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A Journey of Faith



10 OCT  
WORLD  
*Mental Health*  
DAY



Whatever is true,  
noble, right, pure,  
lovely, admirable,  
excellent or  
praiseworthy  
think about  
such things.

- Philippians 4:8 -



TAKE CAPTIVE  
*every*  
*thought*  
TO MAKE IT  
*obedient*  
TO CHRIST.



2 corinthians 10:5

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Rev. Vijayesh Lal

## It is time we address mental health in our Churches

The pandemic is still with us. In India, Dengue and other vector borne diseases raise their head as the monsoon rains recede. After the disaster of the second wave of Covid, it is not surprising that the government and public eye is on the daily statistics of afflicted, cured, and dead. Beyond the firefighting, the silent but enormous matter of mental health is ignored or pushed to the back of the table. The World Health Organization (WHO) has red-flagged the enormous shortage of psychiatrists and psychologists India needs for the large number of people with mental health issues.

WHO numbers say that there are

only 0.3 psychiatrists, only 0.12 nurses, 0.07 psychologists, and 0.07 social workers, per 1,00,000 people in India. The desirable number should be at least 3 psychiatrists and psychologists per 100,000 people. The need for upgrading and investing on the mental health infrastructure in India is immense as WHO estimates that about 7.5 per cent Indians suffer from some mental disorder. In simple language, most people with mental health problems will never be able to see a specialist, or even get a sympathetic ear to listen to them.

It is estimated that one in seven Indians is affected by a mental disorder of some kind. The Global

Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study in 2017, says around 200 million or 20 crore Indians have some form of mental disorder. The most recent National Mental Health Survey says almost 80% of all people suffering from mental disorders do not receive any kind of treatment for long periods.

Alas, traditional Indian society stigmatises mental disorders, aggravating the plight of the individual and the family, especially in the areas of livelihood and education.

At its extremes, mental distress can lead the individual to take his or her own life. It is worrying to note that India accounts for over 1/4th of deaths by suicide worldwide.

The pandemic has only made matters worse for mental health in India. The India Today magazine recently noted that just one city, Indore, reported a 128% increase in mental illness cases in 2021 over pre-pandemic levels.

The government's budgetary allocation seems to reflect its general indifference towards matters of mental health. The

total budget on mental health is Rupees 597 crore, including only Rupees 40 crore for the flagship National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), which is a national government scheme and supposed to be applicable and accessible countrywide. 597 Crores is less than 1% of the total health budget.

Out of the Rs. 597 Crores, the bulk of the funding has gone to National Institute of Mental Health and Sciences (NIMHANS) Bangalore (500 Crores) and to the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health in Tezpur, Assam (57 Crores). The National Mental Health Programme gets only 40 crores.

Experts have warned that proposing only Rupees 40 crore for NMHP will "leave India unprepared and unable to deal with the requirements of the population, especially with the added mental health impact and fallouts of the COVID-19 pandemic."

This budget when compared to the Statue of Unity (3000 Crores), the amount spent on publicity by the government (5000 Crores)

and the amount on the redevelopment of Central Vista (20000 Crores), seems paltry.

Practitioners have pointed out that the government “urgently needs to set up bodies that recognise NGOs and community level organisations working in the mental health space and perhaps look at funding them so that they can continue their work. Mass awareness programmes – such as the equivalent of pulse polio awareness – also need to be undertaken.”

Mental Health has perhaps been equally ignored by the Indian Church. To begin with, there is little or no known research on mental health issues in the Indian Church, cutting across denominations. That in itself is a great hurdle in evolving strategies of outreach, counselling, and support.

It would seem the church too has stigmatised mental ailments and related issues. The clergy, for most part, has not received even basic training bringing the required sensitivity and empathy in reaching out to the patient, to use the correct term. The Church is a place of refuge, a spiritual

family and it is only proper that we give our attention to this pressing need.

The Bible does not speak directly on the issue of mental disorder or illness, but we do know that all illness, whether physical or mental, is a consequence of the fall. As our bodies fail us, the mind too can face difficulties and it should not be viewed as out of the ordinary. After all many Biblical characters dealt with depression, suicidal thoughts, anger, and loneliness. The struggles of Job, Elijah, Jonah, and David are known. We need to do away with the line of thinking that tells us that “anxiety demonstrates a lack of faith” or that “depression is abnormal for a child of God”. They are unscriptural and not desirable in the Church.

Our comfort is that God never leaves us and is with us in our struggles, whether they be physical or mental. He is the one who gives comfort to the ones who suffer and who takes care of the needs of the broken-hearted. He is also the one who can restore us completely.

The Church needs to be a place of welcoming. We need to explore

creative ways to integrate those who are dealing with mental health issues into the community of faith. The barriers need to be broken.

To be a welcoming Church, we must also sensitize the people of God and educate them on mental health issues and how to approach them as a community. Pastors and leaders in the Church need to be more open to their own struggles, as many in the ministry do struggle with depression, anxiety, and other issues. Seminars, workshops, and newsletters focussed on

mental health issues can be organized so that the Church could be made aware of the issues involved and effectively advocate for the same in the local community.

