children's homes. They are not safe there either. The recent conviction of former Bihar MLA Brajesh Thakur for raping young girls in homes run by him is not to be considered as an isolated case. All over the country, poorly paid workers do favours for the rich and powerful. Our VIP culture knows no bounds. It is important that children's shelter homes (or shelter homes for women and even others) should not be under the supervision of people in politics. It is better to have independent agencies and NGOs supervising them.

We have to wonder sometimes whether the Juvenile Justice Board thinks of justice for the victim in their defence of the rights of the juvenile criminal. In the case of Gaurav Shukla of the infamous Aashiana case of rich brats kidnapping and raping a poor little girl in a moving car in Lucknow (2005), the relative of an influential political leader, the JJB seems to have bent over backwards and declared him a juvenile, when one look at him should have been enough to set aside his claim to being juvenile. He was at the time of the crime about six feet tall, while the victim was a tiny 13 year-old. But then he was related to a VIP, while the girl was just a nobody. It took eleven years to bring the man to book and punish him. The Bible, on the other hand, shows the prophet

Samuel defying King Saul and the prophet Nathan confronting King David when they sinned (1 Sam. 13: 13-14; 2 Sam. 12:7-13). High and mighty people were not allowed to get away with their wickedness.

Unnamed Prowler

Molech doesn't exist, just as he didn't back in the ancient Middle East. Still, people worshipped at his altar and considered children expendable. In Modern India, children are indeed expendable. While Molech may be an unnamed god in India, he is definitely worshipped in many homes, which is why we have so many children at risk.

In most Indian homes, the householder is considered the sole purpose for which his family exists. He gets to eat first and others get his leftovers. The lion's portion and choice pieces of every meal go to him. If this is happening in Christian homes, and it does in some, we have to face up to the fact that Molech is being worshipped.

The Bible doesn't say to husbands, "Be the head. Assert your authority." Though, it is understood that way. The Bible does ask wives and children to recognise the headship of husbands, however husbands are to serve their wives (Eph. 5:21-30) and respect their children's rights (6:4). In the context of the family, "Who will be the head" is the wrong

question. The right question is, "Who will be servant and serve the others in the family?"

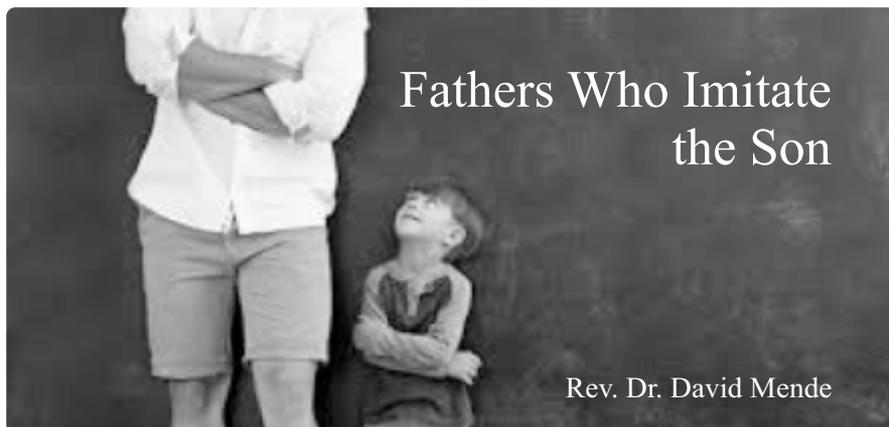
The family is compared to the Church and the Church itself is compared to a body. The parts of a body interact and cooperate. No part is devalued (1 Cor. 12: 21-22), and no part is deprived (vv.23-26). This view of the family clearly emphasises that the well-being of the entire family depends on a sense of equality and cooperation within the family – affirming the equal rights of all its members to love, care and sustenance.

As long as people worship Molech, children will run away from abusive elders. As long as Molech prowls our land (within homes, in institutions and on the streets) children will be considered expendable. The people who are supposed to give children care go on being predators worshipping at Molech's altar.



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Fathers Who Imitate the Son

Rev. Dr. David Mende

A young boy was asked, “What’s special about Mother’s Day?” The boy retorted that “It’s a day when mothers are treated like queens. They get a break from cooking as dads take the family to a restaurant. And the mothers even get some gifts on that day.” Then, he was asked, “What’s so special about Father’s Day?” to which he replied, “It’s a day the father drives down his family to his favorite restaurant to celebrate his special day and ends up paying the bill.”

Dads are special! As a child, I thought that He-man, Spider-man or Batman are heroes. But later, I realized that none of these so-called heroes were of any help to me. It was my dad who worked hard and provided for all my needs. Along with my mother, he brought me up in the fear of the Lord. Even as the world celebrates Father’s Day this month, it’s an awesome occasion to honor our fathers. Some of you

might have not experienced your earthly father’s love. Or you probably lost your father at an early age. Still, we can experience the perfect love of our heavenly Father! Some married men may not be fathers as yet, but praise God, you can be a spiritual father to many.

Now I cannot overemphasize the influential role of a father. According to a survey, if the child is the first person to receive Christ in a family, there is a 3.5% probability that the rest of the family members will be saved. But if the mother is the first person to receive Christ in a family, the probability of the household getting saved goes up to 17%. However, if the father is saved first, the probability of the entire family to receive Christ is 93%! That shows the significance of a father’s influence.

We know that the ultimate goal of our salvation is to be like Christ

(Rom. 8:28-29). All believers, including all fathers, must strive to become like Christ. So, the basic premise I present in this article is: Fathers must imitate Jesus in their lives. Fathers must imitate Christ in order to be a positive influence on their family and society. Though Jesus was never married and didn't have any physical children, He is a perfect role model for every believer and every father. I believe that this world desperately needs fathers who imitate Jesus. So, in what ways must fathers be like the Son, Jesus? Let me give you seven godly qualities.

1. Fathers Must Be Loving Like Jesus.

The first characteristic that fathers must imitate is to love like Jesus. Jesus demonstrated His love for God and for others by dying on the cross (Jn 15:13). Earthly fathers must also love God and others (Mt. 22:36-40; 1 Jn 4:7-8). In many families, an ugly cycle recurs. Since the fathers don't love their family enough, the wife and children disrespect their fathers. This further hinders the father from demonstrating love to his family. This must stop. The fathers must be loving, no matter what. The wife and children must respect the father, no matter what.

