

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF EFI PUBLICATION TRUST

aim

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A Journey of Faith

H A P P Y
Mother's Day



*He will never leave you nor forsake you.
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.*
Deuteronomy 31:8

DAY OF
PRAYER
— & —
FASTING

Let us join in fervent prayer for the healing of
our nation and the world from Covid-19

FRIDAY 7th MAY 2021



Facilitated by



Catholic Bishops Conference of India
(CBCI)



National Council of Churches in India
(NCCI)



Evangelical Fellowship of India
(EFI)

A Journey of Faith

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Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

As India struggles with a massive and severe second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the loss of lives is mounting up. Till now we have lost over 2,18,000 people to this virus and our daily cases tally has crossed 4,00,000 cases a day, which is the highest ever reported by a country in a day. Experts say that the numbers are under-reported, and that the death tally and the daily cases tally are much higher.

Our hearts are broken by the visuals on television and social media, particularly of crematoriums being packed as people line up the bodies of their loved ones for the last rites. Because crematoriums have run out of space and facilities, public places including parks have been

converted into crematoriums to deal with this new reality.

A New York times article by Jeffery Gettleman captures this bleak picture of New Delhi, the Capital of India, where health infrastructure is better than most places in the country: "Crematoriums are so full of bodies, it's as if a war just happened. Fires burn around the clock. Many places are holding mass cremations, dozens at a time, and at night, in certain areas of New Delhi, the sky glows. Sickness and death are everywhere..... I'm sitting in my apartment waiting to catch the disease. That's what it feels like right now in New Delhi with the world's worst coronavirus crisis advancing around us. It is out

there, I am in here, and I feel like it's only a matter of time before I, too, get sick."

The situation is even worse in villages. Scroll reported how in villages, "people are dying of fever and breathlessness even before they can be tested for the disease." "People are dropping dead like flies," it grimly noted.

Social media is full of requests for hospital beds, oxygen and ventilators prompting media to comment on how Twitter is functioning like a covid helpline in India and has become a nerve center and hope for people to survive this pandemic.

The Church too has suffered losses and many Bishops, Pastors and leaders have been lost to covid-19. In three districts of Maharashtra alone, over 20 Pastors have succumbed to covid-19, while in Dangs in South Gujarat, according to local leaders, at least 35 pastors and influential leaders have passed away due to covid-19. A church leader told me, "Every morning I fear picking up my phone, wondering whose death will I mourn today."

At a time like this, tough questions must be asked. Reuters recently reported how the Indian government, in March 2021, ignored warnings by a forum of scientific advisers set up by the government itself of a new and more contagious variant of the coronavirus taking hold in the country. Despite the warning, the scientists said, the federal government did not seek to impose major restrictions to stop the spread of the virus.

Ironically, it was in March itself that our Union Health Minister, Dr. Harsh Vardhan proudly proclaimed that "We are in the end game of the COVID-19 pandemic in India".

Ashish K Jha, the dean of the Brown University School of Public Health, writing in an Op-Ed in Hindustan times observed, "..in late-February and early March, infection numbers were rising quickly. And certainly, by mid- to late-March, the rise was extremely obvious to anyone paying attention. And yet, through all of March, there was little to no action by the government. This was a collective and shocking policy failure." He also ascribes

blame on non-adherence to basic public health guidelines and a misplaced belief that India had beaten Covid-19, when in fact no one in the world had beaten it.

Vaccines are in short supply even as demand for them is soaring. Adar Poonawalla, the chief executive of the Serum Institute of India, the world's biggest vaccine manufacturer, has said that the shortage in supply would go on till July 2021. Only a few weeks earlier the authorities were congratulating themselves on vaccine diplomacy, as India supplied more than 65 million doses of vaccines to 91 countries including some of the poorest countries in the world in Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean as well as some of our neighbors. Questions are now being raised on this especially in the light of the short supplies in the country.

But despite the questions, the focus now should be on saving lives, containing the spread of the pandemic by adhering to public safety guidelines like wearing masks, not stepping out of the house unless necessary and scaling up testing. We should also increase the vaccination drive and genome sequencing.

The Church has a big role to play in containing the pandemic and making the country ready for the future fight. The time is to pray earnestly and to extend relief and hope to a nation that is struggling. Our institutions and organizations are already playing a major role in this and we must continue to look out for avenues where we can do more to strengthen our involvement in relief, healthcare, and public awareness.

We must also pray earnestly that God will have mercy on us as a nation and on the world. The Catholic Bishops Conference of India, National Council of Churches in India and the Evangelical Fellowship of India have issued an appeal to all Churches in India to observe the 7th of May 2021 as the Day of Prayer and Fasting for the healing of our nation and the world from Covid-19. Let us join in huge numbers and cry out to God who alone can save.

Most of all let us continue to be super spreaders of Hope, in an environment of fear and uncertainty.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal



My Mother, My Teacher

Mr. Chacko Thomas

A Happy Mother's Day to all mothers!!!

Of all the days we celebrate, Mother's Day seems to be among the tops, perhaps only after Christmas. This is judging it by the number of cards, flowers, presents, given on Mother's Day across the world.

Mother's Day is a great occasion to appreciate all mothers. Mothers include not just one's own mother, or one's wife who is a mother. It includes all mothers in the family, church, neighbourhood, and all we come across. And mothers without discrimination of caste or social standing or religious affiliation. All mothers, even those near and far.

However, we do not want to forget those couples, for reasons known or unknown to them, who are not able to become parents. We have such people too in our lives. We should not underestimate their pain, especially on Mother's Day. This is a sad reality for one couple, in about every six marriages.

In God's providence, days before sitting down to write this article, I read a small Christian book entitled, "INFERTILITY, The Silent and Unseen Issue." It is written by a Christian couple who shared their agony of being unable to conceive and have children. Now (sadly, only now), I have an awareness of what such couples go through, especially emotionally and spiritually. We

should be very careful to promise a miracle to such couples because of a handful of exceptions in the Bible. They carry their pain, as do all mothers too.

Motherhood is not a bed of roses. I have observed my mother, when older (earlier being too blind or even foolish). I have also seen it firsthand with my own wife. Although, my wife and I wanted a larger family, we were forced to abandon the idea. And from the two, the Lord gave us, he took one from us, our son, at the age of 17, leaving a huge, painful hole in our hearts. My wife and daughter seem to cope better than me, even after 18 years. Sunil passed away in 2003. (But we rejoice in the hope of seeing him again in heaven. Heaven has never been as special; we did not know it is everywhere in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.)

"My Mother, My Teacher", is the title of a book I read few decades ago. It was written by Rev. P. T. Chandapilla. The title stayed with me, although I cannot recall much else now. (Sometimes, the best thing about a book is its title and/or subtitle.) Obviously, the author wrote it in appreciation of

his mother, whose contributions and sacrifices have been significant to him and his life and ministry which impacted millions. (Everyone ought to write something about their parents even if it is only for our own posterity.)

D.L Moody, the great evangelist, talks about returning home after a long absence. It was going to be a big "surprise" for his mother. He entered the house, she was not in the living room, so he went from room to room and did not find her there. He commented that it did not feel like coming home. The house was there, but his mother was missing. That made all the difference. Oh, the role of a mother to make the house, a home.

Have you noticed children when they bump their head somewhere or fall and bruise themselves? They run past all the other aunties who brought them sweets and toys and entertained them; they run to their mother. Her embrace and kiss, seems to make it all go away. What magic!

King David speaks of his Mother. One man who wrote a lot about his mother, more than any

that I can think of, in the Bible, is King David. It was not beneath his dignity, for this warrior, musician, administrator, ruler, to speak of his mother in his Psalms. See Psalm 22:9 where the KING talks about being in his mother's womb and feeding from his mother's breasts [NASB]. He talks about being "fearfully and wonderfully made". Perhaps, his mother was his theology teacher? His, is not a Macho theology. She may also have been his worship leader and music teacher, who made him, a "man after God's own heart", without taking away his manhood. He was a "man's man" and also God's man.

The Bible Narrative is silent about David's childhood, although David himself is not so silent about it. Study the Psalms he wrote, more than 75 of them. Allow me to quote two paragraphs from Rev. Dr. Tom Houston's book on David. It is subtitled "Reflections on King David for today's leaders." Rev. Houston shares some insights on David's childhood, gleaned from David's Psalms.

"There are strands in the Psalms, however, that may help us. In his poetry, he makes some allusions

to his early life. There was the influence of his mother. We do not know her name or where she came from. She had grown daughters that she took with her into her second marriage [to Jesse, the father of David]. David must have been a much longed-for son born in her later years. We do not know how long she lived. She was still alive when He had to flee, with all his family, as an outlaw, to the cave of Adullam, near the border of Philistines, their enemy. After he saw to their safety from there, we hear no more about either parent. We know that he remembered and admired and tried to emulate the way his mother had served the LORD (Psalms 86:16, 116:16)"

"More than once he speaks with some awe of his birth. Are we hearing a reflection of his mother's talk to her son, in a not too welcoming household? Speaking about God, he said, 'it was you who brought me safely through birth, and when I was a baby, you kept me safe. I have relied on you since the day I was born, and you have always been my God (Ps 22:9-10). "You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because you

are to be feared; all you do is strange and wonderful. I know it with all my heart. When my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother's womb, when I was growing there in secret, you knew that I was there – you saw me before I was born. The days allotted to me had all been recorded in your book, before any of them ever began (Ps.139:13-16). Whatever the source of such reflection, there is a strong sense of divine providence shaping his life from the beginning."

David regarded his mother as a "maidservant of the Lord." He prayed in Psalm 86:16 "... save the son of your maidservant." Again, in Psalm 116:16, "...I am your servant, the son of your maidservant." Interesting, that he does not pray on the merit of being the son of Jesse.

However, David's father is not to be discounted, because David's credentials to be the King of Israel came through his father. Jesse was from the tribe of Judah, with an illustrious background, with Boaz and Ruth (a Moabitess) as rich grandparents. God had promised that the kings of Israel would

come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8-10). Not just another kingly tribe, but also the predecessor of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:1-9, 10-16, Matt 1:5-6). David owes much to his father, although he was probably more shaped by his absence than his presence. I hope that I'm wrong, here.

This brings me to an important question about parent-child relationships, although it is an excursion. What do we do if we did not have such good relationship with our parents? Most of us are not blessed with perfect parents. Briefly, it is that when God says, "Honour your Father and Mother", he is not asking us to honour their character, that may not be honorable. He is asking us to honour their position. It is like in the Army, we salute not the Officer's character, but his position. If our parents have ruined our lives in any way, the Bible's answer is not disrespect, or disregard and certainly not hatred or revenge. It is forgiveness. Forgiveness frees us and enables us to come out on top. Whereas, the opposite enslaves and destroys us.

Now back to our topic. David's mother is not the only unknown mother in the world. She represents, millions, rather billions of unsung heroes. I close this article by recommending you to a book "**Lost Women of the Bible**" by **Carolyn Custis James**. Brother George Verwer [GV] got my daughter to review it for him [GV cannot possibly read all the books that are sent to him, although a great reader, himself]. Well, after my daughter, her parents also ended up reading it. Out of about ten women the author wrote about, my favourite is her chapter on Noah's wife, entitled, Mrs. Noah. James argues in fact, there were eight people in the ark, rather than just Noah, is to the credit of that great women. That her sons, daughters-in-law all did not walk away from this mission that everyone else ridiculed, is because she (Mrs. Noah) followed her husband and his God and encouraged her sons to do the same as well as her daughters -in-law. We will get her proper name when we meet her on that great reunion day. Wow, was she rewarded!