But most of all we need to be supportive. The Bible calls us to “carry each other’s burdens.” We need to care for each other. There are many ways in which we can reach out so that the stigma, fear, and ignorance is done away with by sincere efforts and love that is shared in a caring community.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal



*cast all  
your anxiety  
on Him,  
because He  
cares for you*

*1 Peter 5:7*



# Mental Health and the Church

Dr. Kuruvilla George (KG)

There is no doubt that the current Covid-19 pandemic has raised the awareness of mental health and the impact of the pandemic on people's mental health. Over the years, mental health problems have often been a taboo subject among Christians and many suffering from mental illness or emotional problems have experienced stigma and prejudice. It is therefore a good thing that Christians are more aware and willing to talk about mental health issues more openly.

There is more to good health than just a physically healthy body: a healthy person should also have a healthy mind and spirit. A person with a healthy mind should be able to think clearly,

should be able to solve the various problems faced in life, should enjoy good relations with friends, colleagues at work and family, and should feel spiritually at ease and bring happiness to others in the community. It is these aspects of health that can be considered as mental health.

All of us get emotionally disturbed at some point in our life due to a variety of reasons. At times we feel sad, at other times we may feel tense or anxious, angry, agitated and even confused as a response to situations in our life. Often, these responses do not last long and our life or the lives of others are not significantly impacted by these emotional disturbances that we have. These disturbances are not considered

abnormal as we human beings are emotional beings. It will be abnormal if we do not experience emotions and remain at the same emotional level all the time. What then is mental illness and when do we consider a person as mentally unwell? Mental illness which is 'any illness experienced by a person which affects their emotions, thoughts or behaviour which is out of keeping with their cultural beliefs and personality, and is producing a negative effect on their lives and/or the lives of their families.

Mental illness includes a broad range of illnesses. Most people think of the mentally ill as exhibiting severe behavioural disturbances such as agitation or violence. However, in reality these disturbances are associated with severe mental disorders and the vast majority of those suffering with mental illness behave and look no different from anyone else.

### **Why be concerned about mental illness:**

- Because mental illness can affect all of us. Studies show that one in five adults will experience a mental health problem in their lifetime.

Anyone can suffer from a mental health problem.

- Because mental illness are a major public health burden. Studies show that up to 40% of patients attending general health care services suffer some form of mental illness. **The World Health Organisation estimates that 56 million Indians suffer from depression and another 38 million suffer from anxiety disorders.**
- Because mental illness can cause significant disability. Mental illness is a leading cause of disability. They can also cause death as a result of suicide and other causes. **India accounts for 36.6% of suicides globally and suicide has overtaken maternal mortality as the leading cause of death among women and teenage girls between the ages of 15-19 in India.** According to the World Health Organisation, four out of the ten most disabling caused in the world were mental illnesses. Depression is the most disabling disorder.
- Because mental illness services are very inadequate. There is a severe shortage of mental health professionals all over the world. **There are 0.3**

**psychiatrists, 0.12 nurses, 0.07 psychologists and 0.07 social workers per lakh population in India.** The treatment gap is 50% globally and up to 85% in developing countries.

- Because mental illness can be treated with simple relatively inexpensive methods compared with physical illness.
- Because we may not be able to cure many mental illnesses, but much can be done to alleviate suffering and quality of life of sufferers.
- Mental Illness leads to stigma. There is still much ignorance about mental illness which leads to stigma and discrimination against those suffering from mental illness. This happens even among Christians and the Church.
- Because mental illness affects us irrespective of age, gender, race, culture or religion
- Because those suffering are human beings loved by God.

### **Christian perspective on Mental Illness**

Christians have traditionally viewed mental illness and mental health practitioners with suspicion. All kinds of inhumane acts have been performed on the

mentally ill in the name of religion and the "church". Mentally ill patients have been burned at the stake, beaten and whipped, drowned and excluded from the community. Though we are not as cruel in the modern world, there is still a lot of ignorance, wrong teaching and stigma when it comes to the mentally ill among Christians and the Church. There is no difficulty accepting that Christians can suffer from physical illness but when it comes to mental illness, it is thought to be due to spiritual weakness (or lack of faith), personal sin (or generational sin) or due to demon possession (or oppression).

All human beings (Christians and non-Christians) are susceptible to diseases or disorders of the body, soul and spirit. Being a Christian does not confer us any immunity to diseases.

Disease or disorder in one part of our being can affect other parts of our being. Diseases of our body affect our emotional and spiritual well-being. In the same way, psychological problems are well known to cause physical symptoms and affect our spiritual well-being. For example, when we suffer from an infection like

influenza, we feel awful physically and emotionally. These are times when we want to curl up and to shut off from the world. We do not feel like reading the Bible, praying, worshipping God or being involved in any spiritual activity. This is because we are not made to function as different parts or as compartments but as a complete being. Christians are not immune from physical or bodily illness and in the same way Christians are not immune to mental or psychological diseases.

### **Examples from Bible Characters and modern Christians**

There are a number of examples that we can find in the scriptures both from the Old Testament and New Testament about people who went through emotional and mental trauma and suffering. Prophet Elijah's mental meltdown is well described in 1 Kings 19. He came to have suicidal thoughts and thoughts of life not being worth living. The way God dealt with him is an example of a perfect therapist. Job's emotional pain, suffering and grief is documented in the book of Job. Psalm 38 describes very well some of the symptoms

and signs of someone suffering from a severe depression. There are several Psalms of "lament" describing emotional pain and suffering of various people and mainly King David. King Nebuchadnezzar's insanity in Daniel 4, fits a description of a psychotic illness possibly schizophrenia. Jesus' grief at the death of Lazarus and his emotional suffering in the garden of Gethsemane is documented in the Gospels (Mathew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22).

