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A Journey of Faith





Let's Super Spread Hope!

Greetings from Evangelical Fellowship of India,

As India struggles with a massive and severe second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the loss of lives is mounting up. Till now, the nation has lost over 2,46,000 people to this virus and these are just the official numbers. India has now confirmed Covid-19 cases of 2,14,00,000 plus and counting as of 10th May 2021. The daily confirmed cases are the highest in the world with nearly 4,00,000 cases being reported every day for the last two weeks.

Hospitals are overburdened and medical personnel are finding it hard to cope up not only because of the sudden and massive increase in the number of cases, but also especially in the light of lack of medical supplies particularly oxygen. Many patients have died because of lack of oxygen at the right time.

The poor, migrants, homeless and the marginalized have again been the hardest hit by the various lockdowns in different parts of the country. They have lost their jobs and their hope. Many have nothing to eat.

Crematoriums and graveyards are packed as people line up the bodies of their loved ones for the last rites. Parks are being converted into crematoriums to deal with this new reality.

The Church too has suffered losses and many Bishops, Pastors and leaders have been lost to Covid-19. It is estimated that over 400 pastors and Church leaders have succumbed to Covid-19. Churches have been unable to meet for weeks now, a pattern we also saw last year, and has resulted in economic hardships for pastors and evangelists who are dependent on the offerings of the congregations. It is a desperate situation.

The time is to pray earnestly and to extend relief and hope to a nation that is struggling. We believe that as Children of God, Christians have been called by Him to pray for the world at this time and to act in generous ways so that the poor, needy and marginalized would be cared for.

Through this letter, we are appealing to you to help strengthen our hands as we seek to reach out to needy people both in the family of God and to those who are outside.

Last year, with the help of friends and supporters like you, EFI was able to reach out with emergency supplies and direct cash transfers to over 32000 beneficiaries through our network of thousands of Churches across the nation. Our ration kits contained food supplies that can last a family for at least 3 weeks. These supplies cost us around 2500 Indian Rupees (35 USD approx.)

Plan for relief in the second wave

With your help, we plan to provide food relief to at least 3000 families (15000 beneficiaries approximately) to help them weather this difficult time. Many of these families have been identified and many are still being added to our list.

We are also hopeful of providing a grant of 55,000 (764 USD) to around 100 families that have lost their primary breadwinner. This grant can be used to start a small business so that they can sustain themselves.

The total **budget** for the first phase of relief is as below:

Particular	Amount INR	Amount USD
Food Relief to 3000 Families @ 2500 INR (35 \$ per packet)	7500000	104167
Income Generation Grant for 100 families @ 55000 INR (764 \$)	5500000	76389
Total	13000000	180556

We request you to please consider this appeal prayerfully and help as God enables you. A detailed report will be submitted with proper documentation and regular updates would be given on our website and through emails. Please donate generously using the following details:

Contributions from within India only

Account Name:	Evangelical Fellowship of India
Account Number:	909844182
Bank:	Indian Bank, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019
IFSC:	IDIB000N044

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For Contributions from outside India please contact us at donate@efionline.org

We look forward to your support in this endeavour.

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Rev. Vijayesh Lal

The truth shall set us free

Will there be a third wave of Covid? I asked a doctor friend of mine. His reply was most illuminating. He informed me that he had been in touch with epidemiologist friends of his, (people that help predict these waves and the spread of disease) and they believed it cannot be said conclusively if there will be a third wave as the present data was untrustworthy.

He pointed out to the data currently being churned out daily where small states like Kerala (population wise) are reporting infections upwards of 20,000 cases per day. However, populous states like Uttar Pradesh are reporting only 2000

plus cases a day. That, he says, is hard to believe unless the state is testing less. According to him, epidemiologists can only predict with precision if the data they are working with is accurate and reflects the situation on the ground.

The New York Times on 25th May 2021, came out with an article on the possible number of Covid deaths in India after consulting over a dozen experts. According to the article, the official counts till May 24th were 307231 deaths from covid. The NYT estimated that conservatively at least 600000 people had died. A more likely scenario, they said, would be of 1.6 million (16 Lakhs)

people who had lost their lives to this pandemic. The article stated that according to the worst-case scenario the death toll could possibly be more than 4.2 million (42 Lakhs). This is frightening.

Newspapers have reported that Peru has revised its official death toll due to covid and it now stands at nearly triple the earlier official number. According to the revised data, Peru lost 500 people per 100000 people because of Covid. The Peruvian Prime Minister Violeta Bermudez said that it was their duty to make public, the updated data which was increased on the advice of Peruvian and international experts. That is a fine example of accountability and leadership.

In India's case, news portals and social media have reported how in various states, the number of Covid funerals have overshoot the official death tolls. Doctors have acknowledged that the numbers being released are underestimated. And to be true, it is possible to miss Covid cases and deaths due to several factors like the lack of access to

healthcare, hesitancy in taking the tests, people dying at home which is probably the largest factor in the underreporting of deaths.

But underreporting to escape accountability, to maintain one's image rather than project reality, to claim victory over Covid when cases are shooting up is not only turning a blind eye to reality but is also shameful, irresponsible and a sign of a deeper malaise. This is what took us from 8715 cases on 8th February 2021 to 414280 cases on 6th May 2021, a period of less than three months.

We need to realize that the truth will help us. Jesus said that the Truth will set us free. Although said in a different context, we can apply it here. Unless we know the truth about the real covid situation in the country, how will we ever respond in full measure or proactively prepare for what is to come?

The response of the Church

The Church and Church related institutions have responded with relief, medical care, and

emotional and psychological help both in the first wave and in the second. The Christian community remains one of the largest healthcare providers in the country.

On its part, EFI has reached out with food relief to families who have been affected by hunger and starvation because of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns. In the first wave with God's help and with the support of our members and donors, we were able to reach to over 32000 beneficiaries with food packets that lasted them over three weeks. This time too, we are hopeful of reaching over 40000 beneficiaries with essential food supplies. Details of the appeal is share are shared in this issue of AIM and we encourage you to pray and give towards the same.

However, given the onslaught of Covid-19 especially in rural and semi-urban areas there is an urgent need to get involved in responding holistically so that if there is a third national wave, the community is prepared for the same.

EFI along with its members and partners has initiated the collaborative Covid response that envisions to establish Centres of Hope in 20 – 30 locations across the country. These Centres would be started by partnering with existing Christian hospitals, with Churches and Christian schools and other institutions that have the necessary infrastructure in place. Volunteers would be mobilized with the help of network Churches and trained with the help of our hospital associations like CMAI and EHA.

These centres can function as Covid care facilities or quarantine areas, taking care of mild to moderate cases before they go to the hospital or after they are discharged and need to quarantine. We hope to equip the centres with oxygen concentrators and necessary medical supplies that will help serve the patients from the community.

But what is more, is that these centres of hope can also be places where covid patients and

people in general can come for counselling, treatment, friendship etc. They can be points from where food relief and awareness campaigns can be coordinated, and long-term involvement can be planned.

These centres can help us demonstrate the love of Christ through our service by bringing hope into an atmosphere plagued by fear and uncertainty.

The collaborative task force is also working on how to engage in caring for the caregivers. Today our medical fraternity – our doctors, nurses, and others, are fatigued both physically and emotionally. They need an outlet. They need to be taken care of. This is also true for our pastors who are also fatigued in a similar way.

It is also envisioned to extend the existing helplines – medical and emotional health - and set up new ones so that people can call at the time of crisis and get sound advice. Proper medical advice

that can help families take care of covid patients at home for mild cases, can reduce a lot of pressure that is on our hospitals. At the same time, people suffering from the silent pandemic of emotional and spiritual trauma can dial in to the helplines and know that there would be someone to talk to, someone who would listen to them and help.

The above-mentioned initiatives are attempts by followers of Christ in India to collaborate and serve the people of our nation; to provide some help and respite and to spread hope consequently.

Please keep the above initiatives in your prayers. Pray also for our national leaders that they would be given wisdom to lead the nation through these tumultuous times.

Do read the article written by Dr. Sunil Gokavi and ask the Lord what He would have you do.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal

Care and Support in Crisis: EFICOR's Response to the Second Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. M. Ramesh Babu

The second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India is leaving a devastating trail. There has been sharp rise in Coronavirus infections since the mid-March 2021, with infections reaching a record 30 lakh plus cases, and death toll reaching 2 lakhs. This huge surge has overwhelmed all sectors; especially the health sector was greatly affected. There was acute shortage of essential medical supplies related to treatment of the disease. The afflicted families rummaged for oxygen and medicines for their dying family members. This untold humanitarian crisis has left enormous impacts not only on the health of the many poor,

marginalised and vulnerable families in the country but has gravely affected their livelihood.

Our response and interventions:

To help cope with this devastating crisis, EFICOR has partnered with various concerned individuals and other organisations in India and around the world to reach out to the affected people - daily wage labourers, migrant workers, people living with HIV and AIDS, and persons with disabilities. We started our interventions in Delhi and in 12 other states where EFICOR is working in its project locations. EFICOR has planned to support 25,000 families by

espousing three-fold ways of intervention: Cash/voucher transfers, community engagement and risk mitigation, and cash for work to provide livelihood support. EFICOR has been reaching these communities in partnership with Government, local churches, Dargah, Corporates and well-wishers.

The cash transfer support has been initiated in Delhi and Jharkhand states and so far many poor and needy families have received INR 2000 each which helped them meet their immediate needs. Relevant data of the needy families were collected by using KOBO toolbox. More than 70 volunteers were trained on using KOBO tool to identify and collect the data of such families. Data collection was done in several places and as on 21st May, a total of 8874 beneficiaries' data has been collected for cash transfer. Among these, 40% are women headed families, 58% are daily wage workers, 10% are migrant workers, 5% are agriculture workers, 16% are unemployed.

Communities were engaged in awareness messages on COVID risk management and were given face masks and sanitizers as precautionary measures against COVID in EFICOR's project locations of Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. 300 bars of soap have been distributed in COVID Care Centres in Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh. EFICOR, being part of the Delhi Movement which is a network of various organisations working to support those affected by the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic in Delhi, has the privilege to lead essential provisions to support 5000 families in Delhi. Our relief team has identified 5 areas in Delhi such as Mehrauli, Mahipalpur, Azadpur, Seemapuri and sub-city of Dwarka. EFICOR has also been working with Nizamuddin Dargah to support to 1000 families belonging to daily wage labourers.

Our Future Plans:

EFICOR is planning for Cash for Work programme for a period of 30 days at a cost of Rs. 9000 per family to create "Green

Economy" within the community. This will enable families to have food security, increase their purchasing power and enable them to have a sustainable livelihood, by working alongside the Government and other civil society organisations. This will create 'community assets' for sustainable purposes in the days to come.