And be sure to claim your rewards from the Lord, as did

Moses' mother, for looking after her own son. She was paid by the palace (Exodus 2:9). Mothers you are serving the Lord's purposes. The Lord will richly reward you.

Meanwhile, God bless all the Mrs. Jesses and all the Mrs. Noahs and all the mothers of the world.



Mr. Chacko Thomas

is presently a Minister-at-large with Operation Mobilisation. He served for 15 years on the OM Ships Logos, Doulos, and Logos II. His ministry has taken him to 107 countries in six continents. One of his few passions is to see the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord and His values blessing the nations. He can be contacted on chacko.thomas@om.org



'An epitome of beauty
A symbol of compassion
A comforter in tears
A friend like no other..
Caressing with her love
Is a MOM,

God's wonderful creation!'

#Special greetings to all the beautiful 'moms', to stay healthy and happy!

Happy Mother's Day!

Being the second creation as God's own handiwork, Eve was brought into this world to complete a man, in fact to complete the world itself. In God's eyes, every woman has always been considered as a beautiful treasure. Though created a little bit weaker in terms of physical

strength, she's made a lot stronger to conquer the impossible through her undefinable will-power...

Motherhood defines the best part of a woman's life in addition to being the most cherished phase in a man's life and the irreplaceable treasure in her child's heart..

A woman though shines like gold.. she sparkles as a diamond when she becomes a "mother".

In the Holy Scripture, there are countless encounters noted which marks the uniqueness of a mother's greatness...Almost 321 times in 293 verses (according to King James Version), the word

'mother' has been mentioned in our Bible. Let's get to know 'M-O-M-S'c the way our Creator praises..

M for 'MERCIFUL' MOM

If I ask you, 'Who loves you the most?' I'm sure 99% would affirm it to be your moms. Though dads are irreplaceable, moms hold a special in our hearts. We could speak or sing endlessly to show gratitude to our mothers who made it possible for us to be a part of this world ..

'God has inscribed you in His hands ..and mom has held you in her hands'..

Lord Jesus, while carrying the cross met the compassionate moms who out of mercy, cried seeing the Saviour's painful mistreatment (Luke 23 :28)which made God say to them to not worry about Him as they are the ones to care the most about their families.

O for 'OCCUPATIONAL' MOM

From time immemorial, moms are known for their relentless efforts to serve their families and to safeguard the welfare of every individual. We work to fill our

pockets or to pay our debts or to satisfy our needs. But *she works day and night, selflessly, just to see you smile...Isn't that amazing?..Thank her for all that she's done for you!*

Proverbs 31 : 17 says "***She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms***"...The account of a 'virtuous wife' as recorded in Proverbs 31:10-31, sheds light on the professional competency of a MOM who could manage both business works and household chores with appreciable success and applauds of praise from her family members.

M for 'MEDITATIVE' MOM

When talking about true meditation that made all her worries go away to the point of remembering her sorrows no more...who could forget the beautiful tear-filled prayers of Hannah (1 Samuel2 :1-10). Her meditative nature not just helped her to enjoy motherhood; instead she was the mother of Samuel, Israel's first prophet who spent his entire life with utmost meditation to serve the Almighty. ***A woman who meditates gets stronger but a mother who***

meditates gets more stronger and powerful..

S for 'SACRIFICING' MOM

A talk about mom without the mention of her innumerable sacrifices is of no significance. Every mom sacrifices her life for the happiness of her family. She harvests her time, health, hobbies, interests and ambition for the joy she reaps by seeing the prosperity in her children.

One mom who stood exceptional for her sacrificing nature was the Syro-Phoenician mom (Mark 7 : 25-30) who readily sacrificed her dignity through the faith she possessed, to the extent of being counted as a little dog just to see the Jehovah Rapha healing her sick daughter. Similarly, there are many remarkable incidents recorded in the Old as well as New Testaments which proves the dedication and love of a mother towards her children, thus instilling a special respect in our hearts towards our moms.

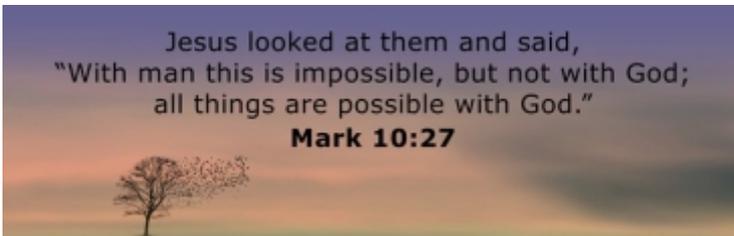
“From womb to tomb..she cares for her child..Cherish her!

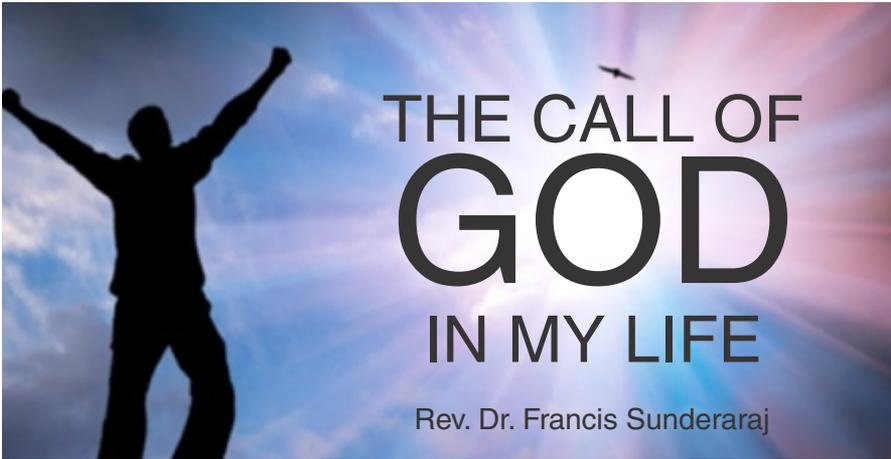
From eternity to eternity..God loves His children..Praise Him!!”



Ms. Princy Priya

born and brought up as an ardent Christian in the emerald isles of Andaman and Nicobar is presently pursuing Masters in Education (M.Ed.) from Madras University. Being inspired by God's wonderful Words, she is also a blog-writer. She can be reached at prinspark20@gmail.com





It was a Sunday evening in 1960. As usual I was in my Church at Chennai, formerly known as Madras, South India, as a member of the choir taking part in the evening worship service. The Emmanuel Methodist Church was known for the singing, and simple and dynamic worship.

Though I was outwardly participating in the worship service, deep inside I was in a desperate condition. Desperate because of the frustrating inconsistency I was going through in my spiritual life and the sense of lack of direction concerning my future. I said to



(Rev. Francis and Mrs. Bhanu Sunderaraj)



(With the Family)

myself, "I must meet the Pastor after the worship service is over and seek his guidance."

Rev. Alfred Schneck, Pastor of the Church, was a wonderful man of God. He and his wife, Marie Schneck came to India as missionaries from the USA to serve the Methodist Church in India, which was part of the United Methodist Church in the USA. About his spiritual experience Mrs. Schneck says, "Al was discouraged about the Chennai Church. Not much was happening and he was hard put to preach both morning and evening messages. He was not gifted as a speaker but spoke sincerely and from his heart. One Sunday evening Al invited Rev. Wilfred Kurt, missionary with the Strict Baptist Mission to preach. The Holy Spirit directed Al to go to the altar at the conclusion of Rev. Kurt's message, and without any thing being said, Al went to the altar crying and confessing the need of the Lord. Everyone left the church quietly, leaving him alone with God at the altar."

The following Sunday morning, Rev. Schneck stunned the congregation by confessing that

all along he had been serving the church without salvation experience, and that only at the previous Sunday evening worship service, he had repented and accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord, and had the assurance of salvation. He was in tears. His sincere and touching testimony had a profound impact on the congregation. It was the beginning of revival in that church.

That evening after everyone had left, I approached Pastor Schneck and shared with him my desire to meet him privately. In spite of his busy schedule, he took me to his study and gave me a patient hearing. He then opened his Bible and gave me a verse from it, which is, "The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it (1 Thes. 5:24). He urged me to hold on to Christ at all times and prayed with me. The Spirit of God touched me anew, and since then this verse has become my life text.

I was born in a simple middle class Anglican family in Chennai on April 7, 1937. My father retired as a Section Manager in the Corporation of Chennai. I always remember him as a very

humorous and helpful person. My mother retired as a teacher. She was resolute in her faith and was a disciplinarian. We are three brothers and I am the middle one. Our sister Dora died when she was just three years old. My elder brother Bhaskar was a Vice-President in a USA Investment Company. He passed away in 2019. My younger brother Lionel is an ENT surgeon in the USA. From my childhood days, I was very active in St. Paul's Church, Chennai, as a choir member and an altar boy. I was good in studies and active in sports.

On a Saturday evening in 1954 at age of 17, I attended a Youth for Christ meeting held at the Memorial Hall at Chennai. The speaker was Rev. Cyril Thompson, an Anglican priest from England, actively involved in Youth for Christ in India. While he was sharing the gospel message, the Holy Spirit convicted me of my sins and spoke to me that Christ could make my life meaningful in this world, if only in faith I surrendered myself to Him. After some struggle within me, I gave myself to Christ trusting that He would lead me on according His will and purpose.

After the meeting was over, I stayed back for counseling. My counselor was Dr. Norton Sterrett, a missionary from the USA, who was on the staff of the Union of Evangelical Students of India. Both these men were godly men with deep commitment to Christ and great love for the people of India. After the experience, I could sense a change within me—spending time in reading God's Word, praying, and getting involved in reaching out to others with the transforming love of Jesus Christ. There was joy unspeakable within me, something I had never experienced.

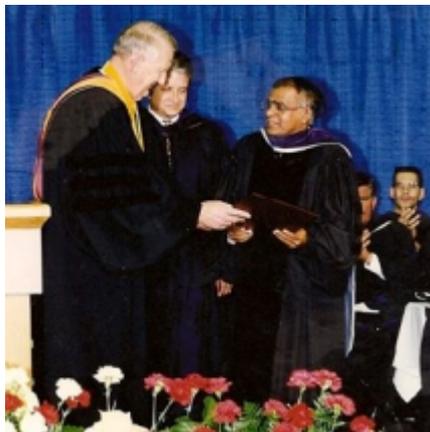
As days went by, I began to realize that in spite of the assurance of salvation in Christ and the availability of His grace, I must 'work out' and 'make efforts', as the Apostle Paul says, to maintain and to grow in faith in Him. There were times when I could not hold on. There were times when I went astray that made me feel disappointed with myself. I was desperate. It was in this condition, that I met with Pastor Schneck that Sunday morning.

Rev. Dr. Samuel Kamaleson, a

young singer and dynamic preacher of the Word, succeeded Rev. Schneck. During this time, I was very active in the Church, and a leader in the area of evangelism. I regularly went to the nearby slums and villages with the evangelistic team of the Church, rejoicing whenever some one in those places received Christ or became a seeker. In my eagerness to win souls, I never seriously considered their economic and social plight. I never raised questions within me, such as: Why are these people so poor? Why do they live in slums? What is the cause? Why there are no proper health care and drinking water facilities in villages?