Many Christians suffer from mental illness at some point in their lives. Some well-known Christians include William Cowper, the famous hymnwriter who faced multiple episodes of depression to being suicidal, Charles Spurgeon, the famous writer/preacher who struggled with depression, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, C.S. Lewis, Isaac Newton and Florence Nightingale are some others. We are all aware of fellow believers who struggle with emotional problems and mental illness.

### **Christian response to mental illness**

Some of the challenges for

Christians and the Church are:

- How to respond effectively and with credibility.
- Be willing to accept that none of us is perfect and that we are all vulnerable to mental/emotional problems as we are to physical ill health
- Be willing to accept that we are all fallible and that we do not have all the answers
- Be willing to accept our limitations and know when we have to refer to professionals
- Be willing to work with health practitioners and even with those who are non-Christians

### **Some principles in helping someone with mental illness**

- **Sympathy** – we need to be moved not just with sympathy or even empathy but with compassion, the way Jesus did.
- **Support** – prayer, emotional and practical support for the person and family – (affirmation, acceptance, affection, appreciation)
- **Speak** little but listen much. Listen to understand. Be careful of non-verbal cues that we may be giving out without being fully aware.
- **Subjectivism** – encourage person to move from subjective feelings to objective

truths including Biblical truths.

- **Symptom** – we need to understand and distinguish the difference between symptoms and cause. For example, rather than labelling a person as an angry person we need to find out what has caused the anger.
- **Self –Esteem** – there are deeply rooted issues with self-image for many with mental illness. Be willing to encourage and praise when appropriate
- **Secrecy** – respect privacy and confidentiality. Be careful of "sanctified gossip".
- **Slow** – mental illness takes much longer for recovery. And there are often relapses. Patience is required.
- **Study** – be willing to read and study more as regards mental illness. Be balanced
- **Stigma** – share your learning with the Church community and help to reduce stigma and ignorance about mental illness.

For our churches to be really effective in helping and supporting those with mental health issues, we need to establish a culture where everyone in the local church

knows it is acceptable to have problems (physical, psychological or spiritual) and that the church is there to support members during these times. I hope, pray and look forward to such a day dawning among us as Christians and within our Churches.

Transform4Life is an organisation that seeks to partner with churches to train and assist in this important area and has developed a number of training modules. Further information can be obtained by contacting [info@transform4life.org.au](mailto:info@transform4life.org.au).



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KG and his family lived in India as missionaries from 1986 to 1995. He was the general secretary of the Evangelical Medical Fellowship of India and travelled widely visiting medical colleges and mission hospitals ministering to health care professionals. His experience includes a period as Doctor with Operation Mobilization's first ship the MV LOGOS. Kuruvilla is married to Margaret who is from UK and has four grown children and four grandchildren.

***Come to me, all you who are weary  
and burdened, and I will give you rest.***

***Matthew 11:28***

# Be Courageous like Christ

Rev. Dr. David Mende



## Introduction

Christians are called to stand out from the rest of the world. But we have to pay a price to live consecrated lives. For more than two thousand years, God's people have been facing persecution for the sake of Christ. Often, we have to choose between Christ and persecution. What would you choose? Mark 14:66-72 reveals that Peter had to choose between possible imprisonment for Christ and the denial of Christ. Peter ended up choosing the latter. I've entitled this article as **"Be Courageous Like Christ."** In Mark 14:66-72, we see that Peter denies Jesus when he is confronted by a slave girl and bystanders. As we go through this passage, let's see how our Jesus, our guru is a great example of courage.

## 1. Peter Denies Jesus After Being Confronted by a Servant Girl (14:66-68).

After mentioning Peter in 14:54, Mark resumes his story in verse 66. The literary technique of flashback indicates that Mark wants us to contrast the trial and interrogation of Jesus with the trial and interrogation of Peter. We can even see a contrast between Jesus' watchfulness and Peter who failed to be watchful in Gethsemane. The fact that Mark mentions the denial from verse 66 points to verse 65 which mentions that Jesus was mocked and ironically asked to prophesy. The Sanhedrin didn't realize that Jesus' prophecy was being fulfilled right in the courtyard.

### a. Peter is confronted by a servant girl (14:66-67).

The mention of Peter being "below in the courtyard" (v. 66) suggests that Jesus' illegal trial took place in a room that was above the courtyard. In Gethsemane, Jesus found Peter sleeping thrice (vv. 68, 70, 71) which was a foreshadow of his three denials. As Jesus went through an intense trial above, Peter also went through a different kind of trial below. Though Peter fled from Gethsemane, he came back following Jesus till the high priest's courtyard. To be fair to Peter, we have to admit that he was trying his best to stay true to his words of commitment and stick to Jesus. Peter still loved Jesus and was concerned about him. He did show quite a lot of courage too. However, Peter eventually failed to stand for the Lord.

"One of the servant girls of the high priest" came to the courtyard and saw Peter warming himself (v. 67) at the fire (literally: light). In John 18:16, we read that the servant girl is a doorkeeper. This incident happened somewhere in March/April and it must have been pretty cold in Jerusalem at this time. Probably, the servant girl recognized Peter due to the light from the fire. Since the high priest's house was near the temple in Jerusalem, she

probably saw Jesus and his disciples at the temple earlier in the week. Though Peter wanted to be "at a distance" (v. 54) and hide among others in the courtyard, the servant girl eventually recognizes him. Mark tells us that the servant girl looked at him twice: "seeing" (Gk. *horao* : discern clearly) and "looked" (Gk. *emblepo* : to observe fixedly).