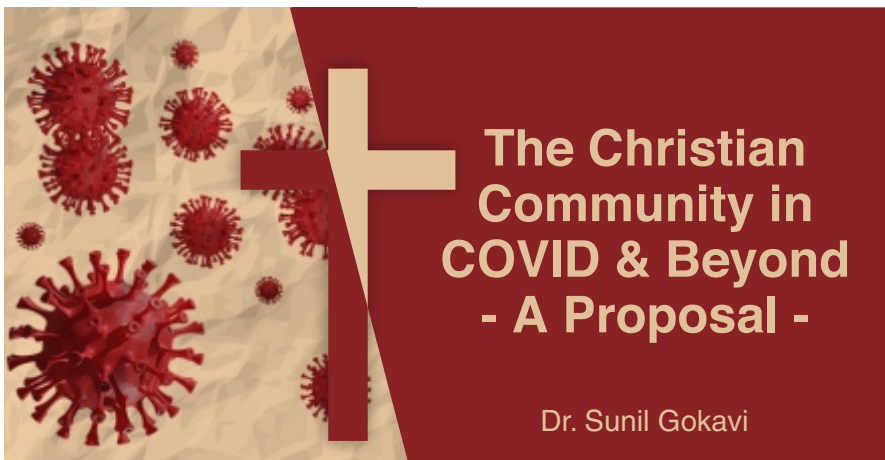
The Community Engagement and Risk Mitigation will be continuing in all EFICOR project locations by promoting COVID appropriate behaviours including use of face masks, maintaining physical distance, washing hands and involving in vaccination campaigns to create positive attitudes. Awareness on COVID-19 Vaccination will be conducted in collaboration with the district administration and health departments under the guidelines of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). To enable the needy and vulnerable groups such as Persons with Disability and the aged to receive vaccination, they will be provided free transportation to reach to the nearest vaccination centres in these areas.

Conclusion: We praise and thank God that we are able to provide support along with the churches and many other civil society organisations in the COVID relief and response. As concerned individuals, organisations and as a church, let us all continue to model the Kingdom of God in care for and collaborate with one another to give support for the sick, the dying and the afflicted in this time of grave crisis. Let the suffering and grieving people see more clearly the mission of Church with unity in action.



Mr. M. Ramesh Babu

has been working in development sector since 1996. He has been serving in EFICOR in various capacities and responsibilities. Presently he is the Executive Director of EFICOR since February 2020.



SARS COV-2 or COVID 19, as it is popularly called, has well and truly ravaged the population of India and caused a collapse of the health system in the country. It has probably been the worst scenario, both from socio-economic and health perspectives, in living memory.

History is known to repeat itself - the pandemics that have affected the globe at various times in the last 2 centuries have had people in panic. Yet there has always been small groups who faced the scourges with courage, choosing to expend themselves in service of the sick and suffering - among them has always been the followers of the Lord Jesus. Today, you and I, as His disciples are being afforded much the same privilege! - as Rev Dr Ajai

Lall put it, we have the opportunity to run TOWARD the pandemic, and not away from it.

So, how could the Christian community in India respond to the on-going pandemic in such a deliberate manner that will alleviate the suffering of our fellowmen and at the same time bring glory to the God whom we serve? It is, for us, the time of reckoning - toward unity and for action!

An analysis of the pandemic makes it evident that this is not just a matter of health, but very much a huge social and economic problem that shows no signs of abating in a hurry. The scenario is compounded by the fact that very little is understood in terms of definitive treatment of

the infecting organism, despite the plethora of studies, research efforts, trials, hypotheses and publications. Yet there have been a few definite conclusions that define initiatives that can benefit patients with significant Covid symptoms, defined by the single most important marker - a drop in oxygen saturation below 94%. The measures for such patients are:

- Appropriate oxygen therapy
- Appropriate administration of steroids
- Appropriate administration of blood thinners
- Antibiotics where indicated
- Respiratory inhalant Budesonide
- Lying in a prone position when sleeping
- Control of blood sugars

These measures, possible even at home if family members are adequately motivated and trained, can possibly obviate the progression to severe illness in about 75% of symptomatic patients - RIGHT TREATMENT AT THE RIGHT TIME is key!

So, why are people so seriously ill and dying by the thousands?

If we attempted to answer this, it would in all probability define

what we as the people of the living God will need to address to the best of our ability and resources.

- Irrational fear of Covid resulting from a poor understanding of the infection
- Delay in diagnosis and seeking treatment - the social stigma contributes hugely to this detrimental behaviour to ones own loss.
- Illogical understanding of the remedy or treatment modalities i.e. the more the drugs, the better, obtaining a hospital bed will save my patient, my relative needs an ICU bed etc.
- Inability to access the needed interventions due to a shortage or prohibitive cost.
- Indiscriminate use of drugs like steroids and blood thinners, besides a host of antibiotics.
- Shortage of appropriate equipment and supplies - oxygen, essential drugs, NIV, ventilators etc.
- Breakdown in the health system - hospitals crowded with patients who could do well in lesser facilities.

An important question that needs to be addressed is this : CAN COVID-19 INFECTION BE PREVENTED?

We have been told ad nauseum about masking, social distancing, and hand sanitization for the last 15 months - can a further focus on this actually make a difference?

All of us, I am sure, know of people who have been ultra-cautious, yet contracted the illness

The whole concept of isolating people - what is to prevent a group of people who finished their isolation period from contracting the virus the next day from an unknown source?

Let us recognize that this process is progressively de-humanizing us! The basis of meaningful existence is human relationships, which is being steadily chipped away at by the so-called 'preventive' measures - a daughter cannot even hug her mother at the loss of her father! Let us also be clear that facetime and video calls are NO lasting substitute for the physical touch that we were created to enjoy.

As a friend of mine, who has been in the thick of COVID care for over a year yet consistently tested negative, put it - "If you have to get COVID, you will get it". Couple that with the fact that we have as our Head the all-powerful, all-

knowing, all-seeing God who is absolutely sovereign over each of our individual lives as well as those of nations.

Would it not be adequate to just observe basic precautions and leave the rest to this sovereign God while going about doing what He calls us to, in BECOMING neighbours to those in need - expending our time, resources, agendas - just as the Samaritan did?

So what are the needs that continue to be manifest around us?

A. In the Covid setting :

- The need for correct information and awareness
- The ability to deal with irrational fears and behaviour
- The need to recognize and treat the illness caused by Covid-19 early enough to prevent progression to serious disease
- Links with suitably equipped hospitals for higher care where needed, preferably those within the network
- Ambulance services
- Home based care including

provision / hire of oxygen cylinders or concentrators with regular follow up

- Care for widows and orphans, disabled persons and elderly affected by Covid
- Burial assistance and proper closure in death
- Helping affected families get back on their feet to the extent possible

A. In the wider setting :

- Upgradation of existing mission hospitals
- Re-opening of closed mission hospitals
- Christian centres of medical excellence around the country, including a medical college or two.

All these factors pave the way for a potentially powerful and effective ministry through the Church of Jesus Christ - the holistic approach has never been needed more than now!

- Through the wisdom that comes from the Lord, mission hospitals in the thick of treating Covid patients at all levels can formulate care protocols with documentary evidence to show what is

actually working and feasible on the ground. **The wealth of data we could collate and analyze would be of national importance if we were to standardize our approach.**

- Online help through Helplines for medical assistance and counseling services, with a robust follow up system
- Strategic organization of decentralized leadership comprising churches of all denominations, that plans for specific geographical areas, each chapter deciding on the interventions based on the needs and ability to fulfill them
- Strategically located Community-based Treatment centres in urban areas manned by trained non-medical volunteers under the supervision of a skeleton staff of doctors and nurses, where churches can minister to patients with moderate disease, pray for them by name, etc. Follow up for patients in their homes can be arranged
- Such centres can serve as the common base for the whole range of interventions including counseling, food

distribution, assisting needy families, isolation, child care, palliative care, burial assistance, vaccination, etc. Every member of each church can be a volunteer for whom a definite role can be defined and assigned

- Each participating church in each area to contribute 20% of its budget to support the work, besides raising funds from other sources. Now is the time to dip into building funds, etc so that adequate finances can be made available for this most urgent and important task of contributing to the health and building of the nation.
- Linking with like-minded agencies in the area, including working with the government
- Christian hospitals adequately equipped and staffed to deal with serious COVID illness

It is my submission that the establishment of strategically located CHRISTIAN COVID CARE CENTRES across cities can serve as the hub or base for all community interventions - for meeting and praying, planning, storing,

counseling, treating patients, community outreach, etc.. The centres will be the LIGHT - the physical presence that is evident to all, while the way the comprehensive work is carried out will be the SALT, influencing the community in a quiet but telling manner.

While the physical structure may not be the emphasis, it will certainly serve as that tangible and focal point of reference which will keep us from remaining abstract and disjointed in our efforts.

If and when we do get past COVID, these centres can continue the relevant aspects of the work established, while adapting to the next need that will inevitably arise.

A note on the wider influence of Christian medical mission :

If this is truly to become a reality, it will require a great deal of sacrifice - foremost to my mind are three factors :

- A significant number of Christian doctors must be willing to leave private practice and government service to serve in and build Christian hospitals of excellence
- Church leadership should be

fully committed to recognizing the vital role of a robustly functioning Christian hospital as a means to love our neighbours as ourselves. It needs to be perceived as an integral function of the ministry of the church. Christian businesses should similarly be prepared to sink 20% (arbitrary figure, taken just to make the point) of their earnings into such ventures on a regular basis

- The church must be fully involved in the building of Christian hospitals through regular and substantial giving (suggested 20% of the annual budget be set aside to facilitate this process, in the knowledge that evangelism and many other budgeted activities can be carried out in and through the hospitals themselves)

If we all as followers of our Lord do not begin to think and act this way, I doubt if we will ever be able to get any plan off the drawing board, and it will remain where it has hitherto been - a pipe dream with good intentions and a lot of talk. A hospital needs to be seen, not merely as a facility for medical care, but as an avenue for all types of Christian service - a base of sorts, through which

communities can be reached and ministered to.

Mission hospitals provided one third of the entire medical services of our country in the early 1950s - this was only possible due to the deliberate sacrifice of fully trained professionals who came to serve and even die on Indian soil, and congregations continually giving sacrificially to sustain the medical work in India. It can be no different for us as medical professionals and congregational members, if we really want to make a difference as the church of Jesus Christ in India.

***25th May 2021
(Following a Zoom meeting of church leaders across the country)***



Dr. Sunil Gokavi
Former Executive Director of Emmanuel Hospital Association



Introduction

Right now, due to the second wave of coronavirus pandemic, our nation is going through confusion, anxiety, hopelessness, and fear. New strains of coronavirus are causing panic among many people. The virus is spreading rapidly. As I write this article, more than 2 crores, 43 lakh people are infected with COVID-19 in India. Sadly, more than 2 lakh, 66 thousand precious lives were snatched away due to the current pandemic.

There is a huge shortage of oxygen, medicines, hospital beds, and vaccines in our country. A few weeks back, I

heard a sad story about an elderly man in Hyderabad. He was suffering from COVID. His family went around in their car and tried admitting him to a hospital, but none of the hospitals had oxygen. They went from one hospital to another in desperation. But they failed to get admission to any of the hospitals. Eventually, this elderly man died in his daughter's hands. This is just one of the many tragic stories. Due to panic, some COVID patients are seeking admission to a hospital even though their condition is not that worse. You see, fear of the unknown can paralyze us. We worry about things that may or may not happen. In the midst of

chaos and fear, the Lord is saying to us, "Do not fear, only believe" (Mk 5:36).

Beginning with Mark 4:35, we see that Jesus has authority over danger (storm) and demons. Jesus returned to the west side of the lake of Galilee, perhaps to Capernaum, his ministry headquarters. Then, in 5:21-43, Mark shows that Jesus has power over disease and death. The two stories in this passage include two cases of uncleanness: a woman with a continual flow of blood and a corpse (cf. Lev. 15:19-33; Num. 19:11-22). In Mark 5:36, we see that Jesus asks Jairus to stop fearing and keep believing in him. The Lord wants us to do the same as we face an unprecedented crisis.

1. We Must Not Allow Fear to Cripple Us.

Jesus says to the fear-filled father, Jairus, "Do not fear" (Mk 5:36). We fear many things. Some fear failure. Some fear rejection. Some fear sickness. Some fear their future. But the fear of death is probably our greatest fear. Fear

anticipates the worst possible results. Fear is a painful feeling. Jesus says that in the last days, people will faint with fear (Lk. 21:26). Right now, people are willing to spend huge amounts of money as they are gripped with fear. Even secular doctors are telling us not to fear as it weakens our immune system. But sadly, even God's people are stupefied by fear.