After obtaining the Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Chemistry from Madras Christian College, Chennai, in 1957, I decided to pursue employment as Chemist. For about two years, I worked as a Chemist in the Water Works Department of the Corporation of Chennai. Since that was the time the Rapid Gravity Filters were introduced at Chennai, I was trained to operate the system and to treat the water to make it potable. Two years later, to better my prospects, I

joined the Tube Products of India, situated twenty-five kilometers from Chennai as a Chemist. The job was very challenging because the factory was newly started and produced steel tubes for various purposes. I was thankful to God for this opening as it had a materially prosperous future; however at the same time deep within me I had a feeling that I was missing something special God had for me.



(Conferred Doctorate at Biola University, USA before addressing the Graduating Students)



(Delegates from India at an International Conference organized by the Evangelical Alliance of Asia in Thailand. Rev. Sunderaraj was the General Co-coordinator)

At this point of my life, a weeklong Deeper Life convention was organized in my Church at Chennai. The speaker was Dr. J.T.Seamonds, a well-known Methodist preacher and a professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, USA. One evening, after his Spirit-filled sermon, he invited the young people in the congregation to dedicate themselves to full-time Christian ministry. Impelled by the Holy Spirit, I went to the altar and surrendered myself to the Lord. I said to Him, "I am willing to go, please help me, and guide me when I should step out." I continued to be active in the Church.

The following year, I received an invitation to join a Company owned by a well-known Christian family which was planning to start a paints manufacturing factory at Chennai. In my discussions with the Managing Director of the Company, I shared with him my intention to enter full time ministry. As the family was in need of financial help, I also requested him for a job for my father who had just retired from service. After a brief pause, he said to me, "I appreciate your intention. But listen; here is an

opportunity before you for a bright future, earning as much as you can and helping those who are in need. Maybe God wants you here." I went home puzzled. Maybe God did want me to work and give my earning to those who labor in His vineyard. After a few days, I met him at his office and informed him that I would join his Company.

Two months later, the Managing Director sent me to Kolkata, formerly known as Calcutta. The train journey to Kolkata was a long one. I had mixed feelings of apprehension and expectation - apprehension because I was going to a totally new place where no one knew me personally and expectation because I knew that the One who had called me was faithful, and that He would take care of me and enlarge the area of my influence. Though the Company provided everything, deep within me I was restless and had a feeling of guilt that I had disobeyed God in not stepping out in faith to serve Him fully. I struggled daily in my job.

During that period, Dr. Theodore Williams who was on a missionary survey, was passing through Kolkata. He spent some

time with me sharing his conviction that there was a need for missionaries and that he had a missions-vision for India. He was totally dedicated to missions. God spoke to me through him. Finally, I could not resist the Call. I wrote to my parents and to my pastor at Chennai about my decision. My parents wrote back requesting me to stay on with the job as the family needed my financial support. The pastor sent me a telegram that everything had been arranged for me at Union Biblical Seminary at Yavatmal, Maharashtra, and that I could proceed. After much prayer and being totally convinced of the call of God, I tendered my resignation, and not knowing where exactly Yavatmal was, proceeded by train in first week of August 1962. It was absolutely a step of faith. On the first night at the Seminary, I cried to God saying, "God, You know that my intention is not to let you and my parents down. But as You know, I could not resist Your call. I do not know what the future holds for me. I just give myself to You. Please lead me on."

Initially, it was a big struggle for me in the Seminary. Once again, I had come under the discipline of

student life. It was a strict residential institution and the students were closely watched and monitored. I was just given Rs.8/- per month as pocket money in the first year and it was raised to Rs.20/- the next two years. But, God was wonderfully faithful to me. The Seminary life taught me the importance of the Word of God, how to study it, and the necessity of maintaining healthy inter-personal relationships for fruitful ministry.

After my studies at UBS, I joined the Pastoral staff at the Emmanuel Methodist Church in 1965. The senior Pastor was Dr. Sam Kamaleson. Pastor Kamaleson was a wonderful singer and dynamic preacher, versatile and astute. It was a time of learning, what the pastoral ministry was! The same year I got married to Sheila Bhanu, a committed Christian. She always stood with me right through my ministry. After two years, we both along with our 8-month-old daughter, left for Malaysia to serve God and His people through the Methodist Church.

In 1970, I proceeded to Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, to do MTh for a year and then

joined the faculty of UBS, at Yavatmal. But my heart was for the pastoral ministry and to train the lay people. So, my wife and I returned with our daughter to Malaysia, in 1972. God gave me the grace to influence many young people to walk in Christ. Some of them responded to full time ministry and were sent to UBS at Yavatmal. After completing their studies, they returned to their country to become pastors. We returned to India in 1976.

After returning to India, I took up an assignment with the Evangelical Fellowship of India as the Assistant Secretary of its Christian Education Department (CEEFI). Two years later, I was appointed as the Secretary of the Department. CEEFI gave me an excellent opportunity to train the lay people across India, with a highly dedicated team. Christian Education is absolutely vital for the growth of the Church.

In August 1983, the EFI Executive Committee appointed me as the General Secretary of EFI to take over the post from January, 1984 at the 33rd EFI Annual Convention at Hyderabad. The Lord led me to

invite Brother Bakth Singh to say the installation prayer at the Convention. He came along with a few of his elders and prayed for me.

EFI was formed at the Free Methodist Bible School, Yavatmal in 1951. The leaders determined that the Bible School should be made the Union Biblical Seminary with B.D. Two years later UBS was formed.

We Secretaries in EFI enjoyed working with Dr. John Richard who did what he could in building up the Church through EFI.

The task was immense. We Secretaries determined that our focus must always be building up the Kingdom of God. We had the privilege of conducting annual Conventions, Seminars, Conferences and Institutes in Christian Education, Missions, Management, Stewardship, Evangelism, Reconciliation, Issues relating to Women etc. across India. They were well received.

At the UBS Board of Governors meeting in 1984, Dr. Ben Wati, the then Chairman, proposed my name for the Chairmanship of

Board and it was seconded, and I was elected. For two terms (each term three years), I served as the Chairman. Our Sovereign God wonderfully used the Seminary to produce many outstanding servant leaders. During my tenure, Dr Brian Wintle succeeded Dr Saphir Athyal. One thing I very much appreciated in them was that both were fully focused on the building up of God's Kingdom and not their own Kingdom.

In 1992, I took one year leave from EFI and with my wife, went to Wheaton College Graduate School, Wheaton, USA to do MA in Intercultural studies. God enabled me to do Cross Cultural research at North Laundale Black Community in Chicago. It was an eye opener to me. God gave me many good friends during my stay at Wheaton.

In 1994, the Executive Committee of the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia, now Asia Evangelical Alliance invited me to help EFA as its General Secretary. With the consent of EFA Executive committee, I started serving both EFI and EFA.

Almost all the countries in Asia

have National Evangelical Fellowships and are members of Asia Evangelical Alliance. I visited all of them except the Fellowship in Pakistan, as I could not get the Visa. During my tenure in AEA, we conducted the following Programmes.

1. *The Asia Church Consultation.*
2. *Religious Liberty Consultation.*
3. *The Asia Missions Congress*
4. *Consultation of Leaders of Youth Ministry*
5. *Consultation on Children at Risk in Asia*
6. *Consultation on Women in Asia*
7. *Consultation on Biblical Stewardship*

Three hundred twenty-six Church and Missions leaders from over twenty-four countries participated at the historical EFA(AEA) Conference held at Pattaya, Thailand from October 1 to 5, 2001. I was the General Coordinator of the Conference.

After serving EFA for eight years, I retired in the month of October, 2001. During my term with EFA, I represented EFA on the International Council of World Evangelical Alliance.

Recognizing my academic qualifications and ministerial experience, Dr. Clyde Cook, President of Biola University, California, USA invited me to address the graduating students and to confer on me Honorary Doctorate. It was a joyous and emotional experience.

After my retirement from EFI and EFA, I restricted my ministry to Hyderabad where my wife and I lived till 2019 except once when I had been to UBS to address the graduating students (Extension) and twice to speaking at the Maramon Convention, Kerala as one of the four main speakers (2016 and 2018), invited by the Metropolitan of the Marthoma Church.

In 2019, my wife and I shifted to the Home for Senior Citizens, Richmond Town Methodist Church, Bangalore.

My wife and I are blessed with two children, Mallika Ruth who with her husband John Samuel live in Singapore, and our son Vinodh Samuel who with his wife Sandra Yvonne and their daughter, live in Seattle, USA. All of them are very precious to us.

Several years have gone by since I received the call of God. All these years, He has taken me through various situations. Through them all, I have experienced moments of victory and failure, joy and sorrow, pleasant surprise and unexpected disappointment, and ecstasy and agony. In all these, I have found that “the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning, new every morning. Great is Thy Faithfulness, O Lord; great is Thy Faithfulness.” My wife and I are thankful to our Heavenly Father for having blessed us with two wonderful children and their spouses, and a granddaughter. TO GOD BE THE GLORY.



Rev. Dr. Francis Sunderaraj
*former General Secretary,
Evangelical Fellowship of India
and Asia Evangelical Alliance*



In a railroad town, Pastor Henry Maxwell was preparing his sermon for Sunday, when a man rang his doorbell. Maxwell looked out of his study window. There was a shabbily dressed man at the door. The man wasn't begging, but looking for work. Wanting to get back to his sermon preparation Maxwell, just said that he didn't have any work for him and didn't know of anyone hiring to recommend him to. He told the man he hoped that the man would find work soon. He then went back to preparing his

message on "following Jesus". That happened on Friday.

Two days later, on Sunday, after Maxwell preached, a voice called out from the back of the church, startling everyone. Then, a shabby man walked to the front of the church. It was the same man who had turned up on Friday to ask for work. The man said that he had been out of work, like many others, because of new machinery being introduced in the printing industry and he wasn't trained for it. Then he said,

"I was wondering as I sat there under the gallery, if what you call following Jesus is the same thing as what He taught. What did He mean when He said: 'Follow Me!?' The minister said...that it is necessary for the disciple of Jesus to follow His steps, and he said, the steps are 'obedience, faith, love and imitation.' But I did not hear him tell you just what he meant that to mean, especially the last step. What do you Christians mean by following the steps of Jesus?

I've tramped through this city for three days trying to find a job; and in all that time, I've not had a word of sympathy or comfort except from your minister here, who said he was sorry for me and hoped I would find a job somewhere. I suppose it is because you get so imposed on by the professional tramp that you have lost your interest in any other sort. I'm not blaming anybody, am I? Just stating facts. Of course, I understand you can't all go out of your way to hunt up jobs for other people like me. I'm not asking you to; but what I feel puzzled about is, what is meant by following Jesus. What do you mean when

you sing 'I'll go with Him, with Him, all the way?'