2. Fathers Must Be Humble Like Jesus.

One of the major sins that we men

struggle with is pride. But God hates pride. The Bible repeatedly warns us about pride (Ps. 31:23; 1 Pet. 5:5). God alone is worthy of all the glory, honor, and praise and we must give Him the rightful place in our lives. We must follow the example of Christ who came as a servant to this earth (Mk 10:45). Jesus is the greatest example of humility. He demonstrates this beautifully at the Last Supper (Jn 13:3-5).

Though Jesus is the eternal God, He humbled Himself to the position of a slave. Although He knew his disciples would betray Him, desert Him, and deny Him, He still washes their dirty feet. That's why the Father highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:5-8). As fathers, we must not be arrogant. We must shun pride and develop humility with the help of the Spirit.

3. Fathers Must Be Compassionate Like Jesus.

Compassion is often seen as a feminine emotion. Men don't like to give the impression that they have a soft heart. But Jesus felt compassion towards the lost (Mt. 9:36). He even wept on a couple of occasions (Lk. 19:41; Jn 11:35). Compassion is a biblical quality that the fathers must possess: "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him" (Ps. 103:13). Even when you discipline your children, show them compassion and love. Spend

time with your children. Share in their disappointments and joys.

4. Fathers Must Be Self-Controlled Like Jesus.

Every father must develop self-control. The Bible says that “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls” (Prov. 25:28). A city whose walls are broken is vulnerable to attacks. If we don't have self-control, we will be without defense before Satan and our flesh. Cain didn't have self-control and he committed the first murder in human history. David didn't have self-control and he committed two terrible crimes—adultery and murder.

But Jesus had self-control. Though he was tempted for forty days and forty nights, he didn't yield to Satan's temptations (Luke 4). From Luke 4, we learn that we can defeat the temptations of the enemy through fasting and prayer, the Spirit, and the Word of God. Fathers, let's practice the spiritual discipline of fasting. It will break the power of sin and flesh in our lives. We must develop self-control which comes from the Spirit (Gal. 5:23).

5. Fathers Must Be Gentle Like Jesus.

The world projects angry macho men as real men. Many men think that meekness is a sign of weakness.

But gentleness is Christ-like (Mt. 11:29). Since Christ is gentle, He is able to offer rest for our souls. Quoting Zechariah 9:9, Matthew (in 21:5) writes: “Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey.'” We must develop the quality of gentleness in our lives (Gal. 5:23). As leaders, we must not drive our families harshly. Rather, we must lead our families gently.

6. Fathers Must Discipline Like Jesus.

Jesus is not all about love, compassion, and gentleness. He was also firm in disciplining. Similarly, fathers must be gentle. Yet, they must discipline their children as well. We must learn to strike the balance. When the disciples failed to cast out the demons from a young boy, Jesus rebukes them and says, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?” (Mk 9:19). Also, when Jesus predicts his impending death and suffering, Peter rebuked Jesus and said, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you” (Mt. 16:22). And Jesus rebuked Peter in very strong words: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Mt. 16:23).

Fathers, let's listen to the words in

Proverbs 3:11-12 (which are quoted in Hebrews 12:5-6): “My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.” You will discipline your children if you love them and delight in them.

7. Fathers Must Be Prayerful Like Jesus.

Jesus was a man of prayer. In his book, *Spiritual Leadership*, J. Oswald Sanders writes about the prayer life of Jesus. He says, “Surely if anyone could have sustained life without prayer, it would be the very Son of God Himself. If prayer is silly or unnecessary, Jesus would not have wasted His time at it. But wait! Prayer was the dominant feature of His life and a recurring part of his teaching.” Luke 5:16 (NIV) says that “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

Fathers, your children will not be blessed if you merely provide their needs. Pray for your children. Pray with your children. Lead your family in prayer and Bible reading. Be the priest and the leader that God has called you to be. Fathers must be prayerful like Jesus.

Conclusion

Fathers must imitate Jesus in their lives. I have obviously not shared an exhaustive list of a father's qualities.

A father has to provide for the family, teach God's Word to his children, and fulfill several other obligations. But we focused on the need of fathers reflecting Jesus through their lives. Fathers, we are not perfect. We are fallen human beings in a fallen world. But the more we look to Christ, the more we will become like Him. He is our ultimate role model. Even when you fail, run to Jesus and ask Him to forgive you. He will grant His grace and make you the kind of leader and priest He wants you to be. Let's imitate Jesus!



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LET US NOT CHILL
WHEN IT COMES
TO CHILDREN!

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

June 12 is the United Nations World Day Against Child Labour. It is a good time to remind ourselves about responsibilities we have in a world which is still largely unsafe for children.

We must PRAY against Child Labour. We pray for a child with 'great anguish and sorrow' like Hannah did before they are born (I Sam. 1:16, NLT). Do we maintain or up the tempo when it comes to praying for our children and the children of our nation after they are born? We must!

Myron Weiner's words written in 1991 offers some prayer fuel: "Sivakasi is perhaps the most publicized centre of child labour in India. Children are employed in the matchbox, fireworks, and printing industries. Children are brought to

Sivakasi by bus from neighbouring villages within a radius of about twenty miles. They are loaded into buses and vans from three to five in the morning to get to the factories at six or seven, and they return home between six and nine in the evening. As many as 150 to 200 children are packed in a vehicle. The children work for about twelve hours, but they are away from home for over fifteen hours. Forty-five thousand children below fifteen years of age work in Sivakasi or in nearby workshops or cottages within their own village, perhaps the largest single concentration of child labour in the world. Three-quarters of the child workers are girls. Each village has an agent who enrolls the children and ensures that the children are awake when the transport arrives. The agents receive a monthly salary of 150 rupees. They may pay an

advance of up to 200 rupees for each child labour enrolled. The advance is then deducted from the child's salary" [Myron Weiner, *The Child and the State in India*, Princeton, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 24].

We must be vigilant against those who PREY on our children. We must be like the men of Issachar who were 'men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do' (I Chron. 12:32).

Let's fast forward to the present time. The "India Today", March 2, 2020 issue published these chilling statistics about the menace of child porn in India (a world that is created by luring children into different forms of sex work): India now accounts for the maximum number of cases of online child abuse imagery in the world; the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) that Indian users have uploaded 25,000 images or videos of children in sexually compromised situations in the past five months alone! Delhi tops the list of the maximum number of lists of child porn. There is a distinct increase in self-generated child porn. Last year – 2019 – 377 websites were blocked for posting child porn content." This article talked about how online predators used

applications like messenger apps that come along online games children play to what is called 'grooming'. What is grooming? It is 'the act of befriending a child, and sometimes the family, to lower the child's inhibitions with the objective of sexual abuse' (according to Pallavi Pundir). Parents, please understand that while you may be busy with your work, your child may be groomed by a potential child sex offender for participation in the creation of child porn. These things can happen right under your nose if your child is using an unmonitored/rarely-monitored smartphone.