The servant girl calls out Peter emphatically, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." The Galileans (Nazareth was in Galilee) had a reputation of being troublesome. Even in Acts 24:5, Paul is referred to as "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." The phrase "with the Nazarene" (cf. Mk 3:14) suggests that this girl accused Peter that he was Jesus' disciple.

#### **b. Peter denies Jesus (14:68a).**

Peter denied Jesus by saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." These words were used to make a formal, legal denial in a court of law. Mark uses two Greek verbs for "know." The first verb, *oida* refers to theoretical knowledge, and the second verb, *epistamai* refers to practical knowledge. So, Peter completely denies Jesus! Peter thought only about his own safety. He was afraid of people. You see,

fear of people will paralyze us in our spiritual life. Fear of people will stop us from being used by God. That's why we must fear God rather than people.

**c. The rooster crows (14:68b).**

Then, Peter went to the gateway so that he will not be noticed by the light of the fire. He went further away from Jesus. As soon as he went into the gateway, the rooster crowed.

**2. Peter Denies Jesus Again After Being Confronted by a Servant Girl Again (14:69-70a).**

**a. Peter is confronted by a servant girl again (14:69).**

The servant girl saw (Greek: *horao* meaning discern clearly) Peter again. This time she saw him at the gateway. Now she began to call the attention of the bystanders as well. She told them, "This man is one of them."

**b. Peter denies Jesus again (14:70a).**

Though Peter changed the place, his heart didn't change. Now Peter had to deny Jesus before more people. The verb "denied" is in the imperfect tense, suggesting that he continuously denied Jesus before others. The second denial is more intense than the first one. That's how sin works. Repeated sin will make our conscience insensitive to sin.

That's why we must never play with sin. The more you sin, the deeper you get into it.

**3. Peter Denies Jesus for the Third Time After Being Confronted by the Bystanders (14:70b-72).**

**a. The bystanders confront Jesus (14:70b).**

After some time, the bystanders probably recognized Peter's Galilean accent and said, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." Matthew 26:73 tells that the bystanders said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." Since Jesus was from Nazareth, which was in Galilee, the bystanders identified Peter as one of the disciples of Christ.

**b. Peter began invoking a curse and denied Jesus (14:71).**

Peter's denial is as strong as the accusation of the bystanders. In the first two instances, Peter denied being identified with Jesus. In the last denial, he denies Jesus himself. Peter began to invoke a curse and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." In the statement, "he began to invoke a curse on himself," there is no object in Greek. Some scholars suggest that Peter probably

cursed Jesus to protect himself. He even swore and said, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." Peter doesn't even take the name of Jesus on his lips. He is ashamed of Jesus (cf. Mk 8:38)! Dear brothers and sisters, claiming that we will be faithful to Jesus will not guarantee faithfulness. When we go through pressure, we must ask the Lord to help us to be faithful to him.

**c. The rooster crows a second time (14:72a).**

As soon as ("immediately") Peter denied Jesus for the third time, the rooster crowed a second time. Some scholars say that between the first crowing and the second crowing there must have been a one-hour gap.

**d. Peter remembers Jesus' prophecy (14:72b).**

Peter remembers the Lord's prophecy given in Mark 14:30. Another prophecy given by the Lord is fulfilled. Heaven and earth will pass away, but Jesus' words will not pass away (cf. Mk 13:31)!

**e. Peter broke down and wept (14:72c).**

Luke 22:61 tells "And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord."

Commenting on this encounter, John MacArthur writes, "The

Lord turned and looked at Peter. Straight into Peter's eyes went the gaze of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps his trial had just ended and He was coming back across the courtyard, headed to prison where he'd be kept for a few hours until the dawn, fake trial, scourging, crucifixion in the morning.

"His face covered with spit, black and blue puffy from being punched in the face and slapped. His garments covered with sweaty blood that had oozed out of His sweat glands in the agonies in the garden. And as He's bound, is taken through the courtyard. He looks right into the eyes of Peter. I'm pretty sure that's a look that Peter never, ever, ever forgot."

The last sentence in verse 72 can be translated as, "And when he had thought about it, he wept." This shows that Peter felt remorse. Unlike Judas who betrayed his Master, Peter denied him due to his weakness rather than any other evil intentions. This anticipates that Peter will be restored (cf. Mk 16:7).

**Conclusion**

Since Peter was the chief apostle and the spokesperson for the rest of the apostles, his denial is hard-

hitting. Though Peter didn't face a formal trial, he denies Jesus without even uttering his name. This story teaches that even the best apostle was not immune to apostasy. Peter didn't watch and pray, and thus he denied his own Master thrice.

This entire episode also teaches that no one is beyond God's grace, forgiveness, and restoration. However, this story should not be seen as an encouragement to sin. Rather, we learn that God is the God of second chances! Mark wants us to see the contrast between the bold and good confession of Jesus (1 Tim. 6:13) before the Sanhedrin and Peter's denial before a servant girl and bystanders. Jesus is not only our Lord and Savior, but he is also the best example for us.