Do you mean that you are suffering and denying yourselves and trying to save lost, suffering humanity, just as I understand Jesus did? What do you mean by it? I see the ragged edge of things, a good deal. I understand there are more than five hundred men in this city in my case. Most of them have families. My wife died four months ago. I'm glad she is out of trouble. My little girl is staying with a printer's family until I find a job. Somehow, I get puzzled when I see so many Christians living in luxury and singing 'Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee,' and remember, how my wife died in a tenement in New York City, gasping for air and asking God to take the little girl too. Of course, I don't expect you people can prevent everyone from dying of starvation, lack of proper nourishment and tenement air, but what does following Jesus mean? I understand that Christian people own a good many of the tenements. A member of a church was the owner of the one where my wife died, and I have wondered if following Jesus all

the way was true in his case. I heard some people singing at a church prayer meeting the other night,

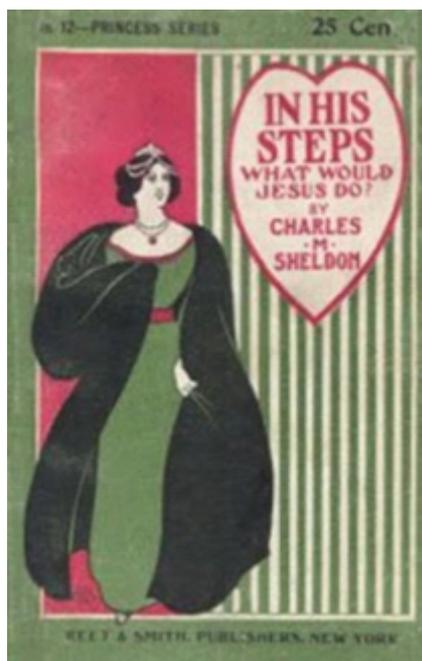
'All for Jesus, all for Jesus,
All my being's ransomed powers,
All my thoughts, and all my doings,

All my days, and all my hours.'

and I kept wondering as I sat on the steps outside, just what they meant by it. It seems to me, there's an awful lot of trouble in the world that somehow wouldn't exist if all the people who sing such songs went and lived them out. I suppose I don't understand. But what would Jesus do? Is that what you mean by following His steps? It seems to me sometimes as if the people in the big churches had good clothes and nice houses to live in, and money to spend for luxuries, and could go away on summer vacations and all that, while the people outside the churches, thousands of them, I mean, die in tenements, and walk the streets for jobs, and never have a piano or a picture in the house, and grow up in misery and drunkenness and sin."

After saying that, the man

collapsed. He was taken to the manse and a doctor visited him over the next few days, but in the end, he died. Maxwell challenged the church the following Sunday to pledge themselves for one year to ask, "What would Jesus do?" before everything they do.



The novel *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon tells the story of that church's one year experiment and how it affected the lives of people both within the church and outside. It was first published serially in 1896 and in book form in 1897, becoming an all-time bestseller.



Janie Tinklenberg, a youth leader at Calvary Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, after re-reading it in 1989, challenged the church's youth group about asking the question and living their lives according to what Jesus would do in their situation. At the time friendship bracelets were the in thing and so, she got a local company to make 300 with WWJD on them. Tinklenberg asked the group to wear them for 30 days. It caught on and spread from there to every state. Many others exploited the youth movement commercially.

Prior Question

Just asking the question "What would Jesus do?" is bit vague. It is left to the individual to decide because there are no specific guidelines to answering the

question. Whereas just asking another question would really focus us on what the issues are when you ask the question "What would Jesus do?" The prior question to ask is, "What did Jesus do?"

I suppose, people don't want to ask that question because it gets too specific and uncomfortable and won't allow them to bask in sentimentality and have a good feeling about being vaguely spiritual.

The first thing we learn about something Jesus did, is about His subjecting Himself to the authority of His earthly parents (Lk. 2:51). Do note that Joseph was not his birth father. I wish I had paid attention to this detail about what Jesus did after I received Jesus as my Saviour. The rest of my family hadn't at that point in time. I felt superior and developed an attitude of self-righteousness. This led to doing wrong and justifying it.

We need to be asking, "What did Jesus do about such and such?" if we are going to find the answer to, "What would Jesus do?" The

following is not a comprehensive list of all the things Jesus did, but it will help us to focus on what we need to do in order to follow Jesus in doing what Jesus would do.

- Jesus made it a habit to be at corporate worship (4:16)
- Jesus was prayerful (Matt. 14:23)
- Jesus was intent on fulfilling all righteousness – living according to the specifics of the Law (3:15)
- Jesus gave importance to children (19:14). Other rabbis ignored children or were harsh toward them.
- Jesus treated women respectfully, unlike other rabbis (Jn. 4:27). He regarded women as “daughters of Abraham” (Lk. 13:16). He was the only rabbi to allow women to join His band of disciples (8:1-3)
- Jesus was downright disrespectful to people who prided in their riches and power (Lk. 12:14-21; 13:31-32; 16:13-15)
- Jesus fought hard against tradition and ritualism (Matt. 9:14-17; Mk. 7:1-23)
- Jesus touched the untouchable (Mk. 1:40-41).
- Jesus permitted the disreputable to touch Him and show their affection in public (Lk. 7:37-38)
- Jesus was kind to people whom others treated badly (Matt. 9:9-13; Lk. 19:1-7)
- Jesus was patient with His slow-learning disciples, willing to teach them again and again. He wasn’t angry with them. He didn’t mock them.
- Jesus was servant to His followers/students (Lk. 22:27; J n . 1 3 : 1 - 1 7) . He said that He had set them an example and they were to serve each other. Even though He is our example in prayer and worship, the only time Jesus used the word “example” is in this connection. Putting others ahead of oneself, is something He taught His disciples again and again (Lk. 9:46-48; Mk. 10:35-45; Lk. 22:24-27). Paul called this the “mind of Christ” (Phil. 2:5, KJV) elaborating on how we ought to consider others first (vv.3-4).
- Jesus forgave those who hurt Him (Lk. 23:34)

The Ultimate Question

Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt.25:40).

Ultimately, the question every believer needs to ask is, “What am I doing today to Jesus?” This question follows from the first question, “What would Jesus do?” That question is about how we conduct ourselves in practical situations and relationships. It is about living out what we say we have inside of us – love for Jesus.

Loving Jesus is not simply saying, “I love you Jesus” in song and prayer. We love to croon about loving Jesus. Love must however not be love in words, but love in deeds. The only way to show love to Jesus today is to show love for His sisters and brothers. If you don’t love sisters and brothers, you don’t love Jesus.

In the end, Jesus will tell some, “I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and

you did not clothe me, I was ill and in prison and you did not look after me” (vv.42-43), because they would not do it for His sisters and brothers (v.45).

People’s needs matter – physical, material, emotional, and spiritual. When I have enough and more, I dare not say, “I’ll pray for your needs and God is going to take care of you” (Jas. 2:16). Faith to be faith must be effective. It must make a difference.

“When it is in your power, don’t withhold good from the one to whom it belongs. Don’t say to your neighbour, ‘Go away! Come back later. I’ll give it tomorrow’—when it is there with you.” (Pro. 3:27-28 CSB). “Make no plans that could result in injury to your neighbour; after all, he should be more secure because he lives near you” (v.29, Voice).

Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan. Some people have tried to give it a spiritual spin to say that it is the story of a sinner’s salvation. The man robbed is the sinner. Religion (represented by the priest and the Levite) can’t help him. The Good Samaritan

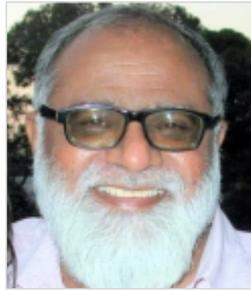
represents Jesus, who is the only one who can save the man.

But Jesus told that story to teach about loving one's neighbour. So, let's interpret the story in the light of the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46) and His saying that whatever we do (or don't do) for sisters and brothers, we do (or don't do) to Him.

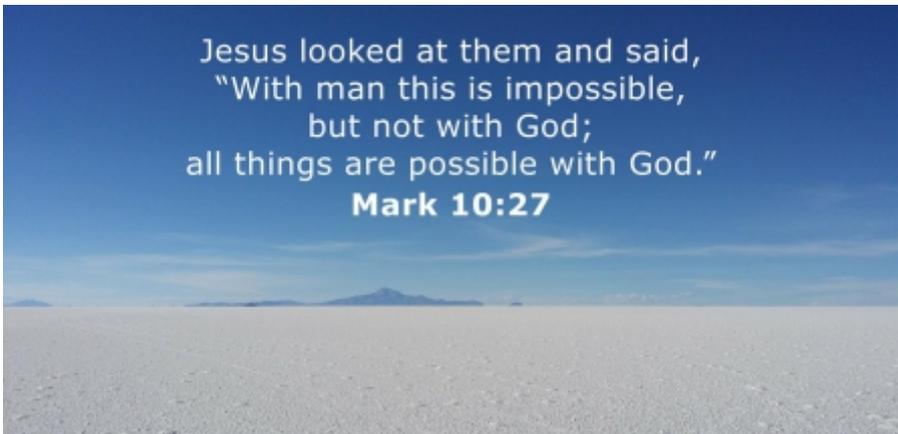
Jesus is the man who is robbed and battered and left to die. Religious goody-goody folks don't help Him. But an outcast of society reaches out to help Him and Jesus says to those who will listen, "Go and do likewise."

Think about it: how we treat

brothers and sisters is how we treat Jesus. What kind of treatment is Jesus getting from you today? When you put or pull someone down, when you mistreat someone, when you deny someone fair treatment, according to Jesus, you have done it all to Him.



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Blessings of a God-Fearing Family

Rev. Dr. David Mende

Introduction

Families are important to God. We see that in both the Old and the New Testaments. As the world celebrates "International Day of Families" on May 15th, let's see how a family can be blessed by the Lord. Psalm 128 continues the theme of God's blessing mentioned in Psalm 127. In Psalm 128, we see that those who fear the Lord will be blessed in every way.

Psalms 120-134 have a common title, "A Song of Ascents." Some scholars say that the Hebrew word translated as "ascents" (means "steps") is related to the verb, "to go up." They say that the Jewish pilgrims sang these songs as they went up to the

Temple during the three annual agricultural festivals. For instance, some say that Psalm 128:2 probably alludes to an agricultural harvest. The main idea I want to focus on in this article is: **Fearing the Lord brings blessings!**

1. Those Who Fear the Lord Will Be Blessed (Ps. 128:1, 4).

In verses 1 and 2, the word "blessed" means "happy." In verse 4, the psalmist says, "Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord." Other psalms also highlight the theme of God blessing those who fear him. For instance, Psalm 112:1 says, "Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his

commandments!" Also, in Psalm 119:1, the psalmist writes, "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord!"

We must align our lives according to God's word. This blessing is for "everyone" who fears the Lord! Now we must not think that material blessings are automatically promised for all those who fear the Lord. This psalm gives a general description of the blessed life in ancient Israel. This psalm is not a universal promise to God's people. In the New Testament, the emphasis is on spiritual blessings more than material blessings. Material blessings are a mere shadow of the eternal blessings.

After making a general statement that those who fear the Lord will be blessed (v. 1), in verses 2-3, the psalmist specifies how God blesses a person who fears him.

2. God's Blessings on Those Who Fear Him (Ps. 128:2-3).

Let's see how God blesses those who fear him.

a. The blessing on the table (v. 2).

This is a reversal of the curse that came as a result of what Adam and Eve ate (Gen. 3:16-17). Eating "the fruit of the labor of your hands" is a covenant blessing (Deut. 28:1-6). The opposite happens when we are disobedient (Deut. 28:33). In those days, people didn't always enjoy the fruit of their labor. People faced war, drought, disease, or plagues regularly. So, enjoying the fruit of their labor was considered a great blessing.

In today's context, the Lord blesses the labor of our hands in our jobs and businesses. The Bible teaches a strong work ethic. We must not be lazy but work hard. The Lord gives us satisfaction as we pursue our vocation.

b. The blessing within the house (v. 3a).

The psalmist writes that "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house," (v. 3a) instead of being a faithless wife whose "feet do not stay at home" (Prov. 7:11). Here, the psalmist uses the metaphor of a vine for a wife. This metaphor suggests delectability (Song 7:8) and childbearing

(Gen. 49:22; Isa 5:1). I believe that even if the wife cannot bear children, the family is still fruitful if she labors for her home and God's kingdom.

c. The blessing around the table (v. 3b).