Like worry, fear will not help you in any way. Rather, fear paralyzes our decision-making. Fear hinders our prayers. Fear limits our faith. Fear adversely affects our health. Fear takes away our joy. In the Old Testament, we see that the great prophet, Elijah purges Israel of Baal worship. When Jezebel sought to kill him, he was so fearful that he ended up in depression and asked God to take his life (1 Kgs 19:3-4)! He says, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers" (v. 4). Fear makes you paralyzed and irrational. In a world filled with fear, what must be our response?

2. We Must Trust Jesus in All Circumstances.

Mark writes, "While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?'" (Mk 5:35). Jairus' heart probably sank as he heard the news of his daughter's death. Meier suggests that "The subliminal message here is that Jesus is only a teacher, and death marks the limit of whatever power he may have." Jairus' situation was hopeless. But Jesus says, "Do not fear, only believe" (Mk 5:36). These words echo Jesus's words to the disciples in the boat (cf. 4:40). In Mark 4, when Jesus calms the Sea of Galilee, the disciples ask, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (v. 41). Mark reveals the answer to this question by mentioning three miracles that Jesus did in Mark 5:1-43. In this section, we see that Jesus delivers a man who was possessed with demons, heals a woman who has the issue of blood and raises the daughter of Jairus from the dead. This reveals that Jesus is Lord over demons, disease, and death!

Jesus is even challenging us to believe in him. If Jesus is with you, there is no reason to fear. Faith is the antidote to fear (cf. 4:40). We must fight fear with faith. We must trust the Lord, not our circumstances. We must focus on the Lord's promises more than our circumstances.

Jesus gives two commands here: "Do not fear" and "only believe." Both the verbs are in the present tense. Jesus is saying to Jairus, "Do not keep on being afraid." Sometimes fear comes back, but we must stop fearing. Further, the Lord says, "Keep believing in me." Jairus already showed his trust by coming to Jesus. He must now keep believing in him. Jairus saw how the woman believed Jesus and received a miracle. Now it's his turn to believe the Lord and receive a miracle. Note that our trust must be in Jesus. It's not enough to have a positive mental attitude. Believing in ourselves is useless. Our trust must be in Jesus.

Jesus says, "Only believe." We must not believe and be fearful at the same time. We must not

believe and try to figure out everything at the same time. Jesus had already agreed to go with Jairus and heal his daughter. Now his daughter is dead. So, Jesus is asking Jairus to believe in the promise of Jesus' willingness to heal his daughter. In essence, Jesus is saying, "Believe that I will do what I promised I will do." Jesus went on to raise Jairus' daughter from the dead (5:41-42). Jairus' faith was rewarded.

Today, Jesus is not promising us that everything will be alright if we believe him. Rather, he is asking us to believe his glorious promises that he already gave us in his word. We must believe that no matter what circumstances we face, nothing will separate us from God's love (Rom. 8:31-39). We must believe that God will use our sufferings for our good (Rom. 8:28). We must believe that Christ will give us his grace when we go through trials (2 Cor. 12:9-10). We must believe that our eternal life is secure in Christ and that no one can snatch us from his hand (Jn 10:28).

It's natural to be afraid sometimes, but we must not remain in fear. Today, whose voice are you hearing? The voice of fear or the voice of Christ? Fear often pretends as truth. Don't believe what fear says to you. Apostle Paul writes, "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Tim. 1:7). God's Spirit enables us to be bold.

In one sense, Jesus' words to Jairus seem quite unreasonable. How can anyone have faith in the face of death? Well, we can have faith in the face of death because our faith is in the one who defeated death (Rev. 1:8)! Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18). Apostle Paul writes that God is "able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). Do you have a need? The Lord promises to meet your needs (Mt. 6:25-43; Phil. 4:19). Do you feel lonely? The Lord promises to never leave you nor forsake you (Heb. 13:5). Do you feel afraid? The Lord encourages us to believe in him (Mk 5:36).

As the virus is spreading across our nation, believe Jesus. If you are infected with the virus, believe Jesus. When your prayers are not answered, believe Jesus. When your situation is hopeless, believe Jesus. Let me share a few biblical texts which can boost your faith in the Lord:

Psalm 27:1: The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalm 46:1-3: 1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

Even if the whole world in chaos, we need not fear because God is our refuge and strength.

1 John 4:4: Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Our God is far greater than any virus, disease, or any other problem.

Psalm 23:4: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Sometimes, we may go through "the valley of the shadow of death," but we must not fear any evil. Why? Because God has promised his presence to us. Our Good Shepherd is always by our side in our most difficult trials. We must trust Jesus in all circumstances.

Conclusion

If I have to encapsulate the message of this article, this is it: **Do not fear but trust Jesus in all circumstances.**

We must believe that the Lord will help us. This does not mean that God always rescues his people from danger (cf. Acts 12) or heal every sickness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-10). However, it means that he holds the ultimate authority and we need not fear. We are "more than conquerors through Him

who loved us" (Rom. 8:37). Since Jesus conquered death itself (Heb. 2:14-15), he can calm our fears.

One night, a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness. As can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: "Jump! I will catch you." But the boy protested, "Daddy, I can't see you." The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters."

We may not know what the future holds, but Jesus knows it all. He sees it all. That's all that matters. Jesus wants us to move from fear

to faith. So, no matter what your circumstances are, do not fear but trust Jesus!



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JAMES 1:6

*But when you ask, you must believe
and not doubt, because the one who
doubts is like a wave of the sea,
blown and tossed by the wind.*



I was recently reading a book about 21 people whose lives were badly scarred by the partition of India that happened at the time of India's independence but who were subsequently able to rebuild their lives. Many names are recognizable - Dr. Manmohan Singh, Ram Jethmalani, L K Advani, among others. Among those was the story of the legendary Flying Sikh - Milkha Singh an inspiration to generations of sportsmen and others like me, who are not. Milkha Singh's life was well captured by the title of his Biopic - "Bhag Milkha Bhag" (Run Milkha Run). But the first time that Milkha ran was not in some athletic championship. The first time was in his village (now in Pakistan),

running to save his life as attackers sought to attack and kill him. He saved his life on that occasion, crossed over to India, and eventually, after many twists and turns, was recruited in the Indian Army after many attempts to recognize and nurture his talents on the Field. The name of Milkha Singh comes to mind because at the age of 91, he has just tested positive for Covid and is now, running another race.

I have been working from home since March of 2020. It has not been easy to live and work with a small Flat serving as both office and home 24/7. But bored as I am and stressed, I am still grateful that thus far I have not had to face the huge challenges faced by

people who contracted Covid or whose loved ones did. And not because of the disease itself which would be bad enough but also because of the sheer battle to even get treated, regardless of the outcome. How does that then cultivate hope and positivity at times like this? This is so important because although we have data - real or imagined of the numbers of people Covid is infecting (accurate or not), there is no telling the number of emotional and social cripples that the lockdowns and the pandemic have created, that time alone will tell. Recognizing how important it is to inject hope and positivity into the public space, even the stuffy leadership of the RSS got into the act and recently organized a series of positivity drives to boost the morale of common citizens with pep talks by several eminent citizens.

So how does one live with positivity at times like this? And indeed, there are ways to do so and count one's blessings day after day, even amid the gloom, for such times bring out the best in men and women as also the worst. So, even as the newspapers were full of stories of

rich businessmen looking to get richer by hoarding oxygen cylinders and subsequently selling them for inflated prices, Twitter and Facebook were full of individuals asking for, as well as giving help. The Sikhs stood out for their innovative Oxygen langars and other initiatives and converting their large Gurudwaras into Covid Care Centres. Christian Hospitals and Institutions like CMC Vellore took on a huge burden of patient care and conducted numerous webinars and consultations to disseminate correct and helpful information to help people navigate choppy waters. Numerous helplines and call centers sprung up overnight, maned by both church members and others to provide online consultation, provide leads on Oxygen cylinders, hospital beds, scarce medicines, and counseling facilities to the caregivers and those bereaved. These were not just castles in the air - many people asked for and received help at these facilities.

Many christian whatsapp groups have been talking about rejoicing in suffering at this time, leaving me totally confused. But I have

always thought that rejoicing in suffering does not mean celebrating when bad news comes. But, it does mean that we can believe that God is doing a redemptive work. This word "redemptive" means that God does not waste a hurt or disappointment. Sometimes, we forget that men and women in the Bible often went through trials very similar to those we face today. For example, even though God provided Elijah with food brought by ravens and water from a brook, "it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land" (1 Kings 17:7).

Although God is always thinking about us, His thoughts are not necessarily your thoughts, and His ways are not necessarily our ways (Isaiah 55:8–9). Sometimes, God doesn't work the way we hoped He would. He may lead us in a path we didn't expect. For the Jews exiled in Babylon, their "expected end" was to find deliverance from the control of a pagan nation and return to their homeland to worship God. For us, it means to live out a holy and productive life all our days on earth. What it

means specifically on a day-to-day basis, time will tell. Whatever His plan is, it's better than anything we could plan for ourselves. God has a future for us, and we should not be afraid to commit our life to Him and be comfortable afraid to commit an unknown future which in any case we cannot fully control, to a known God. We do not know what tomorrow holds, but we do know who holds tomorrow: it's our Father, who has a perfect plan for our life.



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Stories of Hope Amidst Distress

Pastor Jitendra Kumar Chinchani

A picture containing person, indoor, person, standing Description automatically generated Pastor Jitendra Kumar Chinchani is an independent pastor and serves the Lord in the Fatehpur Beri area of South Delhi and relies on the ministry for his financial sustenance.

The lockdown in the wake of Corona outbreak across the state has been challenging for him, particularly financially. As no gatherings could take place, the family exhausted their food items. EFI received their requests through a community leader from another state whom he had approached for help.



Pastor Jitendra was provided with dry ration items, which will help them to sustain for about 15-20 days.

"I thank EFI from the depth of my heart for providing ration items to my family members. Through the ration items, my family will survive for 20 days."

MANIK RAHANG

Two people standing in front of a cake Description automatically generated Manik Rahang from Nuwagaon village, lives with his wife and son and does manual labor work for his living. He also does farming during the paddy season. His son Sidhankar is 13 years old and studies in 7th grade.

After the lockdown, the family has been facing severe financial crisis as there is no work and hence no income. EFI Relief team visited their house and seeing their condition, included them in the "needy" list.



On the day of relief distribution, Manik came and received our relief kit. They are extremely happy and said that the kit is enough for their survival for about three weeks. They have expressed their gratitude to EFI for giving them this wonderful gift in time of their suffering.

His wife said, "In our life, we have never bought these many things at one time. Thank you EFI."

SHAHIDA BEGUM, Guwahati

A person holding a sign Description automatically generated Shahida is a widow with a family of seven members. Natives of Bihar, living in a rented house in Adabari (Guwahati, Assam), Shahida's son and daughter-in-law work as daily labourers to fend for the family. Before the lockdown somehow, they were managing their needs through their daily work. However, now their condition is such that the house rent is unpaid for over a month and they struggled for food.



When they came to know about EFI's relief program, her daughter-in-law, Nazo Begum requested for help. After Shahida Begum received the ration kit and reached home, Nazo Begum called and said,

"Thank you very much for ration kit, now I am feeling very good because my family can survive for some days. Please convey my heartfelt thanks to brothers of EFI. They are really doing good works."