The main message I want to share through this article is: **Instead of being timid, we must be courageous like our guru, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Christ's disciples must not be timid. We must be bold. Not all of us may be imprisoned or killed, but all of us will be mocked and questioned for our faith. Sometimes, we may hesitate to

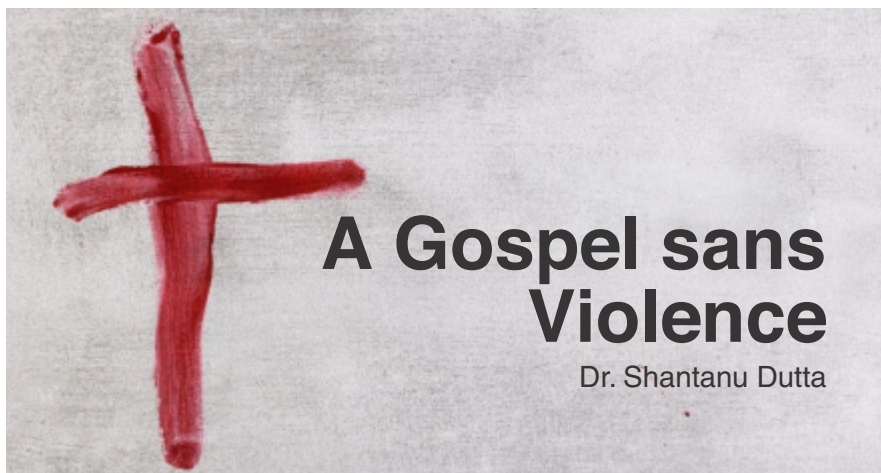
identify ourselves as Christians. Let's not make the mistake that Peter did. Let's be courageous like Christ! Let's be courageous witnesses for the Lord!

*P.S. This article is adapted from Dr. David Mende's book, The Passion of Christ: Expository Sermons on Mark 14-16. You may contact him for copies of this book.*



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# A Gospel sans Violence

Dr. Shantanu Dutta

October is the month we remember Mahatma Gandhi as his birth anniversary is on October 2nd. The UN also observes the day as the International Day of Non-Violence. Though, we may observe this day as we observe several other days, in the UN calendar, like many others, I wonder if non-violence has any relevance or place today, at least in our part of the world. The last of the nonviolent warriors that I knew of, Sunder Lal Bahuguna of the Chipko movement fame, died a few months ago. Any few remaining heroes like Anna Hazare are likely to be semi-retired. There are no younger heroes espousing satyagraha who are in the public space. So, does non-violence have a future?

Non-violent civil disobedience is aimed at an entity like a government, a State or an imposed law, from which there seems to be no institutional or politically acceptable mechanism for redress. Free and fair elections don't guarantee accountability in between those elections, though an independent judiciary and an independent press could be important tools ensuring accountability. Gandhi gave a new political meaning to the idea of civil disobedience during India's freedom movement. The word preferred by the Mahatma was Satyagraha — the quest for truth. The difference between the two is of course more than semantics though non-violence is a common theme. There was a

distinctly spiritual element in the Mahatma's interpretation of non-violence. This included an inner transformation of one's own self so that the satyagrahi himself does not entertain any violent thoughts towards the aggressor.

Mahatma Gandhi obviously identified himself as a Hindu, but he had many Christian influences in his life. But what is the Christian understanding of non-violence? We live in a world that teaches us that when we are faced with violence, the best response is greater violence. But violence always and only leads to more violence, so those who would practice non-violence must start to find alternative, creative solutions out of violent situations. Besides, many Christian nations, supposedly guided by a Christian world view have been associated with war and violence in recent years. Of course non-violence doesn't always end violence. We live in an evil world, and sometimes, evil wins. So, we must not think that non-violence always "works" and is a magic wand. It isn't. It doesn't always work.. The life of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Archbishop Oscar Romero and more recently Fr Stan Swamy is living proof that non-violent resistance too has consequences.

But of course, the more complicated question is whether the Bible actually teaches non-violence. In many places, the Bible seems clearly to present God as endorsing violent acts as well as asking His people to indulge in violence. The stories are so well known that we really don't need to say much about it. However, God is shown in the life and teaching of Jesus and the first Christians: the merciful father of the prodigal son in Jesus' parable, the one who brings rain on the just and unjust alike, that one who—in Paul's words—loves us even while we are God's enemies. Similarly, Revelation actually portrays a God who through persevering love ends up healing even God's enemies—the kings of the earth and the nations (Revelation 21).

The Sermon on the Mount (found in Matthew 5, 6 and 7) is one of the most detailed teachings of Jesus Christ recorded in the New Testament. In this vital sermon, Jesus Christ laid out the central aspects of the way of life for His followers. One of the central themes of the sermon is Christ's expectation that His followers be known as peacemakers—not violence or waging war. In the Beatitudes, Jesus taught, "Blessed [happy] are the

peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). Christ's followers should be characterised by living a way that leads to peace—totally the opposite of a life characterised by violence and strife. The Christian standard of being a peacemaker is found throughout the New Testament. The apostle Paul wrote that Christians are to do whatever possible to "live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). Many scriptures support the basic truth that Christians are to "pursue peace with all people" (Hebrews 12:14; see also 2 Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 5:22; James 3:17).