In Psalm 127:4-5a, the psalmist says that children are like arrows in the hands of the warrior. Here, the psalmist says that children are like olive shoots around the table. An olive tree had several uses. It was useful for its wood, leaves, and oil. An olive tree symbolized well-being (Gen. 8:11) and splendor (Hos. 14:6). Even after being cut down, an olive tree produces new shoots. The Israelites valued children because it was part of the covenant blessings.

There is a sense of community and happiness as the children gather around the table. Children are a great blessing! Vines and olive plants symbolize rich blessing, unlike staple food like wheat. Grapes from the vine and oil from the olive plants were not essential for survival, but they greatly enriched life.

In the same way, a wife and

children are not essential for a man's survival, but they greatly enrich his life. The Israelites undertook pilgrim journeys as a family. Thus, it makes sense that family is given attention in the Songs of Ascents. So, the Lord blesses those who fear him.

3. The Benediction on Those Who Fear the Lord (Ps. 128:5-6).

Zion is the capital of Israel and the temple was situated there. So, to go on a pilgrimage to Zion (v. 5) was to seek God. There were several diasporic Jews who lived outside of Israel. The psalmist pronounces the blessing (barak: blessed of the Lord) that even those who are not in Jerusalem (Zion) would experience God's blessings. Under the New Covenant, since we are made the temple of the Spirit through Christ's sacrifice, all of us can experience God's blessings as the Spirit of God dwells within us.

The godly people in the Old Testament were concerned about "the prosperity of Jerusalem" because it meant the well-being of the Davidic kings

and prosperity for individual families as well. This psalm doesn't advocate individualistic and self-centered families. Our desire must be to see all of God's people blessed. We must care for our community. But families, as well as nations, can succeed only with God's blessings.

Seeing "your children's children" (v. 6) is equivalent to "all the days of your life" (v. 5). And "peace be upon Israel" is equivalent to the prayer that those who fear the Lord may see "the prosperity of Jerusalem" (v. 5). Seeing one's "children's children" was considered a blessing (Gen. 48:11). Seeing great-grandchildren was rare (Job 42:16). These days even seeing grandchildren has become rare because many people are settling abroad. Even in such cases, we must maintain sufficient contact with our extended families. The psalmist prays that peace (shalom: completeness, soundness) would be upon Israel! So, we must pray that the Lord will bless our nation and our rulers.

Conclusion

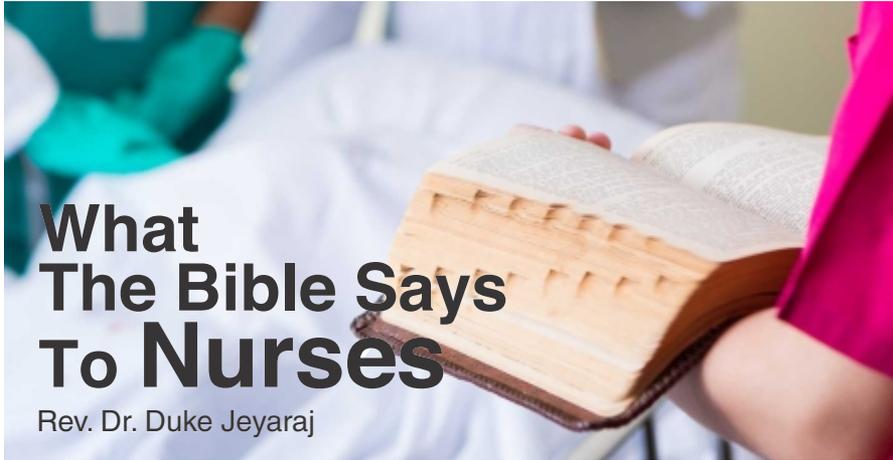
We've seen that: **Fearing the Lord brings blessings!**

As families, our focus must be on godly living, not on earthly blessings. When families seek first the King, his kingdom, and his righteousness, the Lord will bless them in every way! And when we complete our earthly journey faithfully, we will receive eternal blessings!



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What The Bible Says To Nurses

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

May 12 is observed as International Nurses Day. We are grateful to God for the selfless services, nurses world-over, put for the blessing of humanity. The International Council of Nurses records that atleast 1500 nurses from atleast 44 nations have died after contracting Covid-19 from the patients they treated (in a press release done in October 2020 which they readily say is an underestimation).

Sharath Ramesh Kuniyl writes these lines as he reviewed Virus, a Malayalam movie, for The Week magazine: 'Aashiq Abu's Virus is a fitting tribute to them and several other faceless, nameless persons who helped contain and fight the Nipah virus. A series of deaths in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts in May

2018, threw the doctors and state administration into a tizzy as they struggled to identify the disease and the source. Even after it was identified, there was no vaccination or treatment protocol for it. Fear of the unknown spawned fake news, conspiracy theories and spread panic' (June 7, 2019). Rima Kallingal played the character of Akhila 'the Kerala nurse Lini Puthuserry', who succumbed to the rare Nipah infection during its outbreak after (heroically) caring for the first known casualty in the state' (The Indian Express, Dec. 6, 2019).

What does the Bible, God's Word in human words, say to nurses? Here is what I learnt when I meditated on the Bible passages that speak about nurses:

Continue to Make a Difference To One Life At A Time!

When Rebekah was sent by the elders in her family to go with Eliazer, the servant of Abraham, after she consented to marry Abraham's son, Issac, "her nurse" was also sent along with her (Gen. 24:59). The Bible mentions this nurse by name when she died – Deborah (Gen. 35:8). She was not as famous as the other Deborah, the judge of Israel, who was a prophetess and poet. But, she did make a difference to the life of Rebekah. Rebekah's parents wanted her to travel with her as she went far from home to marry a man who was literally a stranger. They believed the nurse Deborah's presence will be reassuring for their precious daughter. Deborah, the nurse of Rebekah, clearly made a positive impact in Rebekah's life.

As a nurse, you may not have the arc-lights on you. The arc-lights may be on the doctor, the surgeon, etc. But take heart. You can touch the world one person at a time, the way nurse Deborah served Rebekah till death. When you care for a patient, think of Rebekah. You are a "nurse" Deborah for that patient "Rebekah"! The God who

recorded a nurse's name in His Book, knows your name and cheers you as you are about to make a difference to this planet, by caring for one patient by one patient, patiently.

See Each Patient As God-Sent To Be Cared For By You!

Evil ruler Pharaoh issued a command that 'every boy who is born to the Hebrews' in his kingdom must be 'thrown into the Nile' (Exodus 1:22, Voice). But Moses' mother refused to obey this command. Instead of throwing her baby into the Nile, she arranged that her baby be towed in that monstrous River on a miniature boat she herself would create. She placed her baby in 'a basket made of reeds, sealed with tar and pitch' and 'wedged the basket among the reeds along the edge of the Nile River' (Exodus 2:3, Voice). I am sure she prayed that her precious son will be miraculously saved by God from menacing crocodiles that perhaps lived in that area. This floating basket that carried little Moses (that was the baby's name!) caught the attention of daughter of Pharaoh who happened to be bathing at the very spot, this basket had miraculously meandered towards. Moses' sister was

secretly watching her baby brother floating in the Nile dangerously. When Pharaoh's daughter recognized her brother to be a Hebrew child, she emerged from the place she hid and said: "Would you like me to find a Hebrew woman to nurse the child for you?" (Exodus 2:7, Voice). To cut a long story short – the mother of Moses was paid by Pharaoh's daughter to nurse her own son (Exodus 2:9). She faithfully fulfilled her role as a nurse and brought back Moses to Pharaoh's daughter, later on (Exodus 2:10). Each time the nurse of Moses – who was also his biological mother – took a look at his angelic face, she knew that this 'baby patient' of hers was God-sent to land on her lap!

Dear nurse, do you grumble and growl because you were assigned to take care of that particular patient – a difficult-to-handle patient? Don't! See that patient as God-sent into your Ward so that you would be able to take good care of him, thinking of the Bible story of Moses' nurse in Exodus 2! This attitude will take you to the altitude that God has for you in your life and profession!

Be Proactive In Your Work As A Nurse

When God blessed Boaz and Ruth with a baby boy, Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi, volunteered to be the child's nurse (Ruth 4:13-16). The Scripture says, "Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse" (Ruth 4:16 ESV). Naomi spent so much time caring for that little boy – Obed who became grandfather of the great king David – that the women of the neighborhood started calling Naomi as the mother of the baby (though she was only the grandmother) (See Ruth 4:17)! Naomi did not say this (though she could have said this as a typical mother-in-law): "Why should I care for little Obed? Let his mom, Ruth, take care of him! What other job does she have in this world? Why should I give her loads of free time to keep romancing her new husband ignoring me totally – me who is taking caring of her bundle of joy - Obed?!"

When you work as a nurse in a hospital, do not just be content doing the bare minimum. Look for fresh opportunities to serve patients and the hospital. "Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people" – that is what the Lord wants us to do no

matter what profession we are in (Colossians 3:23 NLT). If you merely work for a salary then you will only want to do the bare minimum. But since you work for the Saviour primarily, you must proactively do the maximum in your job as a nurse.

Do not be like the careless nurse which 2 Samuel 4:4 talks about: 'Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was disabled in both feet. He was five years old when the news of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse picked him up and fled. But it happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and could no longer walk. A n d h i s n a m e w a s M e p h i b o s h e t h ' (NASB). On 10 February 2019, the newspapers reported this shocking news: the medical team 'left a pair of six-inch surgical scissors inside a patient's stomach during a hernia operation, sparking outrage'. A Christ-following nurse would shun all carelessness and casualness which may have been the cause for such terrible things to happen! A believer nurse's work cannot be categorized as mediocre work and lazy work. Her work will be of top-notch quality.

There is another way in which you can be proactive as a nurse. You

can deliberately and proactively choose to sacrificially serve in Mission Hospitals located in Gospel-starved parts of India – even North India – rather than serve elsewhere. When God said, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Me?", he was not specifically speaking to Isaiah. It was a general call. However, Isaiah volunteered to go for God by saying "Here am I – send me!" Post that, God sent Isaiah to a needy area! Read that story all over again in Isaiah 6, and choose to be a volunteer missionary nurse to a difficult area! You can sacrificially choose to be a nurse in Tripoli (capital of Libya, part of North Africa, one of the world most unevangelized belts), rather than in churches-galore Texas, imitating Isaiah, discerning God's missionary call!

Bring God's Presence Into the Lives of Your Patients

Evil Queen Athaliah wanted to wipe out the last male survivor in the line of David (2 Kings 11:1). The great promise that God made to David through Prophet Nathan that a person from David's physical line would sit on the throne of Israel was under visible threat (II Sam. 7:12-16). That's when God used an ordinary nurse to change the

situation of dire straits. Hear that not-to-familiar-to-most-of-us story straight from Scripture: 'But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes, who were about to be murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah; so he was not killed. He remained hidden with his nurse in the temple of the LORD for six years, while Athaliah ruled the land' (II Kings 11:2-3). This unnamed nurse shielded the last remaining male survivor from David's family in the temple of the Lord for six long years!

The patients you treat may never walk into the temple of the Lord – a local church. But you are to be a living-moving temple of the Lord for that patient (I Peter 2:5)! That patient you treat must feel the living God's very presence in that hospital room! That is why how you react to situations and the kind of language you use in the hospital ward matters. Through your life and lips, you must seek to magnify Christ in the hospital you work! Do not ruin the Christian witness in the hospital you work, by the secret extra-marital affairs you may perhaps

have in the almost-abandoned Christian Mission hospitals you serve in, because you wrongly think no body is watching you!