We also must PROVOKE action against atrocities that we see against children. The Bible says, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice" (Proverbs 31:8-9 NLT). Job could testify this way in this regard: "I broke the jaws of the wicked and snatched the prey from his teeth" (Job 29:17 NASB). We do not have to break the jaws of the child abusers/child employers! But can we at least use our jaws (mouth) to argue for the release of children in slavery or in danger! We can speak against online cyber bullying of kids, to cite a case point! We can point to

the believer in your church who has hired a minor girl to care for a just-arrived new-born about the biblical call to obey rules of the Government of our land – the rules that do not clash with the Word of God (Romans 13:1-2; Acts 5:27-29)!



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If we do not take time to train our kids to be 'arrows in the hands of the Divine Warrior' (Psalm 127:4), then there may be an occasion tomorrow when we have to sorely regret this! Here is why: others (including possible child offenders) may race to fill-in the vacuum, we have inadvertently created in our children. Let us not chill when it comes to our children!

*"And calling to him a child,
he put him in the midst of them and said,
'Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and
become like children, you will never enter
the kingdom of heaven.
Whoever humbles himself like this child
is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 18:2-4*

"FAITH" OR "FATE"?

Everywhere I make a turn
All I see are hearts with fears,
And eyes filled with tears
People unable to be mentally stern.

News and media brought it as an endemic,
But who knew today it would grow like the worst pandemic.

The single yet multiplying corona virus
Left many on earth lifeless.
Rich or poor, Hindu or Christian all was regardless
Thousands and thousands, it killed being merciless.

It attacked one or two nations,
But got a multi-fold to sail along the situations.
The brink of disaster hovers over our world,
The virus has spun around and left everything swirled.

It's now we realize the importance of life,
For no one knows the next second who would survive.

This has brought us all to a lockdown,
In our own, or maybe another's town.
And struggling to see a silver lining to our frowns
Who knows when we will get the Victor's crown?

At a sneeze men run away, being afraid,
And next we see their houses covered with barricade.

Day and night have become equal for a doctor,
Who is trying her best
To minimize those who are positive for the test,
And the virus brutally even knocked her.

And then there goes a nurse,
Who never imagined it to be so worse!
Injections, medications all day long,
Yet service to mankind with her head held strong.

The social care workers and the police,
Have not left a speck to spread peace
All the say "move out in specific timings"
Or you'll find yourselves crossing your own safety linings.

Many have had their lives sacrificed,
Leaders creating new measures to strategize.
Together we need to fight
To come out of this horrible plight
And see a happiness filled sight.

Friends it's never too late
Is it your "faith" or "fate"?

Come let us all kneel down in prayer
To shun away this evil which is our present nightmare?

We have a living God to trust
That you should know for must.
So be courageous and build your strong hope
Then sure healing is in our scope.



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Indian Army.*

Playing flute in Beirut

They had dragged him down to Beirut,
The bustle and buzz of Lebanon,
His breath was saved to play the flute,
His village was bombed at dawn.

He is a king in his early recollections,
Of a vast mansion built on hills,
Freckled with tall trees lined in all directions,
A whiff of cedars, pines and distant mills.

His small body huddled beside a garbage bag,
On the luxury of a grimy pavement;
A streak of blood covered in a rag,
As a crown on his forehead, of abasement.

He dreams of his mother's soothing smile,
Basked in sunlight from the window;
His hand in his father's as they walked a mile,
With sacks of seeds, in their farm to sow.

He's kicked in his back, again and again,
For tears spilling down his cheeks;
He advises himself to stop feeling the pain,
For that tune of fond memories speaks.

Where his mother would kiss the bruise,
His father would tell he's brave;
And he'd be back, chasing the ewes,
Or blowing into his flute, a musical wave.

It was a storage den, rifles in the pathway,
His little feet scrambling for their orders;
Greasy fingers on flute, their songs would play,
Or carry bombs, rifles, grenades and mortars.

He misses the aroma of hot kafta and kibbeh
Which his mom would feed him on her laps;
The long exuberant trips to the city of Entfeh,
Where he'd watch the waves build and collapse.

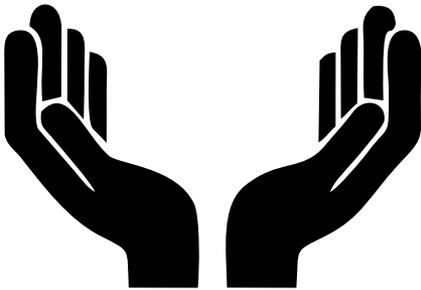
He feels the solace of the gentle breeze,
Long red scars, he was beaten by his flute;
Broken bones bring hunger pangs no ease,
He cries miserably, he hates the city of Beirut.



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**"Honor your father and your mother,
that your days may be long in the land
that the Lord your God is giving you."**

Exodus 20:12



RADICAL *Generosity*

Rev. C B Samuel

“If I have denied justice to any of
my servants,
 whether male or female,
 when they had a grievance
against me,
what will I do when God confronts
me?

 What will I answer when called
to account?

Did not he who made me in the
womb make them?

 Did not the same one form us
both within our mothers?

“If I have denied the desires of the
poor or let the eyes of the widow
grow weary,

if I have kept my bread to myself,
 not sharing it with the
fatherless.....

if I have seen anyone perishing for
lack of clothing,

 or the needy without
garments,...

if I have raised my hand against the
fatherless,

 knowing that I had influence in
court,
then let my arm fall from the
shoulder,

 let it be broken off at the joint.
For I dreaded destruction from
God,

 and for fear of his splendor I
could not do such things. (Job 31:
16-23).

These words of Job, underline the
fundamentals of Judeo-Christian
understanding of giving. We believe
in a God who made all of us and we
will be called to give account for our
actions. And at the heart of our faith
is the belief that giving is the
character of God and he modeled it
for us in Christ.

This understanding is further

reinforced by the New Testament teaching as found in Apostle Paul's writing to the Corinthian Church when he was collecting money from them in order to help the Christians in Jerusalem, in 2 Corinthians chapter 8: "Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality". This is very interesting. The Bible doesn't say that we should be generous because we want to show some kind of mercy, but it is to create a world of equality because today we live in a world which is grossly unequal and we are seeing on the street basically the acting out of a in equal society that we live in. People who have been invisible to us and if the giving doesn't change and create a world of equality then maybe we are not really giving.