Of course, the question will never fully go away. How do we reconcile-- a god of loving kindness, and a god of fire and brimstone, on the other. But even in the Old Testament, as the story unfolds, the revelation of God expands. We see God spare Nineveh, the conqueror of the northern tribes, and Jonah go off wondering about God's mercy. Conventional wisdom demanded of God that the city be destroyed. In the book of Job, we see Job's friends contradicted, those who had argued that misfortune comes from the hand of an offended God. Everything is summed-up in the person of

Jesus of Nazareth, who claims "to fulfill the law and the prophets." Which is to say, he is the climax of Hebrew Bible's struggles to understand God.

We live in a violent world which is tinged with violence and we ourselves are sometimes the victims. It is in such a world that we are called to be peacemakers. Though, we may be surrounded by hate, bigotry and intolerance that stretches us to the full, may the Lord enable us to live, as in the words of Deuteronomy (30:19), "Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.



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If there had been newspapers then, the shocking headline would have been "Hero Apprehended at the Border."

Have you ever wondered about the hero of the Exodus being kept out of the Promised Land in the end?

Almost single-handedly, Moses led an abject and fearful people out of bondage to a very powerful nation. Aaron was supposed to be his helper, but wasn't much good. In fact, he even compromised matters and almost succeeded in sabotaging the mission by introducing idolatry and angering God Almighty (Ex. 32:2-10). Later on, Aaron joined his sister Miriam in rebelling against God's chosen

leader in an attempt to overthrow Moses and usurp his authority (Num. 12:1-3). Moses did have an understudy in young Joshua. But while loyal and faithful, most of the time he remained in the background (Ex. 24:13). And so, it was that the Exodus depended mostly on the leadership of Moses alone.

You can almost imagine Moses banging his staff on the ground and confronting Pharaoh and all Egypt with the miraculous power of God. Obeying God, he raised his staff and parted the Red Sea so that the Israelites could cross it and then lowered his staff causing the waters to crash down on the Egyptian army and destroying it (15:21-22, 26-27). When Israelites needed food,

Moses turned to God and the Lord provided manna and quails in plenty daily (16:1-21), and when they cried for water, Moses struck a rock with his staff to get water for thousands of wilderness-wanderers (17:6).

The next time, the thirsty rabble created a big ruckus for water, God asked Moses (and Aaron) to talk to a rock, instead of striking it. Moses didn't do that. He struck the rock just like the previous time (Num. 20:8-11). Though he had not obeyed God, the Lord honoured His servant and let water gush out of the rock. However, God told Moses that he had dishonoured Him, and the punishment would be that Moses would not be the one to lead Israel into the Promised Land. That honour would go to his undistinguished understudy Joshua.

Moses asked God to allow him to enter the Promised Land. From the Lord's response, it would appear that Moses asked God more than once. "'That is enough,' the Lord said. 'Do not speak to me any more about this matter'" (Deut. 3:26).

There were a number of times

that God had got ready to obliterate Israel for their ungrateful attitude and rebelliousness, and it was Moses who pleaded for them to be forgiven, and God would then relent from His intention to destroy Israel. So why was God so hard with Moses?

### **Unlike All Others**

God's charge against Moses was, "You did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites" (Num. 20:12). Moses had failed to honour God "as holy" by not trusting God. The word "holiness" is difficult to define. It is "glory," "honour," "abundance" (lit. "weight"), and more. However the word becomes comprehensible in part when it is realised that the opposite of holy is "common" or "profane". That is God is "wholly other/separated". He is unlike all the gods of the nations. That unlikeness is His holiness.

This is the one lesson that God was intent on teaching His people who had got used to Egypt during their slavery there. They had imbibed Egyptian culture, including idolatry. That is why they clamoured for a god whom

they could see, a god whom they could hold. They wanted a god like the gods of the nations. They mobbed Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us" (Ex. 32:1). Apart from idols being lifeless and impotent, they appeared to be exploitable in the hands of occultists, priests, sorcerers, witch doctors and shamans. The occultists always used sacred symbols as power-tools to impress their captive gatherings.

The shepherd's staff that Moses had been using to mediate divine power and perform miracles stood in danger of being regarded as representative of God Himself. The Lord God wanted to make it clear to His people that the staff of Moses could not contain Him or take His place. God was not in the staff nor could God be replaced with a staff. God could not be grabbed and held, controlled and used like the staff of Moses.

God also wanted people to know that Moses was not a witch doctor or occultist like the priests of Egypt. He did not hold God captive. He could not and did not make God do his bidding. The people needed to learn and know

that it was the other way around. God held Moses in His hand and that is why divine power flowed through Moses. He was only an instrument in the hands of God. He served God. He did God's bidding.

### **New Day, New Way**

This was the reason it was absolutely necessary that a miracle had to be performed without the staff of Moses being used in the performance. That is why God told Moses (and Aaron) to talk to the rock. Moses was to take the staff but not use it at all: "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so that they and their livestock can drink" (Num. 20:8).

Man of God though he was, Moses had his ego. His image mattered to him. He wanted to show people that there was power in him personally – in the staff he possessed. From his point of view, what was the point of carrying the staff if he could not demonstrate with it that there was power in him?

This is what Moses said then: "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" (v.11). That was just like what an occultist priest or magician would have said: "Look at what I can do with just a wave of my hand."

The first time water was needed, God had said, "'I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.' So, Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel" (Ex. 17:6). There was no doubt then about who had given the water. But the second time, Moses just left God out and his words were suggestive of having power in himself like the priests and magicians of Egypt.

The text doesn't tell us what Moses was to say to the rock for it to pour out water, but it would be right to infer that he would have had to say, "In the name of the Lord God, I command you, O rock, to pour out water". He clearly couldn't have been asked to plead, "O rock, I beg you to have mercy on us and send out water."