May the Lord bless you as strive to be the nurse He wants you to be!



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THE FIRST EASTER



Dr. Sanjay Avinash Mall

The first Easter was the most spectacular event that has ever taken place in the history of the world. It heralded the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the grave where He was interred for three days. It was His triumph over death and the grave and Satan once for all time to come.

As we read the accounts of the resurrection in the gospels, we come across various groups of people who reacted differently to this very historic occasion. I have attempted to present the same in the following pages.

- **The Women:**

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb at dawn. They went to the tomb with spices

to anoint the body of Jesus. They had one worry on their mind, which was who would help them to roll the stone away from the mouth of the tomb as it was very heavy. They had been with Jesus when He was on the cross, when He was laid in the tomb. Now, they were rewarded. They were the first two people in the world to know the joy of the Resurrection. We see that they are the first to believe in the resurrection. They were also very afraid when they met the angel inside the tomb who told them not look for the living among the dead. He reminded them from scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. As they were scared, they ran to tell the disciples who did not believe them. They were the

first to share the good news of the resurrection, and also the first ones to rejoice at this greatest event in history.

- **The Disciples:**

The disciples had fled on the night Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. Peter who followed Jesus into the courtyard of the High Priest, denied Him three times. On receiving the news of the resurrection, Peter goes to the tomb and sees the strips of clothing inside. He goes away wondering what had happened. Peter also went back to fishing and he was followed by the other disciples. The disciples were very much afraid at this time and had gathered within closed doors. When the women returned from the empty tomb and told them that Jesus had risen from the dead, they did not believe them. Their memories seemed to have been clouded. They did not remember Jesus telling them that the Son of Man would be betrayed into the hands of sinners and that He would be crucified and rise again on the third day. Jesus himself appeared to them and showed them his hands and side, to make

them believe that He had truly risen from the dead. A week later Jesus again appeared to the disciples and this time, Thomas was with them. We all know what happened next. Jesus also appeared to two men in a different form while they were walking in the countryside. They too came back and reported it to the eleven that Jesus had risen but they did not believe them. Jesus had to come himself in bodily form to convince them that He had risen from the dead.

After His suffering, Jesus appeared to the disciples for over a period of forty days. During this time, He asked them not to leave Jerusalem till they had been clothed with power from on high..

Jesus appeared to the disciples once again when they were gathered behind closed doors. In order to dispel their fears that He was not a ghost, He asked them for something to eat. They gave him a broiled fish which He ate in their presence.

- **The People on the road to Emmaus:**

The two people walking on the road to Emmaus, one of whom

was named Cleopas seemed very confused and discouraged with all that happened in Jerusalem over the last three days. Jesus, walking on the same road, drew close to them and walked along with them. We can break down the conversation that they had with Jesus on the road into the following sections:

- Reflection: They are found to be reflecting on the events going on in the city when Jesus draws close to them on the road.
- Recounting of the events: They recount to Him all that had happened to Jesus during the last few days and about the women going to the grave to find nothing there.
- Rebuked by Jesus: Jesus is angry with them that what had happened was in line with what was written in the scriptures.
- Revelation: They had a close encounter with Jesus, but they were kept from recognising Him until the breaking of the bread at the dining table.
- Recourse to Jerusalem: The two people make recourse to Jerusalem where they find the eleven disciples and declare to them that it is true the Lord

has risen and has appeared to Simon.

- **The Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law:**

We read in the gospels, how the Chief Priests and the Teachers of the Law were desperate to get Jesus out of the way. They plotted and conspired to have Jesus crucified. Jesus faced the most unfair and illegal trial that has ever been conducted in any court of law in the history of the world. In this, they were ably helped by Judas Iscariot who agreed to hand Him over for a mere thirty pieces of silver. The chief priests and the teachers of the Law were the prime accusers of Jesus throughout the trial, during the night after the Last Supper. They also mocked at Him as he hung on the cross.

However, God turned the tables on them after the resurrection. First, they had plotted the death of Jesus. Now, they were busy plotting to cover up the resurrection. Their efforts were now to appease the authorities as the body of Jesus was not found in the tomb. For this, they went out of the way to bribe the guards to tell the people that while they

were asleep during the night, His disciples came and stole His body. Bribing people came very naturally to them, as first they had bribed Judas to hand Jesus over to them. For the guards to be asleep on duty after making the tomb secure, defeats the very purpose for them to be on duty and is an extremely laughable matter. The accusers had now turned into appeasers.

The First Breakfast by the Beach:

Jesus had hosted the Last Supper in the Upper Room, on the night before He was betrayed. In the case of the Last Supper the meal had been prepared on the directive of Jesus by the disciples and someone who is not named in the scripture. However, after being resurrected, he appeared to His disciples for the third time on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. This time it was He who had prepared the breakfast for the disciples.

It was during this time that Jesus restored Peter to His fellowship. During his conversation, Jesus gives a threefold challenge as if it were to parallel the three-fold denial. In the first and the third

challenge, Jesus uses the word, feed. In the second challenge, Jesus asks Peter to "take care of my sheep". Taking care of the sheep involves all the responsibilities of shepherding the sheep.

Conclusion:

Thus, we read what the resurrection meant to the different groups of people and how each group reacted to the most important event in the history of mankind. Let us not be judgemental as to they reacted in their human strength.

It is my prayer that we draw close to God so that we too may understand and be blessed by the power of the Resurrection in our lives.



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Church of the 'Nazarene', As the name suggests we are Christ Centered Church, called unto holiness and committed to the mission of Christ of evangelism, making disciples, and Christian Education. Through our presence globally, we want to exhibit the characteristics of meaningful worship, theological coherence, passionate evangelism, intentional discipleship, church development, transformational leadership and purposeful compassion.

Our Christian heritage was mediated through the 16th-century English Reformation and 18th century Wesleyan revival, and a renewed emphasis on Christian holiness that was

developed in the mid-19th century. Holiness churches, urban missions, and missionary associations grew from this endeavor. The Church of the Nazarene was born from the impulse to unite many of these into one holiness church. In 1908, three "holiness" movements united in Pilot Point, Texas to form what has become the Church of the Nazarene.

The Church of the Nazarene confesses itself to be a branch of Christ's "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" church, embracing as its own the history of God's people recorded in the Old and New Testaments and by God's people through the ages, in whatever expression of Christ's

church they are found. It receives the ecumenical creeds of the first five Christian centuries as expressions of its own faith.

It identifies with the historic church in preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, maintaining a ministry of apostolic faith and practice, and instilling the disciplines of Christlike living and service. It joins the saints in heeding the biblical call to holy living and entire devotion to God, which it proclaims through the theology of entire sanctification.

Nazarene with their cross-cultural ministries and a denominational concept of world evangelization, have embraced the mission statement: "To make Christlike disciples in the nations." This mission of the Church was always accompanied by its social ministry, medical mission in those days was one of the top priorities, as the result hospitals were built in China and Swaziland, and later in **India** and Papua New Guinea. Later, the creation of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries in the 1980s opened up a wider range

of social ministries that endure today, including child sponsorship, disaster relief, AIDS education, orphan support, water projects, and food distribution.

There are several key ministries that focus on different aspect of the larger mission statement. The biggest of these are Nazarene Youth International (NYI), Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries, Nazarene Missions International (NMI), and Nazarene Publishing House (NPH). Sunday Schools and Bible studies have always been part of congregational life of the Nazarene churches, as they play significant roles in forming Christlike disciples. Therefore, Nazarene founders invested significantly in higher education, believing that it is essential for training pastors and other Christian workers and for shaping the laity in character and works of service.

The Church of the Nazarene has moved over time, from a church with an international presence, toward a global community of believers grounded in the Wesleyan tradition. Nazarene

strategic ministries have centered historically around evangelism, social ministry, and education. They flourish through the mutual cooperation of cross-cultural missionaries and thousands of local ministers and lay workers, who have indigenized Wesleyan principles within their respective cultures.

Nazarenes practice internationalization, recognizing a "worldwide fellowship of believers in which there exists full acceptance within their cultural contexts", and is committed to the distinctive mission of the Church, namely, to spread scriptural holiness. The Church globally affirms the importance of theological training for all ministers, and thereby supports institutions of theological education in each world area. The Church calls for maturity as an international holiness communion within a single connectional framework in which the colonial mentality that evaluated people and nations in terms of 'strong and weak, donor and recipient gave way to one that assumes an entirely new way of looking at the world,

recognizing the strengths and equality of all partners.

By 1998, half of Nazarenes no longer lived in the United States of America and Canada. By 2017, the church had 2.5 million members in 471 districts and over 160 world areas. Nearly 28% of Nazarenes were Africans, 29% lived in Latin America and the Caribbean, while about one-fourth lived in the United States of America and Canada. By 2017, the three largest Nazarene districts were in Asia and Africa, and the three largest congregations in worship attendance were in South America and the Caribbean.

The Church of the Nazarene combines episcopal and congregational polities to form a "representative" government. The salient feature of this structure is shared power between people and clergy as well as between the local church and the denomination.

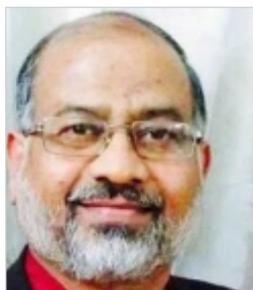
The basic unit of organization in the Church of the Nazarene is the **local church congregation**. Local congregations are grouped

administratively into geographical **Districts**. A District is "an entity made up of interdependent local churches organized to facilitate the mission of each local church through mutual support, and sharing of resources, and collaboration. All Districts of the Church of the Nazarene are organized into **Regions**. The regions are administered through Nazarene **Global Mission**, it focuses on partnership and collaboration to help equip Nazarene churches support mission at community, district, regional and international levels. Districts in areas administered by the Global Mission are often grouped into "**fields**", with a field strategy coordinator providing strategic leadership. On January 31, 2008, **India** became the first field in the global Church of the Nazarene to be entirely indigenous with the field strategy coordinator, **Rev Sunil Dandge**, and all 15 district superintendents, all ministry coordinators, and all pastors from India.

In India, the presence of Church of the Nazarene was there even before the church officially came

into existence as a Denomination in 1908, and the missionary work of the Church continued even after that and continues to expand over the entire Subcontinent. The very first church that was organized was in 1919. Reynold Memorial Hospital was established in rural Maharashtra in a place called Washim in 1936, and the Nurses Training College in 1936. Nazarene Mission Boarding and School as well as well as Bible School were established around the same time.

Presently in India, we have 15 Organized Church Districts and 5 Pioneering Areas. The Church has its presence in 19 States and 3 Union Territories, there are totally 530 Pastors and 2,800 local churches, and 125,000 members.



Rev. Sunil Dandge
*Field Strategy Co-ordinator,
Church of Nazarene.*



Working with Dignity

Dr. Shantanu Dutta

May 1st is observed in most parts of the world as Labour Day and marks the struggle for labour rights culminating in the 8 hours workday, which is considered a milestone. After the industrial revolution in England in the 18th century, when factories began to emerge, labourers began to be employed with no regulation as to working conditions, the sole motive being to harness the workforce to make more and more profits. It is in this backdrop, that Marx developed his theories of communism and the modern trade union movement to provide dignity to labour developed. In India, the first organized movement to work for workers' rights and the dignity of labour was set up, a 100 years ago, by

freedom fighters like Lala Lajpat Rai, Joseph Baptista and Lokmanya Tilak. However, a 100 years of labour activism later, can we say that Indian society has dignity of labour ? These are the facts.