In a time like the present epidemic, everybody wants to give. I have been the head of a relief agency for many years and I know that disaster brings out a very humanitarian concern to give but that is not what the Bible is talking about here. These are great opportunities to question the world in which we live because some of us need to rethink what we possess, otherwise our giving is out of our abundance; and we will soon revert

to a lifestyle of selfish consumption. And I think we must ask ourselves whether this is going to change our way of giving.

Let us look at five important components why I believe that when we talk about generosity from the biblical perspective as followers of Jesus, we are talking about something totally radical.

Giving is a responsible giving

Much giving is moved by deep feeling of compassion but has usually no sense at all. I remember that many times in relief, people who are getting the relief get the same food from everyone and by the end of the day they are just tired. They just throw away the things. So, our giving may make us feel good but makes no difference to the people. It is very important to ask ourselves whether our giving is responsible giving. And in responsible giving it is equally important to ask as to who we are giving to. The former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said that for each rupee that the government gives, only 15 paise goes to the poor. Today there are a lot of groups trying to get our attention to contribute but we need to be responsible and hold those to whom we give accountable for the use of the resources. When you give to someone, whom you cannot hold accountable, it is irresponsible giving. Even if you

give to the PMCARE fund or the CMCARE fund, we must be able to get an account.

At the end of the day, in the words of Sainath's book, 'Everybody loves a good drought', I think everybody loves a crisis. Very soon we'll feel good about our generous actions while our own lifestyle becomes better and the poor are forgotten after the event. So it is very important for us to ask if our giving is responsible.

Radical giving must be costly giving. We have learnt during this lockdown that we can live with a lot less. I know as the former head of a development agency that it is easy to give away the money that someone gives to us; it is easy to be generous with someone else's money. But if our giving has not affected our lifestyle and has not cost us, we are basically just a postman in this whole process. We come up with a good program in which we can channel money. But anyone can do that.

At this time, we will have to ask how can I re-do my life? There are people in this country who do not have two square meals. Did you know that more than 70% of the migrant workers have got just 100 Rupees now in their hands? That is all they have. Many of us perhaps have not just that but many hundreds. We can spend all that in an evening whereas

for a poor family that is something that is a matter of life and death. We need to ask ourselves does giving cost me. For if I am simply a postman, receiving money and giving out the same but my lifestyle remains the same, the food on my table continues to be the same, we must ask ourselves the question whether it is really radical giving?

Radical giving is respectful giving.

The Bible says that when you give to the poor you are giving to God. There is no condescension in our giving. We treat the poor and the people we give to as human beings. This is very important. As Job said I share my food with the poor knowing that one day I have to stand before God, the God who created me and the poor person.

When we give to the poor, we must make sure that we bestow dignity and not rob people of it.

Radical giving is a liberating giving. The Bible says that Jesus became poor so that we could become rich. He came so that we can be free. We must not keep the poor dependent on us. Many times, our programs of charity end up keeping poor – poor, keeping them lower down in society and making them obligated to us. That is not at all the kind of giving that the Bible talks about. When God gave Himself, He did so that we

could be set free. Our giving has to be liberatory. It is very important, when we speak of giving, to ask ourselves, if people are being liberated to flourish as humans.

Radical giving is just giving

Finally, we need to be sure that our giving is a giving of justice. One of the early Church fathers wrote, “When you give to the poor you are not doing charity, you are doing justice. You are giving to them what originally belonged to them.” This is important and we must remember this. We are not doing any charity. We are enjoying fruits of an unequal world in which we belong to as those who are the 'haves'. It is important to remember that what we have is because the have-nots have contributed by their sweat and blood. They built these cities; they are the ones who built our roads for us. Hence it is important to ask: is my giving is creating a just society? Is it biased towards those who are on the streets? India has 10 lakh street children, and no one has an idea where they have gone during this lockdown. We need to look around and not wait for them to approach us so that we can then do charity. We

need to intentionally and consciously look for these who are lost. During this time, there is an increase in domestic violence and all kinds of abuse of children. Perhaps many of the street children who are missing are being abused somewhere.

I think we need to do much more than “feel good” giving. We need to use our giving as a leverage to create a just society, liberate people and treat them as human beings. That will cost us but that would be truly radical giving or generosity.

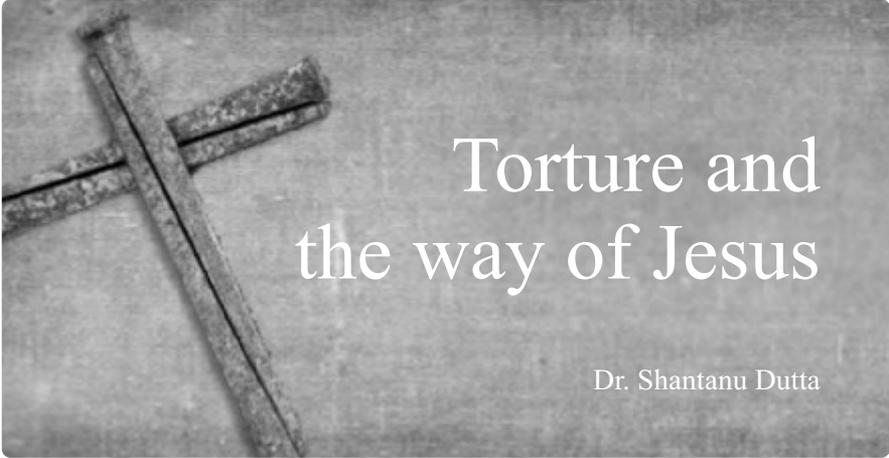


Rev. CB Samuel

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*For God will never give you the spirit of fear,
but the Holy Spirit who gives you mighty power, love, and self-control.*

2 Timothy 1:7



If I were to ask some people if Christians can endorse torture, the answer is likely to be an unequivocal no. But it requires some unpacking, for two reasons: 1) There are countries in the world where Christians have condoned, endorsed and even practised torture in various forms against those they considered the enemy. That the Old testament contains several passages endorsing torture just does not help. And yet understanding what the Bible teaches us about torture is important as torture is certainly not an obscure medieval phenomenon. In fact, in many parts of the world, it may be our brothers and sisters in Christ who may be enduring torture. In some other parts of the world, Christians could be inflicting it.