What Moses did was to leave God out of the picture. He took all

the glory. He had dishonoured God not only in his heart, but before the watching Israelites. He had turned the almighty God who had overcome Egypt into an entity he himself possessed. He had made God just like all the deities – the gods of Egypt and surrounding nations.

Another lesson that the Israelites needed to learn was that God was not at all predictable. He could not be expected to act the same as always. The magicians demonstrated that their gods would do whatever they wanted as a response to the secret magical chants and spells that they alone knew to incant. God wanted Israel to know that He could not be controlled and made to act in accordance with human spells. The Spirit of God is like the wind: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going" (Jn. 3:8).

### **Without Aids and Props**

However, the primary lesson was to be that the power of God did not depend on the staff of Moses. God could and would show His power and do His miraculous

works when the perishable staff of Moses and the leader himself was no more.

To part the Red Sea, Moses had raised his staff high and held it in position until all the Israelites had crossed the sea (Ex. 15:21-22). The first miracle God did at the entry to the Promised Land was to part the waters, just like He had parted the waters at the Exodus. At the Red Sea He had used the staff of Moses as the rallying symbol. But the staff was gone, along with Moses.

The river Jordan when it was in flood, and there was no staff of Moses to make a way for them, the Lord commanded that the priests would carry the Ark of the Covenant and step out. When they would stand in the waters of the Jordan, the Lord would make a way through the waters. God showed His people that He didn't need Moses' staff to do His work. All He needed was a servant ready and willing to obey instructions and commands. God said that He would exalt His servant: "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so that they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses" (Jos. 3:7).

That is what God does: He exalts people who exalt Him. God sent a prophet to tell the priest Eli, "Those who honour me I will honour, but those who despise me will be disdained" (1 Sam. 2:30). Our Lord said, "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

In the context of prohibiting idolatry, God describes Himself as a "Jealous God" (Ex. 20:5). God is jealous about His Name and His glory. He doesn't share His glory with idols and will not allow it. He is not jealous of idols in the sense of envying them. There is nothing to be envious of them. The god they represent don't exist. The word jealous in the context means protective and vigilant and mindful. God says, "I am the Lord! That is my name! I will not share my glory with anyone else, or the praise due me with idols" (Isa. 42:8).

What Moses had done was to dishonour God – turning Him into a totem in the hands of a witch doctor. That was not a belief and practice that God wanted carried

over into the Promised Land.

### **But Not Cast Off**

Still, Moses was not cast off completely. He was not kept out of heaven. He came from God, along with Elijah, to talk to our Lord (Matt. 17:3). He is still a hero of the faith and is included in the hall of faith:

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel (Heb. 11:24-28).

In the end, Moses learnt that,

hero though he was the kingdom, the power, and the glory – all belong to the Lord God. Moses lost it momentarily even though there had been no hero-worship. Time and again, the Israelites had come close to lynching him so that they could return to the guaranteed life of slaves. There's more danger today of celebrity preachers and ministry overlords taking God's place in the lives of their cult following. We need reminding that the power is not in us. The power is not in the staff in our hands. The power is solely and entirely God's.

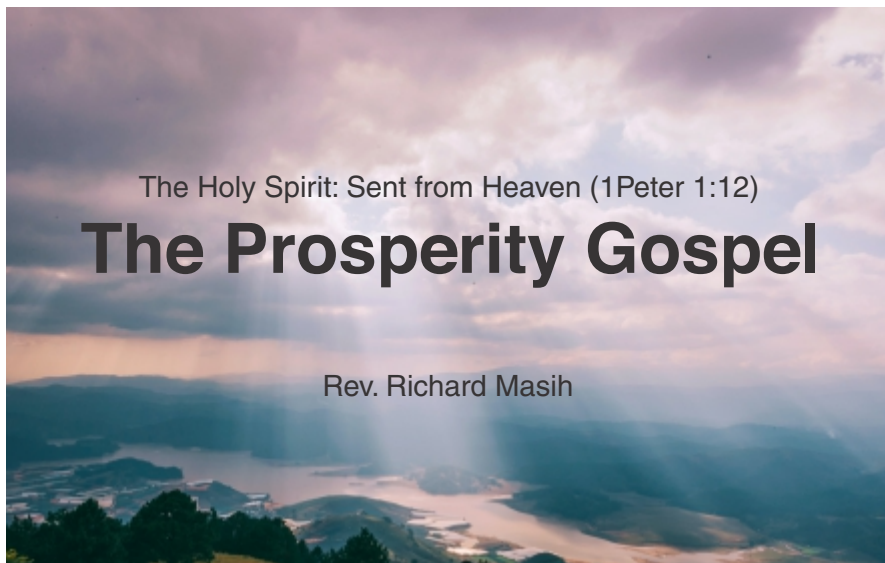


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***Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.***

***Psalms 46:10***



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

# The Prosperity Gospel

Rev. Richard Masih

This Gospel is also known as Health and Wealth Gospel. The proponents of this Gospel base their teaching on 3John v.2, "Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul". It is true that God does delight in the well-being/or welfare of his servants. It says in Psalm 35:27, "Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, "Great is the LORD, who delights in the welfare of his servant!" It's true, he does want his people to prosper. It is seen in other verses of the Bible as well.