The first lockdown to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in March 2020 revealed deep fissures in our societal systems. Saving one set of lives from COVID 19 pushed a million others into the jaws of death after economic systems — supposedly designed to guarantee *roti-kapada-makaan* (food, clothes and shelter) — shut overnight. COVID-19 exposed the magnitude of their plight in the

starkest way possible. It betrayed their hopes by stripping off any last shred of dignity they had left in urban squalor, as cities shut their doors on them, pushing them to walk en masse back to their hometowns and villages. Clearly, bondage in Indian cities is far from gainful employment with dignity.

It is precisely at this point that we need to understand the concept of 'Employment with dignity', because we are not in a situation where people are without employment and are not earning anything. Rather, people are working and earning something to survive, because that is the very basic human instinct – to survive. However, calling a mere survival strategy as employment would not only be an injustice to those involved in such works but also make a mockery of their life situations.

The advent of liberalisation in India witnessed the gradual and consistent phasing out of worker's right through myriad practices like contractualisation of the workforce, 'hire and fire' policy, starvation wages, lack of job security, no annual

increments, no social security benefits, degrading working conditions for a large section of workforce and so on. It is high time that we recognise the concept of employment with dignity. First of all, what do we mean by the concept of dignity here? It must be understood that no job/work is superior or inferior, but what makes a job dignified is the working conditions and social safety net associated with it as well as the agency of the person engaged in that work/job.

Whether a person takes up a job out of his/her will or whether she/he does it out of compulsion of survival is a necessary condition for a dignified job. Someone may really enjoy making and selling tea or pakoda, it is not wrong to call it employment, but putting up a tea stall, or golgappa stall or pakoda stall because of lack of job opportunities and for the mere purpose of survival is an attack on the dignity of the person.

Christians too are typically representative of mainstream society with some exceptions. The most visible trait that I have seen is the practice of haggling

with rickshaw pullers, petty hawkers and street vendors for a few Rupees here and there. The idea is that such people are prone to cheat and therefore, we are doing the right thing by beating the price down. This is an example from daily life of the occasions, when we use our somewhat superior position to destroy the dignity of a working person who clearly isn't earning much, no matter how much they cheat. We can come home and lose a lot more in a phishing incident or online scam and are forced to write that off, because the entities cheating us are too big. We succumb to the same tendencies to deprive the ordinary worker of his dignity while losing ours to a suited booted white colour criminal.

What should we be doing instead ? At the beginning of the Bible, God introduces himself as a worker. What kind of work is he doing? He is creating. And we are made in his image – that means we work too. This could mean building a car, making art, writing a document, starting a company or be a domestic help or maid. We are made in the image of God and

the dignity of our work is that, in some way, it reflects the work of God. This is where the carpenters smile, "I'm in the same trade as our Saviour." If we work in construction or manual labour, you can say, "I do the same work as the Son of God." What about the rest of us? If we are a homemaker, we are reflecting the work of God who created order out of chaos. If we are a CEO, they hold things together and move them forward – this is a reflection of the God who holds all things together. Besides, scientists have since proven that the day a man stops to be productive, he begins to die slowly. Our God does not like idleness. No man must be lazy or idle. From the Biblical account of Creation, Adam, right from the on-set, was given the responsibilities of taking care of the whole of Creation.

Notwithstanding all that has been said and written regarding the dignity of manual labour, the feeling prevails that it is degrading. We were built for work and the dignity it gives us as human beings, regardless of its status or pay. The practical

implications of this principle are far-reaching. We have the freedom to seek work that suits our gifts and passions. We can be open to greater opportunities for work when the economy is weak, and jobs are less plentiful. We no longer have any basis for condescension or superiority; nor is there any basis for envy or feelings of infidelity. And every Christian should be able to identify, with conviction and satisfaction, the ways in which his or her work participates with God in his creativity and cultivation.



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*Never be lazy, but work
hard and serve the Lord
enthusiastically.
- Romans 12:11 (NLT)*

NOT BY ACCIDENT

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

Some smart alec young people make the wisecrack, "You can't choose your family, you can only choose your friends." They probably don't know that they are quoting what Harper Lee wrote in *To Kill a Mocking Bird*: "You can choose your friends but you sho' can't choose your family, an' they're still kin to you no matter whether you acknowledge 'em or not, and it makes you look right silly when you don't."

S o m e h e a r t a c h e , disappointment or anger makes people say that sort of thing about their family. However, the late Desmond Tutu got it right when he said, "You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them."

That's true, you know. The whole idea of constituting humankind in

families started with God saying that it is not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). Centuries later David said that God gives homes or families to the lonely (Ps. 68:6). The fact that in a fallen and broken world every human may not find relationships or companionship, doesn't negate the importance or goodness of companionship.

When Adam saw Eve, he excitedly said, "She's just like me! She's my kind" (to paraphrase what he said – Gen. 2:23). Right at the beginning, God instituted a bonding relationship that would set the pattern for future generations. Those who followed would in turn leave their families to form new ones (v.24).

Later on, when Adam and Eve broke fellowship with God, their

own relationship suffered. God said that instead of being equal as God created them (1:26-27), their relationship would thenceforth be one of emotional manipulation by one and domination by the other (3:16).

The broken relationship of the first man and woman was saved by God Himself, sacrificing animals to cover their shame (v.21), and from that redeemed relationship came two sons – Cain and Abel. The broken relationship syndrome carried over from parents to their children, and there was intense sibling rivalry which resulted in Cain murdering Abel because he was jealous of Abel having found favour with God (4:3-8). The murderous tendencies continued from generation to generation – between Esau and Jacob (27:41), and between Joseph and his brothers (37:20), and among the sons of David, "a man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). Even today, sisters and brothers, who grew up together in love, become sworn enemies when they fight over money and property.

Covenanting Relationships

But before the Fall happened,

what God wanted was for humans to be in relationship – to form new families from generation to generation. When God set in motion His redemptive programme for humans, He started to covenant with those who responded to His call. Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8) and so God covenanted to save Noah and his family from being destroyed (v.17) and when the Flood was over God renewed His covenant and sent them forth to replenish the earth (9:9-17).

Generations after Noah, when God called another man to leave his tribe and clan to start a redeemed community of the faithful (12:1-3), He once again entered into covenant with a human, the man Abraham (15:18). This man believed God and that was counted as his righteousness (v.6).

It is because God's redemption is geared to save whole tribes and clans and families that human society is divided into covenant communities at every level. A nation is a covenant community and so is a city. People who belong to a nation or a city or a neighbourhood are committed to each other in coexistence and

preservation – even if there is only a weak commitment to a bare minimum programme.

The most basic covenant community of human society is the family. Today, families are under attack as humans dump the essential laws of God. They make up their own laws which they consider to be an improvement on what God ordained.

For a family to exist in wholeness, the individual members need to have a sense of being covenanted in relationship. A covenant is not a contract. In the case of contracts, there need be no relationships. A contract is terminated as soon as the terms of the contract are fulfilled (or, broken, in which case penalties are imposed). In the case of a covenant, even when one party breaks covenant the other party does not feel compelled to end the covenant, but can continue in forgiveness and acceptance. After all, this is what God does. When we violate our covenant with God by revolting against His rule, He does not terminate the covenant but keeps on loving us. And, let's not forget that God is the one who initiates redemptive covenants as in the cases of

Noah and Abraham. They were not the ones who approached God to plead that He would enter into covenant with them. All the reaching out was done by God. He did it sovereignly. It was all of grace.

Bonds of Grace

Covenant and grace go hand in hand. This is essential in family life. Each and every one in a covenant family will sometimes fail one or more in the family. The others will rescue the covenant from being torn apart and destroyed by the faults and failures of the erring one. Even otherwise, grace is the one thing that is necessary in families. Grace is what binds a family together. Grace is the bond.

As we learnt in Sunday School, grace has nothing to do with merit. It is unmerited favour. If we love people only if they are lovable because of what they accomplish or do, families would disintegrate in no time.

It is because the Christian household is a covenant community that the Word of God calls for mutual submission (5:21). Let's keep in focus that mutual submission is the

precursor to all relationships. When people lose sight of this precondition, they sabotage and damage relationships.

No one is above another. Only Jesus is Lord, all others are equals (Matt. 23:8). This has to be true for a family of believers just as much as for larger communities of faith. There is no place for dominance when Jesus is regarded and honoured as Lord. Whoever asserts his (or her) own lordship/headship has denied the lordship of Jesus – in thinking, in words and in actions.

Mutuality in relationship means that there is affirmation, encouragement and empowerment of one another. No one exists for the benefit of another, and no one is to take advantage of another or abuse and exploit him. In a family, everyone ought to build up everyone else. It is all about serving one another. No one can be boss in the Christian family. While wives are asked to regard or honour husbands as heads, husbands are asked, not to play boss, but to imitate the Lord who served and sacrificed (Eph. 5:22-33). The question is never, "Who will be boss?" but "Who will be servant?"

If we have received grace, we have to live by grace under the rules of grace – that we will be gracious like the Father.

No Room for Abuse

During the Old Testament period, there were nations that sacrificed children to Molech (Lev. 18:1; 20:2-5). The idea was that the head of the family viewed everyone else as existing for his own welfare and therefore, totally expendable. All of the members of a family were thought of as being there for the sole purpose of the patriarch's success. God described Molech as a detestable god (1 Ki. 11:7). God made it categorically clear that He did not require human sacrifices nor would He tolerate them (Jer. 32:35).

Today, when a man abuses his wife or children, he does not serve the Lord Jesus, but worships at the altar of Molech. How can abusive men claim that they follow Christ? They are definitely not like Jesus. They are not following in the footsteps of the Lord, who took beatings and abuse on Himself, and didn't even retaliate, and, that too, when He would have been justified to

retaliate with judgement and punishment (1 Pet. 2:23).

Instead of abusing and exploiting those who are subordinately placed on account of physique, age, or social standing, the Bible clearly requires that the "weaker vessel" be honoured (1 Pet. 3:7). The Expanded Bible puts it this way: In the same way [\[2:18; 3:1\]](#), you husbands should live with your wives in an understanding [considerate] way [\[-Eph. 5:2533; Col. 3:19\]](#), since they are weaker than you [the weaker sex; or the less empowered one; the weaker vessel; women are typically physically weaker, but in Greco-Roman and Jewish society, they also had less power and authority]. But show them respect [pay/give them honor], because God gives them the same blessing he gives you—[they are co-heirs of] the grace that gives true life [or God's gift of life; the grace of life]. Do this so that nothing will stop [hinder] your prayers.

The weaker are weaker only in physique and strength. In matters of grace, they are equal and fellow heirs. If people have an equal claim on the grace of God, as Peter said in another context, who are humans to deny them

equality in status and rights (Acts 10:47)? When God in His grace treats people equally, dare we treat them as those who are not our equal? Our Lord said that being perfect like the Father means treating people equally with grace. The Father does not withhold His grace from anyone, even those who are undeserving (Matt. 5:45-48). We are those who are called to be followers of Jesus and we are called to be children of the Father.

In the context of treating those who are weaker with the respect and rights of equals, the apostle made the point that prayers are answered only when those who are the weaker members in relationships are treated as co-heirs, because it is when two are agreed about what they ask for, that the Father answers affirmatively (Matt. 18:19-20). It is easy to lose sight of this fine point while we get busy interpreting all the other things said about everyone having equal rights to grace. Prayers will not be answered where the equality of grace is not practised. Note that point and check up on your prayer life.