There's a reason that sincere Christians since days long gone, can turn to torture when it suits their purposes and then casually sustain that they are on the side of God. The

Bible— both Old and New Testaments—endorse torture often, through stories, laws, prophesies and sermons; including from the mouth of Jesus himself. Strong and protracted pain meted out as punishment seems to appear very quickly in the pages of the Bible, exacted by God himself, who curses Eve as she has eaten from the Tree of Knowledge. “To the woman, He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you'” (Genesis 2:16). As understood by the early Hebrews, physical pain would have been just one small part of the curse. One psychological component of the curse was recurring cycles of fear and doubt for a woman. Important church fathers saw this kind of misery and death as right and proper, because of Eve's sin and the role God had set for women.

In the New Testament, pressures of torture appear frequently as apparatuses of persuasion. The book of Matthew puts these words into the mouth of Jesus: "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell" (Matthew 18:8-9). Later, Jesus tells the tale of the unforgiving servant to show how God will treat such hard people. So, yes, these associations are available. But, all said and done, one cannot be Christian and believe in torture. There is no leeway of a concession here. The backing of torture as an instrument to attain one's objectives is not available to a Christian.

I suppose one can be some version of a "nationalist" and support the use of torture, but one cannot be any kind of Christian and support torture. One does not have to be a Christian to reject the brutality of torture, one simply needs to be a humane person. But to be a Christian unquestionably entails us to reject the use of torture. Any thinking person, whatever be their religion or belief, knows that one cannot support torturing people and still claim to be a follower of the one who commanded his disciples to love their enemies. The only way

around this is to invent a false Jesus who supports the use of torture. Those who argue for the use of torture do so because they are convinced it is pragmatic for all kinds of reasons. But Christians are not called to be pragmatists or even safe. Christians are called by Jesus to imitate a God who is kind and merciful to the wicked "Love your enemies! Do good to them....and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. Be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate." –Jesus (Luke 6:35, 36)

Those who identify themselves as Christian are disciples of one who was tortured and killed by a superpower completely devoted to its own security. The Roman governor Pilate sentenced Jesus to torture and execution by acting in the interests of the Roman Empire. The Empire could not accept a Galilean preacher claiming to be the King of the Jews. Rome called it rebellion and the punishment was crucifixion. So, Jesus was tortured to death. But when Jesus was resurrected on the third day, Jesus and his message of enemy-love and radical forgiveness were vindicated. Torture does not lead to freedom and security. Torture is demonic and it leads to hell. Jesus was an object of torture. He was tortured till He died. But Jesus did not only die on a cross, he urged his followers to take up their own

personal cross and come after him! Why does Jesus ask his followers to carry an instrument of torture? Of course not!

The relentless enemy of the realm of Christ is empire, and the ultimate fixation of empire is security. Empires constantly defend their use of torture in the national interest in the appellation of security. Christians however have no entitlement to security. We are unsafe in this world. We have embraced this risk of following Jesus, knowing fully that such an endeavour may lead to woe and anguish. For three hundred years till Constantine, everyone knew that it was risky to be a Christian, and so all knew what it was to be a Christian. Then Christendom was born and suddenly Jesus was Lord, at least in name. This marked the demotion of Christianity to the dominion of empire. Also, this was an effort to create a risk-free Christianity. And it was a “success.” But it came at a 'fee'. The price was that no one quite knew anymore what it meant to be a Christian.

In the 1930s, during the upsurge of the Nazis to authority when the German national church was loyal to National Socialism, Martin Niemöller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and others fashioned the Confessing Church, trusting that it was their obligation as followers of Jesus to call the evil out, in spite of huge

personal and institutional costs. There are, of course, important differences between now and then, but our charge as followers of Jesus is the same: to call the evil out. The importance of being known by the nonviolent Jesus! He wants to live in relationship with us. He calls us to practice his teachings of nonviolence, and so to root our lives in him through prayer and action. Just as he lives and dies in relationship with his beloved God as he walks the narrow path, he wants us to live in intimate relationship with him, dwell in his peace, and follow in his footsteps, and so, to do God's will, to do good, avoid evil, make peace, resist war, practice nonviolence and disarm the world's violence.

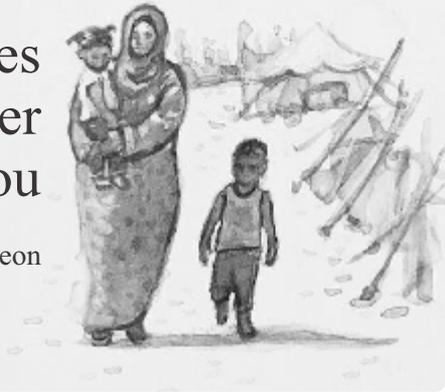


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He loves the foreigner residing among you

Mr. Jude Simeon



Worldwide, nearly 31 million children have been driven from their homes due to conflict, violence and other forms of harm. With the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the needs of refugees, especially children, have become even more severe. Many displaced children experience unbelievable hardships as they are forced to flee their homes, often leaving family members behind, in search of safety and security.

There is no question about the Christian response to forcibly displaced people. The Church is called to be a place of welcome. From the Book of Genesis right through to Revelation, the story of God's people relates to exile, suffering oppression and persecution in foreign lands. The story of Exodus, from slavery in Egypt to the journey towards the Promised Land revealed the nature

of our God. Throughout the Bible, God is identified as the God who cares for displaced people.

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. Deuteronomy 10:18 NIV

Aaqila was 8-years-old when she was forced by the war and fear of persecution from suburban Kabul in Afghanistan to live exiled with her family in Delhi, India. Without legal status, Aaqila struggled through domestic cleaning shifts with her mother for low wages. Persecution and discrimination drove her family away from their homeland. They have now spent five years in Delhi, without any possibilities of permanent resettling anywhere else. Neighbours who once welcomed them have become weary of them, and some have become very hostile

towards them knowing their conversion to Christianity.

With local church support, she continued her secondary education. However, when I met them in 2017, I understood that she would no longer be able to study due to her refugee status and financial hardships. Thus she would not be able to enrol for any further education.

I think about them in this lockdown - how the family will survive without any work, without welfare assistance. The family survived on Aaqila and her mother being the sole breadwinners.

We talk about refugees and build our perceptions based on their identity and what the media reports. These negative and narrow views have resulted in children like Aaqila experiencing discrimination, isolation and an uncertain future, forcing insecurity in their own neighbourhoods.

People fleeing for safety is a growing concern, beyond the legal status of refugees!

Understanding Refugees and Forcible Displacement

It is essential to understand the difference between refugees and forcible displacements. Unless we know the difference, we will never be able to grasp the situation.

The refugee is a term commonly used as a synonym for any displaced people. The term "refugees" refers specifically to a legally recognized status that has access to specific legal protections under the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention. A refugee is a classification for someone who is forced to flee their country of origin due to conflict, violence, or persecution. They are unwilling or unable to return based on a demonstrable threat due to their race, religion, political stance, or social status.