SWARNLATA MITRA, Dehradun

Mrs. Swarnlata Mitra, a 65 years old lady lives with her husband and three children at Moti Bazar in Dehradun. Her husband is retired from the service and receives a modest amount as pension which is most of the months not sufficient to sustain the family. The family is a member of a local free church and once in a while, some of the church members support them either in cash or kind.



However, this lock down has been tremendously challenging to the family as they could not step out of their home to make to any arrangement for food items.

As soon as Mrs. Mitra learnt of EFI relief efforts, she connected with EFI's local coordinator and was provided with the relief distribution kit of dry ration containing essential food items.

Emotions welled up and with teary eyes, she expressed her heartfelt gratitude to EFI.

GURPREET SINGH, Ludhiana

A group of people posing for the camera Description automatically generated Gurpreet Singh is a laborer who works with a welding workshop and stays in a rented house in Khanna area of Ludhiana along with his wife Poonam and three children.

With no job and complete lockdown, the family had no means of earning. This family came to know about the EFI Relief team in distributing kits in Khanna and they called our volunteer and explained about their family condition. They were on the verge of starving because their father could not get any work since the lockdown started.



Our brother visited their home and found that there were no provisions in the kitchen. The EFI team gave them EFI COVID-19 grocery kit and the family was happy and thankful. The provisions in the kit will easily last them for more than 2 weeks.

SURESH GODSE, Nagpur

Suresh Godse is a security guard by profession and heads a family of five. His wife is a domestic worker, and his son works as a daily wage labourer. The Covid 19 pandemic and the lockdown has left all of them without work.

They were somehow able to manage with whatever they had at home but eventually they ran out of things and while they had a roof above their heads,

their stomachs were empty. The unemployment and lockdown situation had left them with no food.

We got to know about them through our sources, and the family was provided with a ration kit of essential grocery items, that will last them for 15-20 days. It was humbling to hear their gratefulness when the kit was handed over to them. The family thanked EFI for coming to their rescue in such tough situations and caring for them.



LALMANI, Jaunpur, UP

Mr. Lalmani is from Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh and is involved in doing the social work in the community since last 16 years. He lives with his wife and three kids.

The lockdown has been a huge blow for him, especially to his livelihood, as he is into full time social work. He came to know about EFI's COVID-19 relief program through one of the EFI's local volunteer, Dinanath Jaiswar.

Lalmani shared about his situation as to how they are in dire need of food items and one of his kid is so young that the child only depends on milk but he had nothing to feed the child. EFI immediately reached out with cash transfer as relief.

The family was really grateful for the help extended by EFI when it mattered the most. Post receiving the cash relief, he immediately bought essential food items which should last for 2-

3 weeks and was able to purchase some urgent medications for his wife.



The Refugee Crisis: Challenges and Responses

Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob



I. Introduction

Refugee crisis is one of the major humanitarian challenges that confronts the world today. Images of people fleeing their trouble-torn countries through extremely difficult and dangerous terrains putting their lives at peril and people having lost their lives in transit to a safe haven, have time and again disturbed the international consciousness. Despite concerted efforts from several quarters for decades to assuage the situation, the refugee crisis persists for want of a strong political will at multiple levels to address the root causes of the problem. The basic issues that precipitate the problem range from war, armed conflict, economic hardships, poverty and violence to list a few.

In order to highlight the issue, World Refugee Day is observed on 20 June every year, celebrating "the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution" and "to build empathy and understanding for their plight and to recognize their resilience in rebuilding their lives."¹ This focus is of significance in the face of hostility, hate and alienation many of them experience either in transit or in the host countries. The theme for World Refugee Day this year is "Together we heal, learn and shine." And it aims to expand access to all kinds of health care, access to quality education to build better futures and support the creative

side of refugees by probably engaging them in some sport. Several activities are organized on this day by different groups to increase the support base for refugees.² World Refugee Day thus seeks to draw the attention of the world to the realities and hardships of the refugees. Awareness is our first step towards any form of meaningful engagement as average individuals, organizations or churches.

II. Global Refugee Scenario

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the key agency at the forefront of helping refugees across the world. Since its inception in 1950 in the aftermath of World War II, UNHCR has helped over 50 million refugees rebuild their lives.³ The task of UNHCR continues to be daunting since "refugee situations have increased in scope, scale and complexity.... Millions of refugees live in protracted situations, often in low- and middle-income countries facing their own economic and development challenges, and the average length of stay has continued to grow.... the gap between needs and

humanitarian funding has also widened."⁴

One can comprehend the magnitude of the refugee crisis to a certain extent by reviewing some refugee statistics and stories that highlight the nuances of forced statelessness and displacement. The UNHCR in its *Global Appeal: 2021 Update* highlights that there are 21 million refugees spread across the world. In addition, it estimates approximately a total of 97.3 million people of concern in 2021 which is about 10.8 million increase compared to 2019, of which 22% are refugees besides returnees, IDPS, Asylum Seekers, Stateless persons, Others of concern and Venezuelans displaced abroad.⁵ These numbers are only set to increase and Filippo Grandi, the UNHCR High Commissioner, says that "no matter the strength of our emergency response, our support to the displaced and their host communities, and our solutions work, unless the international community overcomes its differences and makes peace rather than fomenting further conflict, the number of displaced will not diminish significantly."⁶ Staggering as these numbers

seem, it is even more distressing to realize the fact that about half of the refugees are under the age of 18.⁷ The current pandemic situation has further added to the hardships of their already precarious existence and according to Grandi, COVID-19 has "led to a protection crisis and produced a pandemic of poverty, deepening a sense of despair amongst many of the world's forcibly displaced, severely straining their coping mechanisms and exacerbating challenges to mental health."⁸

Navigating beyond the statistics, the complexities that define the everyday life of refugees is intensely traumatic. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) features the life of a young girl studying in class 8 living in the Jalazone Refugee Camp in West Bank. Encountering problems while travelling back and forth from school is almost an everyday problem besides often witnessing clashes refugees have with the Israeli security patrols and military with the latter frequently using tear gas, plastic-covered metal bullets and live ammunitions during operations. The school zone itself is very

unsafe with frequent clashes which are "...very stressful and disruptive to the education and development of the children and can have long-term impacts on the physical and mental well-being."⁹ The words of this young child capture for us both her fearful reality and future hope. *"Going to school is not safe as it is very close to Beit El settlement and also far from my house, so I don't feel safe. If there are incidents near the settlement, I need to run a long distance [to get to safety.... I don't know, but I think students in Europe or America live their life normally without these problems. As a Palestinian child, I hope that I will one day live in freedom and peace and that I can move freely without checkpoints or searches."*¹⁰ Such pitiful instances in varying capacities are an everyday reality for a cross-section of refugees while most of us carry on with life untouched by such pain and distress.

However, the refugee context also has many stories of achievements, doing service to humanity amidst their pain and confidently rebuilding their lives.¹¹ Some countries, civil society organizations, advocacy

initiatives, churches and other groups have been active participants in that effort to make the world brighter and better for the refugees.

III. Refugees and India

India has weathered through differing stands with regard to the refugee situation over several decades. Ethnic, religious and linguistic factors have intersected the national policy and made a uniformed approach difficult. A recent example is the arrival of the refugees from Myanmar along Mizoram's border and the differences in the approach spelt out by the state and central governments. India does not have national refugee protection framework nor is it a signatory to 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol. India however, hosts refugees from several of its neighboring and other countries. For holders of UNHCR documentation, India follows the principle of non-refoulement (which is the practice of not forcing them to return to their country they fled). Internal security concerns have also been a defining aspect in recent times in India's mode of dealing with some refugees. The numbers in India have been steadily

increasing and the limited resources made available for their use makes their situation difficult. Many of them struggle for basic needs such as food, shelter, health care and education besides the hostility, discrimination and violence they experience. This is a gap that civil society groups can fill by coming in to help them in different ways to make their life better.

IV. A Christian Response to Refugees

There is a definite link between Christian spirituality and the kind of response to the various difficult socio-political-economic realities that grip the society around us. A right understanding of God coupled with a spirituality that is shaped by the Scripture urges us towards active involvement. The alien has a special place in the Scripture, and it calls us to especially care for them.¹² God repeatedly reminds the people of Israel as to how they must treat the aliens and refugees. To care for the alien, to include the alien, not to mistreat them and to treat them equally are special instructions in the Scripture. Their response to the foreigner was an expression of a gratitude for their deliverance from being aliens

and having experienced its pain and difficulties. The trauma of those who are displaced from their homeland and struggling in a strange country must grip our imagination and propel us to engage in meaningful ways.

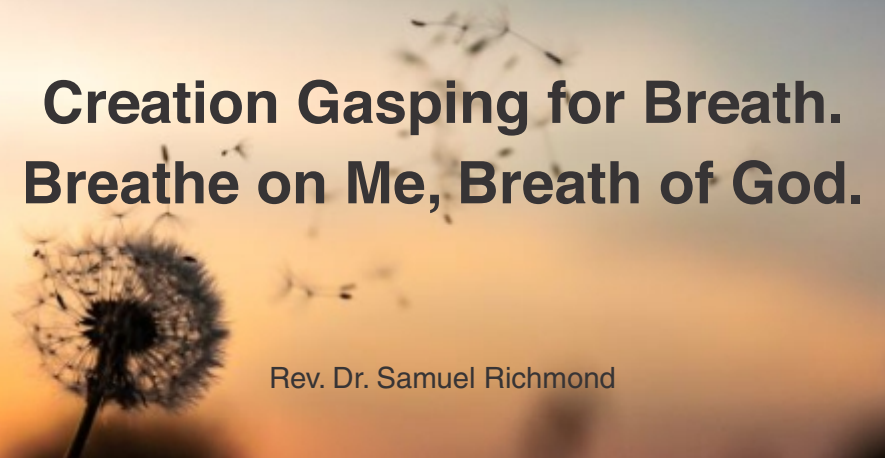
Our approach to refugees makes all the difference in how we engage purposefully. As we are made aware and understand the refugee crisis and we can raise awareness all around us. To uphold the refugees across the world and their cause in our daily individual and family prayer is of much importance. One could contribute to their cause financially either to governments, international bodies that care for them, or organizations and groups involved with them. We could also reach out to refugee families in simple friendship as individuals, institutions, groups or churches. This will open up ways

for further engagement. Together, we can work in easing their pain and empowering them to confidently explore avenues for return or resettlement in a new country. Our compelling call, as children of God, is to feel the pain and distress that define their lives because we worship a God who walks alongside the refugees in their brokenness and feels it just the way they do.



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1. <https://www.unhcr.org/world-refugee-day>
2. For more details you can access <https://www.unhcr.org/world-refugee-day>
3. <https://www.unhcr.org/history-of-unhcr.html>
4. United Nations, Global Compact on Refugees, New York, 2018, p.1.
5. UNHCR, Global Appeal 2021 Update, pp. 12-13.
6. Ibid., p.6.
7. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/refugees>
8. UNHCR, Global Appeal 2021 Update, p.4.
9. <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/features/day-life-palestine-refugee-student-west-bank>
10. Ibid.
11. A few stories can be found using the following links
<https://www.unhcr.org/en-in/news/stories/2020/6/5eeb78b84/seven-refugees-making-difference-during-time-covid-19.html>;
<https://www.unhcr.org/en-in/news/stories/2021/2/603611e14.html>;
<https://www.unhcr.org/en-in/news/stories/2021/5/60a78af34/performers-refugee-backgrounds-eurovision-storm.html>.
12. Psalm 146.9; Exodus 22.21; Leviticus 19.10, 33,34; Leviticus 24.22; Deuteronomy 26.12 are a few references.