Sadly, today there are preachers who are faithful to the letter in

expounding the Word of God, but not faithful in deed. They pride themselves on being good at preaching, while abusing their wives and/or children. Here's what Jesus said: "Not everyone who says, 'Lord, Lord' will enter God's kingdom" (Matt. 7:22). Even works of ministry done in Jesus' name will not count if we do not uphold our covenant with God and people. The Lord said that He would classify even preachers and ministers as "evildoers" and would send them away as unworthy to be admitted to the kingdom (Matt. 7:21-23).

Growing in Love

Where a covenant is in place, love is present, and where there is love, people grow in love. If love doesn't grow, it will stagnate and when love starts to stagnate, it starts to die. Love to be love, needs to keep on growing – in closeness, in intimacy. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always

perseveres. Love never fails" (1 Cor.13:4-8).

Love cannot grow in an atmosphere of fear. "There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So, the one who fears has not reached perfection in love" (1 Jn. 4:18, HCSB). Love grows where there is grace. We are not afraid to let down our guard where there is love. We want everyone to know us as we are and we want to know others as they are.

"Freely you have received. Freely give" (Matt. 10:8). That is grace. That is the nature of grace. If you have received grace, you cannot – you must not – stop the flow of grace in and out of your life – in the family and from your family. You are not an accident. You are a work of grace.



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The Holy Spirit: Sent from Heaven
1Peter 1:12

L. Dreams and Visions.

Rev. Richard Masih

God does guide his people through dreams and visions. In the Old Testament, he gave blueprint to Joseph for his future role. "Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" (Genesis 37:5-8). He had another dream. "Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said,

"Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you" (Genesis 37:9-10).

The two prisoners who were imprisoned with Joseph, had dreams. They were troubled as they did not know the meaning of their dreams. Joseph interpreted their dreams for them. It turned out to them just according to their dreams. "On the third day, which

was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them" (Genesis 40:20-22).

God showed Pharaoh a set of two dreams in which he revealed that first there would be seven years of plenty, and then seven years of famine. Joseph interpreted his dreams with the help of God. It turned out exactly as he had interpreted. "The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said (Genesis 41:53,54).

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had two dreams. "In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him" (Daniel 2:1). Daniel interpreted the dream for

him as it was revealed to him in a vision at night. Then he explained to Nebuchadnezzar the purpose of his dream. "A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure" (Daniel 2:45). He had a second dream. "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me" (Daniel 4:4). With fear and trembling, Daniel interpreted the dream for him. Everything turned out as he had interpreted. "All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar" (Daniel 4:28).

He guided Joseph, in the New Testament, through his dreams. "And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy

Spirit" (Matthew 1:19,20). He warned the Wise Men in their dream. "And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way." He guided Joseph again through his dream. "Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him" (v.13). And, again, "But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt...." (v.19).

The Lord guided Ananias in a vision. "Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias" (Acts 9:10). He guided Peter through a vision. Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean..." (Acts 10:17). He guided Paul in a vision, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, 'Come

over to Macedonia and help us.' And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:10).

It was prophesied long time ago, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28). This prophecy is quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17, "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

But there is the possibility of false dreams and false visions as well. In Lamentations 2:14, we read, "Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading." We read in

Jeremiah 23:32, "Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the LORD, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the LORD." We read in Jeremiah 14:14, "And the LORD said to me: "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying visi every dream and every vision should be tested with the Scripture. God cannot contradict himself. We must also beware of broadcasting our visions lest people think of us more than what is warranted. Apostle Paul says in 2Corinthians 12:2-6, "I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or

out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses— though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me."

We must take care not to transform those whom God gives visions and revelations into some kind of 'super-servants' of God. They and we should realize that they are nothing but mortal men. We read in Revelation 19:10, "Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." This exactly what we need to do and exhort others to do. We read further ahead in Revelation 22:8,9, "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me,

but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

Some claim to have seen God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. They claim to have held conversation with them. Others claim to have visited heaven and hell and met many of the Bible characters as well as people from history. The problem with their claim is that there is no objective proof of their claims of special vision and revelation. We have to take them only at their words. What they say cannot be tested unless of course it contradicts or coincides with the Scripture. Once again, every

dream and every vision must be tested with the Scripture.



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Intercessory Prayer Points



May 2021

1 SATURDAY Thank God for the very gift of life. While many have lost their lives, we are still here. Pray that God may fulfill His purposes in our life.

International Labour Day. Thank God for the works He has designed for each one of us. Pray that we may fulfill His will and purposes as we carry out our works.

Maharashtra Day. We especially pray for the state of Maharashtra today as it is the highest Covid affected state in the country. Pray that God in His mercy would intervene and heal the people of Maharashtra. Pray for complete healing and restoration.

2 SUNDAY Thank God for His protection over us as the whole country battles COVID-19 and many lives are lost on a daily basis. Thank Him for extending your life and recommit your life to Him. Worship the Lord with all your heart, your soul, and your strength today.

3 MONDAY Press Freedom Day. Pray for awareness of the

importance of freedom of the press. Pray that the government would be reminded of their duty to respect and uphold the right to freedom of expression.

4 TUESDAY Pray for sufficient supply of Covid19 vaccination in every parts of the country. Pray for awareness for the need of vaccination to fight this battle.

5 WEDNESDAY Pray for the needs of Evangelical Fellowship of India. Pray that God would continually provide and use this ministry for His glory.

6 THURSDAY Pray for mental health of people especially the youngsters as they witness sickness, sorrow, fear and death due to Covid19. Pray that they would find hope and strength in Christ. Pray that they would know that there is eternal life in heaven for those who are in Christ.

7 FRIDAY Pray for Soul Winning Mission, Manipur. Pray that many wandering souls would find peace and satisfaction as they hear the Gospel from this ministry.

8 SATURDAY Pray for North Bank Baptist Christian Association, Assam. Pray for new insights and zeal for this ministry. Pray for all their constituencies to actively shoulder and implement the mission vision. Pray for God's abundant blessings upon them.

9 SUNDAY Mother's Day. Thank God for your mother. Pray that God's abundant blessings would be upon her. Pray also that at this difficult time, every mother would teach and shepherd her child(ren) in the paths of righteousness.

10 MONDAY Pray for Presbyterian Church in India (Reformed), Manipur. Pray for the personal and corporate revival for all the members of this church. Pray that the love to study God's Word and obey Him would increase greatly.

11 TUESDAY Pray for those who are suffering from COVID-19 disease. Pray for recovery and full restoration. Pray also that their experience would bring glory to God Most High.

12 WEDNESDAY International Nurses Day. Pray for the Nurses as they committedly serve patients despite many challenges. Pray for protection and strength as they carry out their duties at high risk places.

13 THURSDAY Pray for children who are catching up on their studies from home. Pray that they would use their summer break meaningfully. Pray also that God would protect them with His everlasting arms.

14 FRIDAY Pray for Sparsh Sewa Samiti, Uttar Pradesh. Pray for wisdom, encouragement, discernment to decide and the ability to do what needs to be done. May God bless the ministry.

15 SATURDAY International Day of Families. Pray that God who had established the constitution of family, would nurture and strengthen every family. Pray that Christ would be the head of every family and He may be glorified.

Armed Forces Day. Pray for God's protection over them. Pray also for their families as well as they sacrificially serve our nation.

16 SUNDAY Pray for the body of Christ, the Church, to hold on to your truth in testing times and look forward to your promises to be fulfilled. Pray that the Church would cling on to God through prayer.

17 MONDAY Pray for Revival Literature Fellowship at Karnataka. Pray that the ministry would focus to encourage people to receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Pray for strength and commitment for those involved in this ministry.

18 TUESDAY Pray for all paramedics, doctors and nurses and all working in the hospitals as we combat COVID-19. Pray for double stamina and protection for them. Pray for wisdom and the ability to make quick and wise decisions. Pray for protection for them and their families.

19 WEDNESDAY Pray that more people would step out to volunteer to help as Covid19 death toll rises especially in Delhi due to shortage of oxygen and unavailability of hospital beds.

20 THURSDAY Pray for Sharing Love Mission at Tamil Nadu. Pray as they share the Gospel to the Bhil Tribes in Gujarat and that God may use them as an instrument to reach out to many unreached people.

21 FRIDAY Pray for Scripture Union India, Tamil Nadu. Pray for all the people involved in this ministry as they help others to mature in Christ through the spreading of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

22 SATURDAY Pray for the growth of the church where God planted you. Pray that you may be a good and powerful influence in your church. Pray for various needs of people during this crisis.

23 SUNDAY Pray for families who have lost their loved ones to COVID-19 in all parts of the world. Pray for comfort and peace as they mourn. Pray that the Holy Spirit would minister to them personally at this difficult time.

24 MONDAY Pray for Pongring Hope Foundation Centre, Manipur. Pray that the aim and objectives of this ministry would be fulfilled. Pray for

God's enablement and empowerment.

25 TUESDAY Pray for Seva Bharat, Telangana. Pray that the Lord would use this ministry to touch and impact many lives. Pray for God's protection and His favour upon them.

26 WEDNESDAY Pray for Soul Winners Prayer Fellowship, New Delhi. Pray that the ministry would influence the youth group in a big way. Pray for God's Spirit to move and touch many young hearts to love and serve Him.

27 THURSDAY Pray for Safe India, Tamil Nadu. Pray that the Lord would bless their initiatives and bring glory to Himself and goodness for the people involved in this ministry.

28 FRIDAY Pray for Suman Bihar at Nawada, Bihar. Pray that the Lord would show His favour on this ministry and the people involved in it. Pray that many people would benefit from this ministry.

29 SATURDAY Pray that all humanity would turn to God and seek His face. May God's kingdom be extended exceedingly in the hearts of people throughout the world.

30 SUNDAY Thank God that He has protected you through the month. Pray that God would use you more in the months to come.

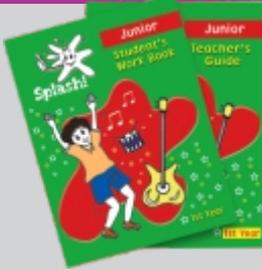
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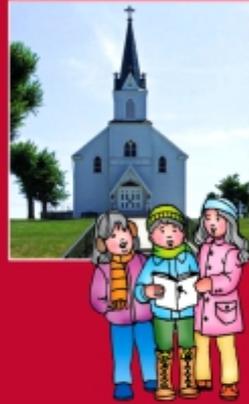
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One in God; Together for Good.

Introduction

Evangelical Fellowship of India, founded in 1951, is the national alliance of Evangelicals in India. As a central network of evangelicals and a service organization, it is the custodian of Evangelical faith, movement and values in India, representing the Evangelical voice, building capacity and promoting participation in nation building.

EFI is a charter member of the World Evangelical Alliance. Its membership includes over 65,000 Churches, over 150 Church related mission agencies and organisations and thousands of individual members.

Our Vision

To see evangelical Churches, institutions and individuals effectively witnessing the good news of Jesus Christ in word, deed and transforming nation.

Our Mission

As an evangelical alliance, serve churches, institutions and individuals through strategic initiatives, capacity building and forging solidarity, thus facilitating the mission of witnessing to the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed, and nation building.

Networks

- CEEFI (Christian Education Department of EFI)
- EFI Publication & Media
- EFI National Centre for Urban Transformation
- EFI Children @ Risk
- Evangelical Trust Association of North India
- EFI Micro Enterprise Development
- Evangelical Financial Accountability Council (EFAC)

Commissions

- EFI Women Commission
- EFI Theological Commission
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