Forcible displacement refers to individuals who were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations; including refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. UNHCR's annual Global Trends Report shows that nearly 70.8 million people were displaced by the end of 2018.

Forcibly Displaced People in India

During the August-December 2008 violence in Kandhamal district, 54,000 people were left homeless and as a result became Internally Displaced People (IDP). Soon after the persecution, many children were trafficked to Noida where they were sexually abused and forced into prostitution. Many were taken to South India to be educated in institutions hundreds of kilometres away from their families, and many

more were forced into the informal labour force at a very young age.

The forcible displacement in Kandhamal is just the tip of the iceberg. India doesn't know how many IDPs are there in the country. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's Global overview suggested around 853,900 people were displaced by violence within India (2015). Maoist and other communal insurgencies have displaced thousands of people across many states.

Nearly 100,000 Sri Lankan forcibly displaced people live in India. They fled during the civil war, many with no place to return to. Almost 25,000 children were born in refugee camps in Tamil Nadu.

Tibetans, Sri Lankan (Tamil) and Bangladeshi (Chakmas) are directly under the protection of the Indian government. As India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol and the country or UNHCR does not have formal national refugee protection or integration plan in place.

India also hosts around 41,000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR. Rohingya and Afghan refugees are the largest registered under UNHCR's mandate.

The global context for Forcibly Displaced People

At least 70.8 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced. Among them, nearly 31 million are children and have been forcibly displaced at the end of 2018. Less than 25% of refugee children get the opportunity to attend secondary school.

Two-thirds of the global refugees come from just five countries -- Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia. Nearly 85% of the refugee population is hosted by developing countries like Turkey, Pakistan, Uganda, Sudan and Lebanon.

According to the World Food Programme, including the forcibly displaced population, about 265 million people around the world will be facing acute hunger by the end of this year. With the COVID 19 pandemic, countries have closed their borders to non-nationals, and many governments have imposed restrictions on refugees' movement within and outside the refugee camps.

Christian Response

Christ's story continued to uphold our call to be with the oppressed, persecuted and downtrodden. Mary and Joseph were forced to take Jesus and hide in Egypt as Herod was

looking to kill Jesus. What does this story mean to say to us? Jesus is the Son of God with all the authority of God his Father became forcibly displaced!

For Christians in India, reaching out to the strangers in our context of persecution in the midst of the coronavirus lockdown is becoming increasingly difficult. Sometimes, we are confused or do not know how to respond to strangers (displaced people). For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. (Matthew 25:35)

The current situation may feel overwhelming. We may not know how to respond. As individuals and churches, we can take time to pray and reflect on God's perspective on forcibly displaced people. We could reach out to those forced to flee. Your kindness can make a difference.

The Bible says it is our privilege as Christians to welcome strangers, for by doing so, we may unknowingly have entertained angels. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2

World Refugee Sunday

Annually, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) together with the Refugee Highway Partnership

(RHP) call on churches to raise awareness of and pray for the situation of refugees on World Refugee Sunday (WRS) on June 14 or 21 – the Sundays before and after the United Nation's World Refugee Day.

Displaced people all over the world are at heightened risk as the coronavirus pandemic spreads. Countries have tightened their borders, which has restricted the refugee resettlements. Displaced people are potentially at increased risk of contracting diseases, including COVID-19, because they live in overcrowded conditions without access to basic sanitation.

To find out more about World Refugee Sunday, please visit refugeehighway.net

Refugee Highway Partnership



Mr. Jude Simeon

is the CEO of BREAD AUSTRALIA. He serves as a global facilitator of the Refugee Highway Partnership and the Chairperson of the WEA Refugee Task Force.



Father's Day! Being a Father Without Excuse or Shame!

Luke 15: 11-32
Mr. Hansraj Jain

Not, too long ago when crisis hit a friend. He is a wonderful, hard working, sincere and a godly father. He went through the dumps. As a consequence of his experience, he wrongly concluded that he was a failure as a father. He also believed that he had lived the lie of being a conscientious father who had tried to be a model father to his children. Now he wasn't so sure.

"It's not your fault. Your kid is an adult and made a choice - a lousy one, no doubt. But then, do they not have the freedom to make a mistake? So, how can you conclude that your child's wrong doing is your fault and blame yourself his failing and judge and pronounce a sentence of a failed and a lousy father?"

A lot of us can identify with the above experience especially when crisis comes knocking the door. Everyone's life is filled with struggles, negative feelings, and melancholic moods. In

fact, every time crisis hits our memories trudge down the lane where buried events and they in turn threaten to engulf us with self-pity.

Fatherhood is a great joy. It is also a great challenge. No one, except God, is a perfect father. That, however, is not license to stop us from attempting to be a 'perfect' human father!

For us Christian there is a Biblical map, guideline, pattern, directive, prototype or pathway for seeker fathers. These instruments demonstrate to us just how we might enjoy being fathers to our children.

We share here with you one of the couple of portraits available to us fathers in the Bible. We hope that it would provide a wonderful example on how to deal with our warped notions, biased and narrow perspective, anger and stress, feelings of failure that are often coupled with a sense of guilt plus a store house of

painful memories that linger on in spite of the passage of time.

Read with us about the father (not just the son or the sons) in Luke fifteen (see reference above!) deliberately. As you read, please take a special note of the 'Father' in the story. If possible, put yourself in the shoes of this father whom Luke presents and allow your thoughts and feelings to surface as you read the narrative. Allow yourself to 'feel' the emotions as they surface.

Surprised?

Luke's story is actually very powerful. It brings to surface issues that we would normally either push them aside or ignore. Yet, the narrative demonstrates to us how we might manage and maintain sanity in the face of relationship challenges as Fathers.

Father's Reality & Truths:

The Father in Luke's Gospel narrative was blessed with two sons. As Indians, we know how our culture views those who have boys born to them. There are 'cruel' jokes about them that tease. Yet these jokes seldom attach feelings of 'shame'. Ours is, by and large, a 'shame' culture.

Then, there is the vital fact about this father that he was a wealthy land owning gentleman. And his boys knew what it meant to be rich and to live it up — at least one of the boys did. The other was a 'poor fellow'. Misers often are self-deprived!

The other interesting fact about the father is that he allowed his boys to be 'men' once they attained adulthood.

That's how he had reared them. He did not feel the need to enforce his will —unlike most parents in India still do.