Creation Gasping for Breath. Breathe on Me, Breath of God.

Rev. Dr. Samuel Richmond

'Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink', the famous quote from the poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, explains the reality of life that we may have something in abundance but not able to use it. The present pandemic once again reminds the same quote in a new form: 'Oxygen, oxygen everywhere, no oxygen to breathe.' Most scientific position cites that if the brain stops getting oxygen for four to six minutes then the brain stops functioning. India has witnessed an acute shortage of oxygen due to the high demand during COVID19 pandemic in the last two months. The second wave of coronavirus

which is severely affecting the lungs has caused many deaths in India. Many of them died because of the lack of the availability of oxygen. COVID virus affects the throat and if the immunity system of the body fails to contain it there then it spreads to the lungs and causes major lung infection. Due to this, the oxygen level falls rapidly and the patient is given oxygen support. India has not witnessed such a scenario after Independence. All our claims to be a self-reliant country (Atma Nirbhar Bharat), a nation not far from becoming a superpower, seems to dwindle with so many people dying on the streets, hospitals, in villages, and at homes because of oxygen

shortage. The number of COVID patients increased so rapidly that there were no beds with oxygen available in the hospitals. It seems we were not prepared in advance to tackle the crises despite warnings given to us by the experts. This second wave has helped us to realize 'the importance of Oxygen' at the global level. As the world celebrates 5th June as World Environment Day, it is important to know the value of Oxygen which is one of the most important components of the environment. It is not just one country that is passing through such a phase but due to environmental degradation, the whole creation is gasping.

Oxygen: Life Supporting Component

A few months back, I came across a message which stated about the 93-year-old man in Italy who was tested COVID positive and got better in the hospital. On the day of his discharge, he was asked by the hospital administration to clear all the dues which included the

ventilator charges for one day. As he came to know the amount, the old man cried aloud. The doctors counseled him not to worry about the bill. But what the old man narrated made all the doctors cry. The old man said, "I don't cry because of the money I have to pay. I can pay all the money." "I cry because I have been breathing God's air for 93 years, but I never pay for it. It takes 500 to use a ventilator in a hospital for one day. Do you know how much I owe God? I didn't thank God for that before." It's true, we have taken God's environment for granted. The way we are treating our environment is a matter of grave concern. Every component of the environment is very precious and needs to be valued. In the beginning when God created this beautiful planet, He in all his wisdom set everything in balance which is beyond our imagination. The goal of the scientists is to unveil the mystery, functioning, laws, properties, and beauty of nature with the help of God's wisdom.

The earth's atmosphere has just

the right composition to allow the visible light to reach our planet while absorbing other kinds of radiation that are dangerous to life. While carbon is central to many of life's molecules, the presence of oxygen in the universe is also important. Oxygen plays a vital role in many biological molecules, and most famously in water and breathable air. The amount of oxygen that we breathe maintains our energy levels. Because of the energy we can move, run, jump, dance, etc. The 21% oxygen available in the atmosphere helps to feed our metabolic needs. If it is increased to 30% then spontaneous combustion will take place in the atmosphere while on the other hand if it is reduced to 15% then human beings would suffocate. Oxygen present in a diatomic state (O_2) is much less reactive as long as the temperature is below 50 Centigrade. Being in a diatomic state, it cannot absorb radiant heat like greenhouse gases. The oxygen atom is also present in water and carbon dioxide which helps life to regulate on the earth. Oxygen

would remain a useful source of chemical energy for life. In cellular respiration, the carbohydrates are broken down in the presence of oxygen to release energy and heat that makes our bodies active. Through proper inhalation of oxygen and exhalation of carbon dioxide, the impurities from the blood are removed by making our body organs more healthy and active. Despite knowing the value of oxygen, we tend to pollute the air which disturbs the composition. Air pollution is the major cause of air-borne diseases that affects the lungs and hearts of human beings. Even water, land, plants, and other living creatures also get affected once the oxygen level gets disturbed in the atmosphere. According to scientific data, every human body requires seven to eight liters of air per minute and when we breathe contaminated air then we may understand its severity.

Beauty of Creation

One day a Scientist asked the priest, 'Can u show me God?'

instead of giving a reply he asked the scientist, 'Can u show me oxygen?' Immediately, the scientist said, 'hold breath for a while to know the oxygen' and the priest replied, 'continue for 5 more minutes to see God!' Have we ever thought that the air we breathe daily is a gift from God? Genesis gives us a systematic, perfect, and wondrous work of God who created the world that flourishes with abundance and diversity. Creation expresses the creative and purposive mind of God. It is an excellent expression of coordination of the Triune God, where God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit work together. The first two chapters lay the foundation of the creation theology and also present the spectacular picture of biodiversity. The sovereign Lord speaks and creation responds, which depicts the Creator's authority over His creation. "For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm" (Psalm 33:9). Further, in Psalm 92:5-6, the Psalmist says: "How great are your works, Lord, how profound your thoughts! Senseless people do not know, fools do not understand." Really,

God's works are marvelous, and to understand His works, we need to trust Him. Why are His works great? David, in Psalm 8:3-4, describes God's perfection in setting every created thing in its proper place which the human mind cannot understand.

God is my Oxygen

In Genesis 1:2, God shapes and adds life and light to the formless and lifeless earth. He labors for six days to make a wasteland transformed into a beautiful Garden of Eden. Similarly, when our lives get dull, darkened, and smitten by hopelessness, He creates New Life in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. God sends His Son to be the light of our lives (John 8:12). The Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:6, writes, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ." Through this, Paul draws a parallel between the original separation of light from darkness and the conversion of a sinner, where a saved sinner displays God's glory. God's light strengthens us and gives us the

New Identity in Jesus Christ. He is so amazing and incomprehensible that, to give us a new life, He died on the cross of Calvary. His interest in us is immeasurable.

In Genesis 2:7, the Lord God breathed into the nostrils of Adam, the breath of life. This verse has two important connotations: firstly, it mentions the life the first humans received in the Garden of Eden so that they may live on this planet along with other organisms. Secondly, the breath of God spiritually connects humanity with the Creator. We may live without food and water for a long period but we cannot live without oxygen. Similarly, without God, we cannot survive spiritually. Alister McGrath (former atheist and now a very powerful believer) said, 'Spiritually, God is the oxygen of my existence; I would find it very difficult to thrive without a belief in God.' In spiritual understanding, we live and breathe in Him, whether we are on earth or in heaven. The Holy Spirit is the combination of the terms "holy" (Heb q deš [lit. "holiness"]); Gk hagios) and "spirit" (Heb rûa , Gk pneuma). The Spirit is the energy

of God in creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Is. 32:15) and also the Lord who gives life. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, even the dead raised back to life. In today's context, pneuma gives the assurance that through the Spirit God gives peace, comfort, and life to those who pass through critical times especially during this pandemic. In Romans 8: 22-23, Paul writes, "we know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the breath, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies." COVID19 pandemic has shown us that the whole creation is gasping for fresh air. The very components of the environment are under severe threat. Environmental degradation has affected the lives of organisms so much that the whole creation is suffering because of pandemic, pollution, war, hatred, lust, etc. We need to invite the Holy Spirit to renew our creation as Psalmist writes, 'when you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground' (Psalm 104:30). It is the responsibility of the Church to be

actively involved in saving the environment. As Christians, we need to acknowledge the work of God in bringing up this creation, as well as His involvement in our lives, as well as in the Church today. Our hearts should always be filled with thanks and praise as we see ourselves and the beautiful fine-tuned creation of God.

*Breathe on me, Breath of God,
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost
love, and do what thou wouldst
do.*

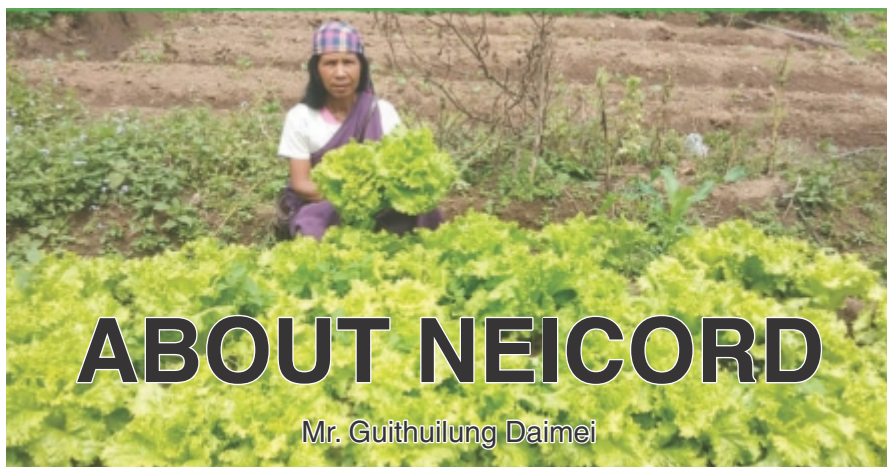
-Edwin Hatch



Rev. Dr. Samuel Richmond Saxena

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North East India commission on Relief and Development (NEICORD) is a North East India region centric and non-denominational Evangelical organization. Since its inception in 1981, NEICORD has been involved in relief and development of the people in North East India irrespective of colour, race, creed, gender and religion and aspires to ensure that poor people work together towards improving their lives and livelihoods and have a say for their future that will affect them. Our staff are drawn from various communities and cultures which represent the North Eastern region of India.

One of the core principles of NEICORD's work is based on Integral Mission or holistic Development, in this context, NEICORD is member of Micah Global where Integral Mission understanding and encouragement is largely drawn. NEICORD is actively involved with various community-based organizations (CBO) and churches that highlight the importance of reaching out to the poor, responding to people affected by disasters and also caring for God's creation (including our environment) to be good stewards.

NEICORD's community

development programme is focus on health, livelihood, education, skill development, WASH, environment and climate change, food and nutrition security, formation of Self-Help Groups (SHG), Farmers Club and Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), women development, women and child protection, networking and linkages, financial inclusion and capacity building of community leaders and community-based organization. Currently, NEICORD is implementing 13 community development projects covering total number of 18,733 beneficiaries (including men, women and youth).

VISION: *Community living in harmony with God, one another and environment*

MISSION: *We seek to serve, care and work with the poor and the oppressed to promote peace, justice and transformation*

PROGRAMMES/AREAS OF WORK

• INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

NEICORD has been involved in Integrated Community Development since its inception which brings about sustainable transformation in the community through its wholistic approach focussing on health, education, building community leadership and livelihood. Through its experience integrated development brings sustainability of the community. One of the most inspiring initiative has been our leadership program and participatory approach, which NEICORD builds in the community which impacted all aspects of development where there is an increase sense of ownership by the people and the community people themselves are the agent of change for their development.

• ENTITLEMENT, AWARENESS & SENSITIZATION

NECORD is experienced in overall community mobilization,

and we have worked with the entitlement and rights of the communities related to various government schemes in North East India. We facilitate to spread awareness, sensitizing the community and helping the communities to access the schemes. We have produced a handbook on various government schemes in local languages and closely work with the local government officials and community leaders and organisations.

- **S U S T A I N A B L E
L I V E L I H O O D**

One of the focus of NEICORD its programs is sustainable livelihood of the poor and most vulnerable communities of NEI. NEICORD realised the importance of livelihood security to bring the community from sustenance to sustainable level. In the course of its developmental programs, NEICORD have mobilized and organized the communities into group (Self Help Group, Farmers Group etc), these groups were capacitated

and regular saving was done by these groups from where the members were able to mobilise funds, to start some income generation activities. The communities were linked with banks to access different financial services. Skill trainings were provided to the SHGs and farmers that enhanced their skill for income and employment generation in the community.