Some would call this as control free living = 'freedom'. The youngest turned out to be a spoilt brat, as some would quickly point out. Some of us would even ask if the father would dare to practice the same "philosophy" that he did with the boys if they were girls or if one of them were a girl? This raises larger issues for all fathers (or would be fathers). Those issues include....

Are we consistent Fathers?

Luke does not present us with any degree of inconsistency in the Father. Neither does Luke portray Father's behaviour, treatment, and display of favouritism for either of the boys irrespective of their hierarchy. In fact, the conclusion one could draw from the narrative is that if the boys were girls or if they were a boy and a girl, he would have remained true to his 'world view' and life-style as he reared his two boys into adulthood.

Is Luke's Father ahead of his time? Or better still, is he a father who is willing to live out his values in the midst of conflicting cultural and social perspectives because he believed in what he practiced. It would be easy to play the judge here. Yet, the fact remains that this father remained consistent because he was convinced of his choice and method in rearing his children.

Are We confident Fathers?

Father's confidence in bringing up the

boys the way he did speaks volumes. First fact to note is that the boys grew up making decisions — good with the bad. Secondly, failure was permitted and was given room alongside space for self-correction, repentance, reconciliation, and acceptance. Here is a father who refused to write off people. Third, the father demonstrates to us how he is willing to face tough times, yet live with hope. This father believed that experience is a great teacher. He is also convinced that God never fails nor does God go into guilt trips when His children make bad choices, walk out on Him, throw blame in His face and then sulk.

This father also refuses to buckle under such pressures. He also refuses to let pride, face-saving egotism and display of anger and disappointment dictate his response. Instead, we have a father who chooses to express generosity, gregariousness, extend grace by coupling it with forgiveness, hear and trust and receive and accept at face value the words spoken by the 'home-coming' of his 'rotted' son. This father refuses to seek for proof, lay down terms and conditions, put in place future code of behavior claim-rights prior to allow return and give acceptance. Instead he keeps status quo when he hugs the boy and orders the servants to, "Bring clothes, gold ring and a chain, shoes, declares "this, my son...".

Is there a character flaw in this father? Perhaps there is a glaring one! This father is a partying man! He loves to celebrate with no-holds-bar especially when "resurrection" has happened in

the family. He wants the whole world to know. And there is no feeling of shame or room for 'subdued' and muffled rejoicing. He is an amazing father!

Finally, this father is a patient man. His eldest had a long way to go grow up to be like his father. Like so many, the son did not appreciate the fact that he had an amazing dad at home. His poor self-worth blinded him to the demonstration on display right before his eyes. Sadly, he chose his angry emotions over power his head and heart. Unfortunately, this is a common and prevalent reality around us. We let our egos, stubbornness non-graciousness to rule our lives with horrendous results.

Conclusion:

Fatherhood in 21st Century continues to be a challenge. Thank God that He has not left us without example, advice, and wisdom to be effective fathers to our children!



Mr. Hansraj Jain
*is the Managing Director of
Inheritors, Nagpur*

Seeking a Lead Pastor for Delhi Bible Fellowship (DBF), New Delhi

Delhi Bible Fellowship (DBF) is a non-denominational, evangelical church, started in the year 1969 and currently having 9 lead congregations and 30 weekly services across the National Capital Region (NCR).

DBF seeks a Lead Pastor, whom God has called, to lead one of its English congregations located in Central Delhi. This congregation is a unique, vibrant and growing congregation that focuses on youth and families, and draws people from all walks of life. This is one of the oldest congregations having a multi-generational and multi-cultural members of 300+ people from many different nationalities.

DBF seeks a full-time Lead Pastor who is led by the Holy Spirit to help grow this congregation both spiritually and numerically, to minister to the changing needs of the congregation and community, and to lead them into God's perfect plans for the church.

The applicant should have strong skills in leadership, communication, discipleship, evangelism, teaching, be a team player, be able to work with the other pastors and staff of the congregation and be a dynamic visionary to lead the church into the future. The applicant must be an Indian citizen or PIO/OCI card holder, have a M.Div or BD and desirably have at least 8 years of relevant ministry experience.

Interested and suitable candidates are requested to send their detailed resume on email ID (searchcommittee.dbf@gmail.com) by 31st July 2020

Chairman - Search Committee

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Department for Advanced Theological Studies

Invites Application for
Ph.D. in Christian Studies

SHUATS is now accepting through its Department for Advanced Theological Studies (DATS) applications for Ph.D. programme in Christian Studies (Six Semester).

This programme is offered in a compressed semester format and will allow qualified candidates to pursue research while maintaining tenure in their respective institutions.

Eligibility Criteria:

University Master's level qualification in any discipline with some theological background.

OR

Candidates having a Bachelor degree in any discipline from a recognized university with a theological degree from a reputed seminary can be enrolled in the third semester (Second Year) of MA Christian Studies offered by Faculty of Theology SHUATS before entering to PhD programme.

Cost of the Programme:

M.A. Christian Studies – Rs. 8,500/- per semester

Ph.D. Christian Studies -Rs. 36,000/- per semester

Last date of the submission of the form is 15th August, 2020.

Interview, Entrance Exam & Orientation will be held on Wednesday the 26th August, 2020.

The application forms can be downloaded from the SHUATS website
http://shuats.edu.in/forms/phd_christian_studiesnew.pdf

For further information you may contact:

**Head Department for Advanced Theological Studies,
Faculty of Theology**

SHUATS, - Naini, Allahabad-211007, U.P., India. Contact: 0532-2684507,
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Email ID: samuelrichmond@rediffmail.com datschristianstudies@gmail.com
http://shuats.edu.in/coll_cats.asp

Intercessory
Prayer
Points



June 2020

1 MONDAY Thank God for His protection over us throughout the month of May. Thank God for those who have stepped up to help the needy and the poor. Thank God for those who sacrificially gave themselves for the sake of others in this difficult time. Thank Him for all the things He has done for us.

2 TUESDAY Pray for those who are in authority to make decisions out of love. Pray that God may give them wisdom and compassion as they handle various things during this pandemic.

3 WEDNESDAY Pray for migrant workers, students and those working in private sectors who are desperate to go home during this pandemic that God would provide a way for them to reach home safely.

4 THURSDAY Pray for the Board of Christian Community Church, Chattisgarh. Pray that they may stand strong amidst trials and hardships and be a strong model to the believers in the state.

5 FRIDAY Today is World Environment Day. Pray that everyone around the world will take ownership

for their environment and will actively engage in the protection of our earth.

6 SATURDAY Pray that Covid19 spread would stop. Pray for healing and full restoration for those who are suffering from this virus. Pray for healthcare professionals and medical fraternity that God would protect them and help them to lovingly serve the sick people.

7 SUNDAY World Food Safety Day. Food and food safety are highly important for our livelihood. This day is celebrated to make people aware of the harmful consequences of contaminated food and water. Pray for awareness. Pray for eradication of diseases like food poisoning and jaundice etc. Pray also that every individual would have enough food to survive.

8 MONDAY Pray for children at risk. During this pandemic, we saw a lot of children suffering as they walked long distances with their parents. Trafficking has also increased. Pray that God would hear our cry for help and keep the children safe and provided.

9 TUESDAY Pray for the Voice of

Christians Evangelical Church, Punjab. Pray that as they witness Christ in market places and teach, preach God's Word and serve the people with healing ministry that God would get all the glory and everything that they do would bring good to the people.

10 WEDNESDAY Pray for Vongzawl Presbytery (PCI) in Assam. Pray for Holy Spirit's guidance and intervention as they serve the church.

11 THURSDAY Pray for Utilize People's Potential Action for Humanities and Research (UPPAHAR) at Andhra Pradesh. Pray that God would use this ministry as his instrument to touch many lives.

12 FRIDAY Today is World's day against child labour. Child Labour is a major area of concern so as to spread awareness about this heinous crime. Pray for people who are working to eradicate child labour. Pray for awareness. Pray also that every child would enjoy their childhood and be able to pursue their dreams.

13 SATURDAY Pray for the Church of the Four Square, Karnataka. Pray for their ministry that involves church planting, short term training, women, youth and children ministries. Pray that the Lord will multiply their work.

14 SUNDAY Pray that God would sustain your local church despite social distancing. Pray that hearts would grow fonder for Him and for fellow believers. Pray that God's Word would be freely and abundantly shared.

15 MONDAY World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Pray for elder people in your community. Pray that we may be kind, loving and caring towards them in our homes or communities. Pray for old aged homes to lovingly take care of them. Pray that each elder would live a dignified life till the end of their lives.

16 TUESDAY Pray for Tribals Transformation India, Karnataka. TTI is committed to share the Good News and to bring wholeness to the community. Pray that the ministry would effectively evangelize, plant churches, train leaders and work for community development.

17 WEDNESDAY Pray for the Pocket Testament League, Uttar Pradesh. Pray that through them, God would reach out to many unreached people in North India and Nepal. Pray for their new believers' discipleship training to be simple, meaningful and effective. Pray for strength and renewed commitment to serve God.

18 THURSDAY Pray for the Union Church Coonoor, Tamil Nadu. Pray that every person whom the Lord brought to this church may feel welcomed and comfortable. Pray for the sweet fellowship of the members of this church that many new people would be drawn to them and to God.

19 FRIDAY Pray for the Wesleyan Church, Gujarat. Pray that God may enable and equip them to share God's extravagant love with people. Pray that people who come in contact with them would experience life in Jesus Christ with them and join their celebration.

20 SATURDAY Today is World Refugee day. World Refugee Day commemorates the obstacles refugees face each year, while also celebrating their courage and strength. Pray that together, we can work to end the refugee crisis and find homes for displaced peoples worldwide. Pray that they would encounter Christ in their deepest needs.

21 SUNDAY Today is Fathers' Day. Thank God for your godly father who taught you the ways of God. Pray for all the fathers to take their role in a family seriously and give their best to their families.

22 MONDAY Pray for the Disciples of Christ Church, Chattisgarh. Pray for love, mercy and goodness to overflow the members of this church. Pray that in everything, their conduct may be praise-worthy.

23 TUESDAY Today is International Widows' Day. Pray for those whom you know personally. Pray that they would be able to overcome challenges by trusting God. Pray that their hope would be in God and they would feel complete with God.

24 WEDNESDAY Pray for UDHAR Multipurpose Society, Maharashtra. Pray that they would faithfully and diligently work so that they would be able to reach their goals.

25 THURSDAY Pray for Zeliangrong Baptist Church, Manipur. Pray that the Lord would speak to them personally through His Words and that they would

be faithful followers and witnesses of Christ in their culture.

26 FRIDAY International Day against Illicit Trafficking. Pray for awareness. Pray for those who are working towards eradication of trafficking. Pray that people would join hands and fight against this social evil and win over it. Pray today also for victims of torture that God would strengthen them and restore them in all areas of their lives.

27 SATURDAY Let us pray for ourselves that our lives may be transparent and highly commendable as Christ's return is near. Pray that we may fully give ourselves in the service of King Jesus and influence many lives with His beauty.

28 SUNDAY Pray for all the pastors who are teaching and preaching the Word of God today. With this 'new normal', pray that all the pastors may be equipped and effectively serve the church.

29 MONDAY Pray for Vatsalya Ministry, Training & Development Centre for Mentally Challenged at Gujarat. Pray for the staff in this ministry to prayerfully train others who would reach out the mentally challenged people with love, concern and care.

30 TUESDAY Thank God for His sustaining grace upon us. Pray for protection. Pray for those who have lost loved ones during this difficult time.

Obituary for Bishop Duraising James



Bishop Duraising James was promoted to glory on the 5th of May, 2020. Bishop James served the Evangelical Fellowship of India, as the CEEFI Secretary from 1991 to 2001, based in Hyderabad. During his tenure, he used to conduct CEEFI Sunday School Teachers training programmes. Bishop James was approachable and friendly. He guided and helped the Staff very lovingly. We missed him a lot after he resigned to return to his pastoral ministry. We praise God for the life of Bishop Duraising James. Bishop James is survived by his daughter, son-in-law, son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren.

May God comfort and strengthen his children and grandchildren.

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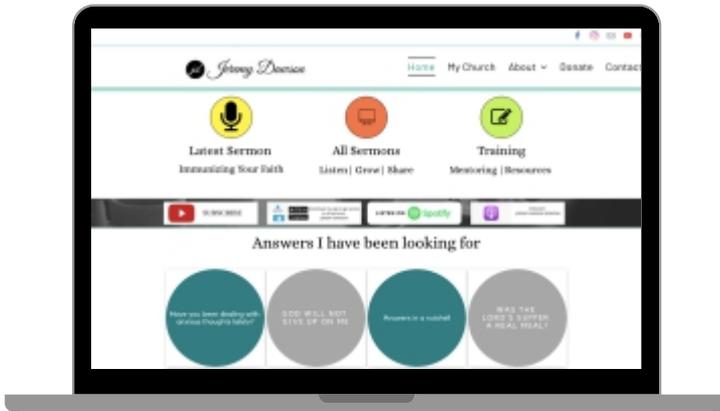


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