- **A G R I C U L T U R E
D E V E L O P M E N T**

Agriculture is the main livelihood activity of the people of North East and India as a whole. 80 per cent of the people in North East are engaged in agriculture. NEICORD has focused on agriculture development where improved and sustainable method of farming have been initiated in all its projects of North East India. As a result of this, there has been an improved food and nutrition security of the farming communities, improved rural income and livelihoods and reduced poverty. The agriculture development program of

NEICORD has also promoted environmental sustainability and conservation of natural resources.

- **CARE FOR CREATION**

Climate change had already had observable effects on the environment. NEICORD recognized the importance of environment and climate change issues and is working with communities across all project implemented by NEICORD in North East India to reduce the environment degradation and help them to cope with the effects of climate change. NEICORD trained the Community Based Organization leaders, community leaders and farmers on care for creation and on the environmentally friendly method of farming that would ensure food security for the farmers, improving human health and conserving the environment.

- **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

NEICORD believes that to achieve sustainable development, it is important to

empower the women so that they too can be a participant in the process of development. Therefore, women empowerment and gender equality are some of the focus of NEICORD. NEICORD through its intervention, has developed the leadership skills of women through mentoring, capacity building and learning opportunities where there is an increased confidence among the women program participants and recognition.

- **HUMANITARIAN
EMERGENCY RESPONSE
(RELIEF)**

NEICORD being a relief organization as was first established, has responded to man-made and natural disasters to help reduce the critical threat to the health, safety, security and wellbeing of the affected communities in North East India. During the past years, NEICORD has responded to natural disasters which include flood, earthquake, famine and to the most recent outbreak of COVID-

19 pandemic, which has helped to meet the basic needs of the affected people, reduced the loss of life, prevent outbreak of communicable diseases and displacement of communities. NEICORD has helped to meet the immediate needs of the affected communities by ensuring that people have enough to eat, a roof over their head, clean water and adequate hygiene supplies. Besides distributions, NEICORD has also built the capacity of the communities where men and women were included in the emergency response. They work side by side with the organization as volunteers, supporting

distributions of relief items, promoting awareness on hygiene practices and encouraging the community to join hand in rebuilding the communities.



Mr. Guithuilung Daimei
is the Executive Director, NEICORD (North East India Committee on Relief & Development) that works for wholistic development of community focus in North East India.





**GOD AS A FATHER IS
VERY DIFFERENT
FROM THE KIND OF FATHER
MANY ENVISION HIM TO BE!**

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

In a month when we celebrate Father's Day (it falls on June 20th, this year), it will be appropriate to study the character of God as a Father so that we fathers can copy him. The Old Testament repeatedly presents God as the Father (though some wrongly believe God is a consuming fire in the Old Testament but a loving Father in the New Testament, influenced by hyper-grace false teaching which largely appeals to people who do not take time to read the Bible fully and comprehensively). You will be surprised to know that even the Old Testament clearly teaches that God is a Loving Father. However, he is not the Loving Father, the hyper grace cult false teachers paint him to be via their

popular-on-Youtube worship songs and their doing-violence-to-the-full-counsel-of-God sermons.

THE PLAN

It was God's eternal plan to be a father to us. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes this known. He writes, 'For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering' (Hebrews 2:10 ESV). God had an Eternal Son. He enjoyed the fellowship with him he had very much. He wanted more sons and daughters – sons and daughters who would be fully human albeit. The addition of these children will

bring joy to God the Father. The joy will be for the kids as well as they fellowshiped with their heavenly dad! To bring more children to glory the Eternal son suffered on the Cross – that is the message of Hebrews 2:10.

THE PAIN

One of the earliest mentions in the Bible which introduces God as a Father to us is in Exodus 4. The Lord instructed Moses to say these words to Pharaoh: "Let My son go so that he may worship me, but you refused to let him go. Now I will kill your firstborn son!" (Exodus 4:21,23 HCSB). When we were slaves of sin, God sought to make us, sinners, sons! So, he sent Jesus to die for us to endure pain on the Cross. When we repent of our sins and come to him in faith, we become sons and daughters of God (John 1:12).

THE PAIRING

The next Old Testament reference to God as a Father is found in the Song of Moses. In that classic Holy Spirit inspired song, Moses presents Israel as God's son. He sang, "They have corrupted themselves; They are not His children, Because of their blemish. A perverse and crooked

generation. Do you thus deal with the Lord; O foolish and unwise people? Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has he not made you and established you?" (Deut. 32:5-6 NKJV). One key thing I learnt from this passage is this: The Father God imagery is not only imagery for God in the Bible. In the same song of Moses, God is compared to "the Rock" (see Deut. 32:4, 15, 30) and the Eagle (see Deut. 32:11). Those who teach that God is only a loving Father and nothing else are clearly wrong. In Hebrews 12, God is presented both as a COMPASSIONATE FATHER (vs. 5-6) and a CONSUMING FIRE (vs. 12)! So, we must always pair the imagery of a loving father present in the Bible with other imageries for God in the Bible. The Bible says, **"It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes"** (Eccl. 7:18, NIV).

Prophet Isaiah, the prophet with the best vocabulary amongst all Bible writers, connects the transcendence of God with the picture of God as the Father in Isaiah 63:15-16. Though 'God looks down from heaven' (a

phrase that talks about his transcendence), as Isaiah puts it in Isaiah 63:15, he is also 'our Father' (as Isaiah expressed it in Isaiah 63:16)! The Christian Faith is unique because it is the only faith where the dwelling-in-Heaven God is the same person who like our doting-us-on-Earth Dad! The Bible remarkably pairs these two unlike qualities in one and the same person – our eternal God!

THE PRIVILEGE WHICH COMES WITH...

Prophet Jeremiah, the Bible Prophet who wrote the most-worded Bible Book in the Bible, also introduces God as the Father. He writes, "For I am a Father to Israel. And Ephraim is My first-born" (Jeremiah 31:9b, NASB). To have God as our Father is a privilege. But that privilege comes with a responsibility. What responsibility? To be fruitful! The word, "ephraim" means to "doubly-fruitful" in Hebrew. "Since I am your Father, you must be doubly-fruitful, Israel" – that was Prophet Jeremiah's inspired message. Since God is our Father, we must be holy! How did

I make this connection? In John 17:11 in the high priestly prayer, Jesus called his father, as the Holy Father! So as children of the holy father, we too must be holy in our day to day lives! Apostle James also attaches responsibilities to those who call God as Father. He wrote, "With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God" (James 3:9, NASB). Those who enjoy the love of the Father (privilege) should love people around them and speak kindly to them (responsibility). James made another connection between privilege of knowing God as the loving father and a connected responsibility of taking care of the poor and the needy. He does so here: 'Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world' (James 1:27). Apostle Peter also attaches responsibilities with those who call God as a Father. If we call God as Father, we must be ready to be sanctified and obey the Lord Jesus, Apostle Peter teaches (I

Peter 1:2). He further writes, 'And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile' (I Peter 1:17). While we can celebrate the privilege of calling God as our Father, we must not forget the responsibility we have in showing him a holy reverence and healthy fear!

THE PERIL

Prophet Hosea perhaps paints the most moving picture of God as a Father in the entire Bible. Here is his unmatched, emotion-stirring depiction: 'Eternal One: When Israel was a child, I loved him; and out of Egypt I called My son. But the more I called to Israel, the more they walked away from Me. They kept on sacrificing to other divine masters and burning incense to idols! But I was the one who taught Ephraim to walk, holding him up by his arms, but his people didn't know I was the One who took care of them. I led them along with leather cords; with ropes of love, I showed them the way. As I dealt with them, I lifted the yoke from their neck; I bent

down to give them their food' (Hosea 11:1-4, The Voice). Here, we see how the people of Israel walked away from God their father who reminds them of his great love for them almost fighting back his tears. Does this love continue forever without ever stopping? The hyper grace cult false teachers who present God as the father compare him with earthly fathers. They ask, "Do you stop becoming your earthly father's son, if you rebel against him? You don't. In the same way, the Heavenly Father will never stop loving you even if you walk away from him, stubbornly, for the rest of your life – you are in no danger of being punished by him. You still remain His Son!" Really? The very next verse post, the greatest Bible passage on God's fatherly love we see God sending a punishment for the people of Israel who spurned his fatherly love: "They will not return to the land of Egypt; But Assyria – he will be their king. Because they refused to return to me" (Hosea 11:5, NASB). Prophet Hosea foretold the end of the northern Kingdom of Israel, also known as Ephraim, here. As he foretold, the Assyrians overtook them in 722

B.C. So, there is a real peril if you keep spurning the love of the Father God and keep indulging your flesh. Romans 11:22 warns that if we spurn God's kindness (expressed by His Fatherly nature), we are in the real danger of being "cut off".

In fact, Prophet Hosea who painted God as a loving father in Hosea 11 portrays him as an upset and furious Bear-Lion-Wild Beast in Hosea 13. He writes, "I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs; I will tear open their breast, and there I will devour them like a lion, as a wild beast would rip them open. He destroys you, O Israel, for you are against me, against your helper" (Hos. 13:8-9 ESV). So, what is full message of Hosea? It is this: God loves you as a father. But if you are stubborn in rebelling against Him and chasing after sin, he reserves the right to become as an angry bear-Lion-wild beast who can ultimately send you to hell.

Using memorable word-number picture, the author of Revelation, Apostle Paul teaches when one calls God as his father, (Rev.

14:1) he needs to "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Rev. 14:4) that is, obey Jesus in all areas of his life! Read Revelation 21:7-8 very carefully and you will understand this: those for whom God is a Father will be the ones who "conquer" (Satan, Self and Sin); they will be the ones who have turned from hell-populating sins such as sexual immorality, murder, sorcery, idolatry, lying, etc.

THE PARENTING

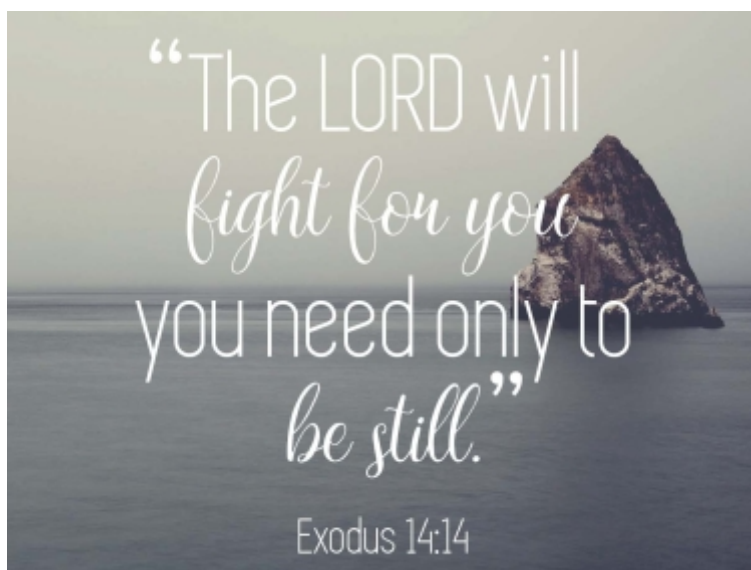
H a v i n g u n d e r s t o o d comprehensively the Fatherly Nature of God as per the Word of God, we fathers must parent like God for Apostle Paul call believers to become "imitators of God" (Eph. 5:1). That means just as God disciplines his kids moved by great love so that his kids may "share his holiness" (Heb. 12:7-10), we fathers must discipline our kids. We must not hesitate to give them whacks when necessary! Those whacks would be a God-intended way of wooing them to grow in holiness! We must discipline our kids when they live in sins such as sexual immorality (porn-watching, affairs, gadget-addiction, etc)

and not look the other way like King David apparently did when Amnon raped Tamar. Prophet Eli finally spoke some words of restraint when his sons went astray in a brazen manner (but it came far too late as God had already planned to execute judgment on them – check out I Samuel 2:12-25). The Nelson Study Bible notes, "Eli had warned his sons of divine judgment (I Sam. 2:25), but he never really rebuked them for their sins (I Sam. 3:13). By neglecting his parental duty, he was in effect favouring his sons above God." Fathers, let us not parent like King David and Priest Eli, but like God!



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Father's Day

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

One of my earliest memories of my father is when we were out for a walk after it was dark. We crossed the road and he switched sides with me. I asked why. He explained that he did that to put me on the inside and he would be on the traffic side. Like all good children, I promptly asked another why. He then taught me a lesson for life: a man should protect his family from all sorts of danger. An older brother should protect his younger sister and brother (I was the eldest), a husband his wife, a father his children.

I was about five, then. That lesson has stayed with me. When I walk with my family or with friends (especially with younger ones), I

walk on the danger side and keep them protected.

What should fathers be like? I would like to answer that question by talking of the temptations fathers face as fathers.

Not Enough

The first thing a man does after schooling and college education is to get a job to earn a livelihood. When he feels that he earns enough to support himself and a family, he decides to get married. He settles into the role of being his family's provider. He feels good and satisfied about himself.

At some point, he begins to think that everything depends on himself. He imagines that he is the sole provider. He isn't

considering the fact that without Father God, he wouldn't be able to do anything for his family. In the end, if for some reason, a man is unable or not there, God has to be the husband, the Father, the provider and guardian.

When a man is in this mode of provider, he thinks he is doing enough by just providing things. When he is focused on this role, he is actually not giving enough, for he fails to give his own self to his family. He withholds himself. He wants everyone to know his strengths, not his weaknesses

Life is not just about functional roles. It is first and last about relationships. It is about love, shared experiences of joy and peace — it is about just being there for one another.

When people focus on roles one of the casualties is a loss of equality within the family. The division of labour is such that importance is given to one activity at the expense of the other. One is the breadwinner and the other is the homemaker, occupying a lower rung. Relationships suffer.

Even in ancient times, the Bible depicts the wife as a very provident woman (Pro. 31: 10-31). In tribal societies till today, women work equally and side by side with the men. Nowadays, with girls and boys getting the same kind of schooling and professional training, it certainly doesn't make sense to think that roles are clearly demarcated into breadwinners and homemakers.

A man must think of himself as a homemaker if he is to bring enthusiasm to his home life. He must learn to give himself.

There is another reason to not be so focused on providing just things. Feelings get out of hand, and one could easily slip into thinking that he must provide more than he actually has the means to. This could open the door to corruption. Even if he is able to keep it all well-hidden, corruption brings a curse into the life of the family.

Primarily and ultimately, God alone is provider. Learn to cast yourself on the mercies of your gracious, compassionate and generous Father. Trust God to work things out.

Office Leftovers

Don't bring leftovers home from your office. I am not referring to the practice of some people pilfering things from the office and bringing them home secretly. That is just not right and ought not to be done. Pilferage is plain robbery, and the Bible categorically says, "Thou shalt not steal." There are no exceptions to the commandment. Thou shalt not have sticky fingers. Thou shalt not pilfer. Thou shalt not steal. Period.

The office leftovers I am talking about is yourself. When a man thinks that his role is to work hard to provide for the family, he gives his all at the office. He gives his best at work. He wants to advance in the job. He seeks the approval and favour of his bosses.

It is good to be approved for our work, but not at the expense of the family.

Keep things in focus. If all you are doing is really for the sake of the family, it is the family that needs to come first, and the office second. The family must get the first helping of your life and the office the leftovers.

You could miss a promotion or an opportunity of advancement. But that is okay, because the family comes first.

Nowadays, people take pride in saying that they are workaholics. The very term indicates addiction, and like all forms of addiction, there are negative consequences — burnout, progressively debilitating health problems, and so on.

No, office work does not contribute to good health. Love of family does. Never lose sight of the focal point of life being relationships.

After my father's parents died, he wasn't able to graduate. He had to start working to support himself. When I was six years old, our family moved from Bangalore to Hyderabad, where we spent the next ten years. My father was not given all that he was promised. It was a family-owned business and quite exploitative. Dad had to work at a factory quite a distance from the city. He had to leave early and would often return home late. Once, he did manage to get home, while we were still playing in the

compound. He quickly had a cup of coffee and came out to kick the ball around a bit. He taught me to dribble. That didn't happen a lot. Though I never did get good at sports, looking back I realise, that dad was doing whatever he could to give himself to us kids. It is a fond memory.

Bossing One and All

Most men are bigger than the rest of the family — bigger in age and in brute strength. It is therefore, very easy for them to think of themselves as the boss of the home.

Christian men think that the Bible sanctions and approves this view of the man's position and role in the family. They refer to the fact that the Bible says that man is the "head of the wife" (1 Cor. 11:3). It does, but the question is whether we have understood what that means. It would take too much space to explain the etymology of the Greek usage of the word "head" in the passage. Instead, I will use simple biblical logic to show that we haven't understood the idea right. The same passage says that God is the head of Christ. Does Father God bully, abuse or force Jesus? That is

plainly not true of the Father's relationship with Jesus. It is clear then that there is absolutely no support in the Bible sanctioning the notion that a man is the boss with license to abuse. Anyone who is a wife-beater is no follower of Jesus, but masquerading as Christ. Preachers who promote the subjugation of wives are messengers of Satan disguised as angels of light (2 Cor. 11:14).

In a Christian family, all relationships have one point of reference: the lordship of Jesus. He is the only Lord. He is the only one who has the right to rule and command. He is the Master, and everyone else is just a member of the brotherhood of Jesus (Matt. 23:8). In a way, my wife is my sister, my son is my brother, and my daughter is my sister. That is why Jesus answered the question, "Who is my mother, my brother" in this way: pointing to His disciples, Jesus said that they were His mother and brothers (12:48-49). That has to be equally true of the followers of Jesus, the Master. All have to have this sense of brotherhood in Christ Jesus.

Those who want to exercise a

top-down control over the family, set aside the fact that the Bible prefaces instructions for family life with one to cover all: "Submit to one another" (Eph. 5:21).

The Bible nowhere asks the man to "be the head". While the wife is asked to submit to her husband, the greater burden of being servant to the wife is laid on the husband. He is to be like Jesus, who washed and served and gave His life for His bride. Jesus didn't make His disciples serve Him. He served them (vv. 25-33). In the Christian home where Jesus is Lord, the question is never, "Who will be boss", but "Who will be the servant of all?"

In particular, the Bible says not to do anything that exasperates or discourages children (6:4; Col. 3:21). I once abruptly said to my teenage son that he couldn't do something "because I say so." He didn't defy me, but there was a flash of anger in his eyes that cured me of that malady. I never again used that argument.

We need to learn to reason and persuade people, rather than bully and force. A family is just not the place for top-down

relationships. In a Christian home, everyone stands at the foot of the Cross of Jesus, and there all of us are on level ground. We're all on equal footing.

Forcing our Dreams

Often parents pressure their children to fulfil their own unfulfilled dreams. A parent who couldn't achieve some academic goal, puts tremendous pressure on their children to fulfil the parent's dream.

There is such a thing as aptitude. If a child is forced to ignore his or her own gifts and inclinations in order to fit the parent's aims and purposes, not only would the child in all likelihood fail, but could reach a suicidal breakpoint in his or her life. Suicide by teenagers and youth is a modern phenomenon, that ancients never heard about.

We do have one example of one ambitious father thrusting his own aim on his son. Saul was that man. He was chosen to be the first king of all Israel. God Himself drew attention to the fact that he stood out (1 Sam. 9:2, 17).

Starting well as a humble man, Saul exceeded his kingly

authority and revolted against the Lord (13:9-13). After that instead of obeying the Lord's specific commandment, he hid behind religiosity to sin against God (15:9-24). He was tormented by a demon (16:14), and from being a brave warrior he turned into a fearful man. When an enemy giant challenged Saul and his army they were too petrified to fight (17:1-11).

David, a mere stripling, heard the giant's defiance. David was no warrior, but he had great trust in his Lord God's power to save and so he took up the giant's challenge and overcame and killed him (vv.32-50). After that, David became the darling of Israel and people began to praise him (18:7). Saul's own son Jonathan recognized David to be one who should rightly lead as king (vv.1-4; 19:1-3). When Saul saw that Jonathan did not share his dream that Jonathan would be king and instead favoured David, in a rage Saul tried to kill his own son suspecting him to be a conspirator and a traitor (20:30-33).

That is what happened to a father who felt frustrated that his son did

not share his dream and it still happens. It can drive a wedge between a father and his son or daughter. Sometimes the break is irreparable.

Following Remotely

What does a father desire most for his children? That they should do very well academically, get into a top-notch professional course, get a high-powered and extremely well-paying job, and finally marry someone who is equally well off. No one actually dreams of sons and daughters becoming faithful disciples of Jesus who put Jesus first. That is something that could happen in due course, but the primary focus is that all these other things that make for a good life on earth should happen first and foremost. I know that I myself worried more about these aspects of my children's life than about spiritual priorities. I hoped that somehow, they would absorb Christian beliefs and values, but the primary focus was on the material things of life.

The material world is in our face and so it is bound to grab our attention. As a result, we distance ourselves from this demanding

Lord, who says, "God's Word is God's Word. You can't modify it or set it aside. If you follow me, I have to be First Ruler and you have to proclaim that I am the only way."

And, what is our response? "Come on! That's a bit much—in this day and age, when we have to accept multiple views and be more accommodating of others." So, what shall we do with this demanding Jesus? We decide a little social distancing will be good. Don't follow Jesus so closely. Let's place one hand in the Lord's hand and the other in the world's. Let's just get along.

There's one problem. Jesus doesn't compromise. He still says, "Deny yourself. Take up your cross daily. Follow me totally."

Think about it. The present pandemic scenario has shown us how futile all our planning has been. Academics have gone for a toss. Jobs have been lost. Salaries have been slashed. Even those who are OK just now, have no guarantees or security.

Jesus did say pandemics would come. Jesus said that there would be disturbances of all kinds. And He said that when all these things happen, we need to wake up because He is coming soon (Lk. 21:8-11)

Jesus is Lord—the only Lord. He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). Don't make boastful plans for tomorrow (Pro. 27:1). Instead of making bombastic plans, submit to the Lord and say, "Rule Lord. Overrule Lord. Give me the grace to do Your will" (Jas. 4:13-16).

Be a spiritual father, so that you have spiritual children. Ensure that all of the family is "in the Lord".



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Child Labour and how it is worsened by the migration of people (World Day against Child Labour)

Ms. Aashima Samuel

Did you know that India is home to 33 million Child Labourers, with 80 percent of the child labourers concentrated in rural India?

The presence of such a large number of child labourers is a serious challenge and barrier to the well-being of children. Article 24 of the Indian constitution clearly states that, "No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or employed in any hazardous employment." But despite such laws and policies, child labour is still prevalent, and with the covid pandemic, it has been on the rise. The coronavirus pandemic has forced thousands

of India's poorest children to halt their educations and go to work to help support their families, as schools have closed and parents' incomes have fallen or vanished. In Madurai, it was reported that child labour increased to around 280 percent, while in Delhi, it increased by nearly 490 percent.

10 years old Udhay was rescued from a snack processing factory where he was paid 5 Rupees for one packaging. His parents are daily wagers, but after their mother's demise and with the rising cases of Coronavirus, it became difficult for his family to sustain on his father's earning.*

12 years old Krishna was*

rescued from a tea stall after his father forced him to work due to recurrent floods in their village and because covid pandemic has left him with no job.

12 years old Bina and 13 years old Sita* from Jharkhand were rescued from a manufacturing plant at Rourkela, Odisha after they were lured with false hopes.*

These four children are fortunate to have been rescued, but there are millions of children around the world forced to work due to their poor economic background. **Report states that there are 152 million children worldwide working as child labourers, and out of that India alone accounts for close to 7.3 per cent child labourer.**

Child labour in India are employed with the majority (70%) in agriculture some in low-skilled labour-intensive sectors such as sari weaving or as domestic helpers, which require neither formal education nor training. There are children who are also forced to work in hazardous working conditions which reduce

their health and life spans. They do not get the opportunity to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally and psychologically. In terms of the physical condition of children, children are not ready for long monotonous work because they become exhausted more quickly than adults. This reduces their physical conditions and makes the children more vulnerable to disease.

One of the most vulnerable groups of children is the children of the migrant workers. Labour migration has been highly prevalent in India before COVID pandemic, and during their period of employment in the city, their children were obligated to work along with them which would add as a surplus to their family income. But today, as migrant workers return home, there is an increase in vulnerability to their children. With no income and household's capacities to cover expenses drastically reduced, children are dropping out of schools and are being forced into labour to support their family. Between

April and September 2020, an unprecedented 1,200 children in India who were being illegally trafficked to work at factories and farms, were rescued.

To keep an economy prospering, a vital criterion is to have an educated workforce equipped with relevant skills for the needs of the industries. The young labourers today will be part of India's human capital tomorrow. Child labour undoubtedly results in a trade-off with human capital accumulation.

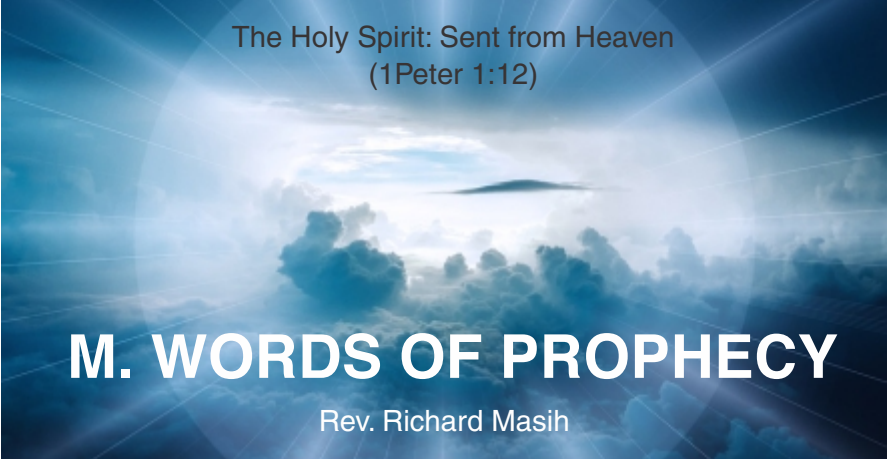
There is an overwhelming need to respond to the safety and protection of our future generation. Let our voices not go unheard in the so called "Culture of Silence." *As Proverbs 31 says, "speak for those who cannot speak for themselves defend the rights of the poor and needy",* let us make every effort, no matter how big or small, to develop a healthy and safe environment and to stand in strength and work towards providing a safe and protected environment for the children.

We at EFIC@R, are engaged in safeguarding and securing the rights of the children by utilising the 5P approach i.e. Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Partnership and Prayer; and facilitating a holistic transformation through advocacy, capacity building, providing education, healthcare, networking with churches and communities and a safe environment in the form of shelter home for the survivors. The challenges of the pandemic should in no way side-line the cause of children.

**names have been changed to protect identity*



Ms. Aashima Samuel
*National Director,
EFI – Children @ Risk (EFIC@R)*



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

M. WORDS OF PROPHECY

Rev. Richard Masih

Some of us get very much excited and carried away by words of prophecy in the church or meetings, especially if they are in our favor. But sadly, we are not excited when we read the same thing in the Scripture. It means, we are more given to sensationalism than the word of God in the Bible. For a few years, a servant of God was attending a particular denominational church in a particular city. Prophecy was a regular feature there. Slowly, he noticed that when a poor person stood up to prophesy, nobody was bothered to say 'Amen' or 'Praise the Lord' or 'Hallelujah'. There would be a dead silence. But when a rich person stood up and prophesied, there was a huge cacophony of

spiritual exclamations. On one occasion, a rich person stood up and prophesied, "Church, I love you." The Pastor became very emotional. He solemnly stood up, closed his eyes devotionally, and said, "Dear church, the Lord loves us. He has just spoken to us that he loves us." The congregation was visibly much moved. The same people would not be moved if they read the same thing in the Bible. It is a mockery of Biblical prophecy.

The word prophecy comes from two Greek words 'Pro' (on behalf of, in favor of) and 'Phemi' (to speak). It had its beginning in Exodus 20:19 when people said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God

speak to us, lest we die." Why didn't they want God to speak to them directly? It is because they were afraid. We read, "Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was" (Exodus 20:18-21; Deuteronomy 18:16). The scene was so much frightening that even Moses trembled with fear. We read, "Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear" (Hebrews 12:21). God's response to the people's plea was, "And the LORD said to me, they are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him (Deuteronomy

18:17,18). This was the beginning of the prophetic movement in Israel.

Praise God for the LORD's prophets in the Old and the New Testament. But there were Baal's prophets also, misleading the people of God. There are false prophets doing the same thing today. It is true that we are not to despise the prophecy. We are told, "Do not despise prophecies" (1Thessalonians 5:20). But we are also told to test the prophets and their prophecies, both with the Scriptures, "...but test everything; hold fast what is good" (1Thessalonians 5:20). We are told to test the spirits, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1John 4:1). Even our Lord has warned us. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree

cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15-20). He also warned us of the same in Matthew 24:11,24, "And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray" "... for false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

We can't give blind allegiance to any so-called, self-proclaimed, prophets. A such so called prophet was trying to burglarize a servant of God by showing him, "And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed" (2Chronicles 20:20). He was specially drawing his attention to the phrase, '...believe his prophets, and you will succeed.' He wanted his blind allegiance to

do something which was unscriptural according to the servant of God. He did not give in. Neither should we. In one church, in the New Year service, the Pastor culled out from the congregation that they would obey him in whatever he says. It was like signing a blank check. Let no so-called prophet mesmerize or hypnotize us by his antics. Please remember, nearer to the word of God we are, the safer we are.

The Scripture gives ten characteristics of the false prophets of olden (and the modern) days:

- .They fill us with vain hope. "Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes" (Jeremiah 23:16).
- .They prophesy the delusions of their mind and heart. "They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:16b).
- .They have not stood in the council of the Lord. For who among them has stood in the

council of the LORD to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened" (Jeremiah 23:18)? But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds" (Jeremiah 23:22).

- They have not been sent by God. I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied" (Jeremiah 23:21). "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" (Jeremiah 23:32).
- They prophesy lies. "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed!" (Jeremiah 23:25,32).
- They steal words from one another. "Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who steal my words from one another" (Jeremiah 23:30).
- They mislead God's people. "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" (Jeremiah 23:32).
- They are interested only in what they can get out of our pocket into their pocket. "Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry "Peace when they have something to eat, but declare war against him, who puts nothing into their mouths" (Jeremiah 3:5).
- They prophesy only good things about us. They flatter us for their selfish motives. They never warn the erring people. They are the source of many people's downfall. "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" (Lamentation 2:14).

- Their sun will set sooner or later. 'Therefore, it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be black over them; the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover their lips, or there is no answer from God" (Micah 3:6).

By the way, there are no more prophets today though the gift of prophecy is there. I say it because the Old and the New Testament prophets were authorized to write the Scripture. But the writings of no such modern day prophets can be added in the Holy

Scripture, the Bible, however gifted and Spirit-filled they may be. Their writings and the so-called oral prophecies are not infallible. Better stick to the word rather than be taken up by something dramatic and sensational.



Rev. Richard Masih

lives in New Delhi. He studied theology in All Nations Christian College, England. He served the Lord for 40 years with the Union of Evangelical Students of India and also authored several books in English. He is available for the ministry of the word in Hindi and English on invitation. He can be reached at Mobile: 9958747748 and richardmasih@gmail.com.

Jesus looked at them and said,
"With man this is impossible,
but not with God;
all things are possible with God."
Mark 10:27

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Intercessory Prayer Points



June 2021

1 TUESDAY Thank God for his Sovereignty over everything including your most unwanted and dreadful situation. Thank God that He has brought you this far.

2 WEDNESDAY Pray for Southern Asia Bible College, Karnataka. Pray for God's leading and empowerment for all the staff and faculty. Pray for God's provision for the needy students in the campus.

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

4 FRIDAY Pray for the Bible Society of India, Karnataka. Pray that the people of India would increasingly love God's word and obey. Pray that BSI would serve and be an instrument in spreading the Gospel.

5 SATURDAY Today is World Environment Day. Pray that everyone around the world will take ownership for their environment and will actively

engage in the protection of our earth.

6 SUNDAY Pray for your pastor to prepare and preach lively sermons. Pray that God would speak to people through them and bring hope during this global pandemic.

Pray for yourself that you would be a blessing to people who are in need, both physically and spiritually. Pray that God would give you prayer spirit to intercede for those who are lost without Christ.

7 MONDAY Pray for Peace Trust, Tamil Nadu. Pray that God would use them as His instrument as they work towards protection of environment, eradication of child labour, women empowerment etc.

8 TUESDAY Pray for Zeliangrong Baptist Church, Manipur. Pray that the Lord would speak to them personally through His Words and that they would be faithful followers and witnesses of Christ in their culture.

9 WEDNESDAY Pray for EFI-National Centre for Urban Transformation (NCUT). Pray that God's words would effectively spread and transform lives

in cities and towns despite busy lifestyles. Pray for those who are involved in urban missions.

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

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

12 SATURDAY World Day Against Child Labour. Pray for children at risk. During this pandemic trafficking and child labour has also increased. Pray that God would hear our cry for help and keep the children safe and provided. Pray also for people who are working to eradicate child labour. Pray for awareness. Pray also that every child would enjoy their childhood and be able to pursue their dreams.

13 SUNDAY Pray for your neighbors today. Pray that their fear would turn them to our loving heavenly Father. Pray that you would become an agent of peace to them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 SUNDAY Today is Fathers' Day as well as International World Refugee Day. Today is Fathers' Day. Thank God for your godly father who taught you the ways of God. Pray for all the fathers

to take their role in a family seriously and give their best to their families.

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

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

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

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

24 THURSDAY Pray for the little children in your locality that the Lord would protect them and safeguard them. Pray also for men and women to be compassionate and loving toward them and not do anything to harm them. May our children long to be in the presence of the Lord.

25 FRIDAY 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.

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

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

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

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

30 WEDNESDAY Thank God for His protection over us throughout the month. Thank God for those who sacrificially gave themselves to fight Covid19 pandemic second wave.

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Evangelical Fellowship of India



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

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

Commissions

- a. EFI Women Commission
- b. EFI Theological Commission
- c. EFI Youth Commission
- d. EFI Religious Liberty Commission
- e. EFI Commission on Relief (EFICOR)

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