For example, "And the LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the

fruit of your ground, within the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down" (Deuteronomy 28:11-13). Further, "And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers" (Deuteronomy 30:5).

But he also allows his people to go through wants and needs to

test what is in their hearts. He doesn't want them to live in self-deception and self-delusion. It says in Deuteronomy 8:3, "And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." So, he often allows his people to go through financial and other hardships. Prosperity is not necessarily the sign of God's pleasure. It says in Psalm 73:3,5,12, "For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked... They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind...Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches."

On the other hand, poverty is not necessarily the sign of God's displeasure. It says in James 2:5, "Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?" Our hearts should desire the Lord, not worship material prosperity. The Psalmist says in Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I

desire besides you." A servant of God was asked by someone else whether he was preaching the prosperity Gospel. His balanced reply was that he wasn't preaching the Prosperity Gospel. But, he wasn't preaching the Poverty Gospel either. Because Lord Jesus has promised in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

A puppy was going around and around trying to catch hold of his tail. In the process, he was losing his balance and falling over time and time again. An elderly dog, standing nearby, was watching him with great interest. Finally, he could not control his curiosity. He asked the puppy as to what he was doing. The puppy replied, "Uncle, I have heard that a dog's wealth and wisdom is in his tail. So I am trying to lay hold of my tail." The elderly dog gave a hearty laugh, "You, foolish fellow, look at me. I walk straight ahead, and my tail follows me." Today, many seem to be hurting and harming themselves in their pursuit of filthy lucre.

The word of God has this to say, "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into

ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (1 Timothy 6:9). So, beware!

## **R. Cursing Satan-**

Some are in the habit of cursing Satan somewhere in their prayers. But not even archangel Michael was disrespectful to Satan over the body of Moses. We read, "But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you (Jude 9)." Renowned Pastor and author, Rev. Dr. John McArthur writes in his Study Bible, "Rather than cursing such a powerful angel as Satan, Michael differed to the ultimate, Sovereign power of God. 'And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!"' (Zechariah 3:20. He goes on to say, "This is the supreme illustration of how Christians are to deal with Satan and demons. Believers are not to address them, but to seek the Lord's intervening power against them."

But some don't mind doing what they aren't supposed to be doing. Some go so far as to insult Satan in their action song based on Romans 16:20, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." They stamp happily and repeatedly their feet on the floor, indicating how they are stamping Satan under their feet. They are making just a mockery of themselves. Somebody has commented on the practice of some saints of binding Satan and sending him to hell in their prayers. Thousands of believers must be doing so every day. Some Christians must have done so throughout the centuries. But since Satan is still very much active in the world, it is evident that he hasn't obeyed them.

## **S. Slain in the Spirit-**

Some have the strange practice of calling people on the stage and then making them fall again and again with the gesture of their hand or with the waving of their coat towards them or the preacher making 'whooshes' sound. The people are made to get up from the floor, only to make them fall again and again. If we have to make them fall again and again only, why do we have to make them get up from the floor?

They fall backward. Incidentally, only the soldiers who had gone to arrest Lord Jesus fell backward. "When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground (John 18:6). All the true worshippers have always fallen forward. Cf. Daniel's example, "Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground" (Daniel 10:9).

Cf. the example of the twenty-four elders in heaven, "And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever" (Revelation 4:9,10). The examples can be multiplied.

What is the purpose of being 'slain in the Spirit' is unclear? Is it for the purpose of healing and deliverance or being filled with the Holy Spirit and power? There are a few volunteers of the preacher stationed behind the people about to be made to fall, so that when they fall backward they don't hurt themselves. Someone has made a wry comment that everyone falls on the floor under the power of the

Holy Spirit except the videographer! Then, there is the practice of 'Laughing in the Spirit' and even the weird practice of 'Vomiting in the Spirit.' One man went around the meeting hall for two hours, driving an imaginary motorbike, making barroom-barroom sound. It was told that in this way, he was releasing the pent up emotions. Readers' thoughtful, prayerful and humble discernment is required.



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# WHERE ARE THE "SONS OF ISACHAR" ?

Mrs. Vinita Shaw

Asks Vinita Shaw on the occasion of International Day of the Girl Child

As I watched the angry protests on television over the Hyderabad rape and murder of a six-year-old, I once again winced and looked away. Such kind of news has become a norm in our context with the media highlighting and replaying it. After the Nirbhaya gang rape in 2012 in the heart of the city of New Delhi, following which, she succumbed to her brutal injuries, many voices to stop such cruelty have risen in unison.

This tragic event very close to home, catapulted me into harnessing mass media to change the centuries-old Indian mindsets that are etched in stone, that women are inferior and mere objects.

Through All India radio national channels and podcasts, we disseminate Bible based awareness about God creating man and woman in His own image and making both equally important for continuance of human race and, Christ's supreme sacrifice and free gift of salvation for all, importance of

educating and making girls self reliant, imparting knowledge about women's, family values etc.

In response, we receive thousands of calls and messages from a variety of listeners pan India, most of whom are girls and women who feel encouraged to value themselves.

The reactions from men can be easily placed in three categories:

- There are those who want to kill us and applaud the rapes, murders and atrocities girls and women suffer. *"All you women deserve to die"*, was an enraged male listener's anger, as he vented to our phone counselor soon after listening to our broadcast discouraging female feticide and offering the suggestion of placing the child for adoption.
- There are others who are appreciative and are making big life transforming decisions for their families – One man said, *"After listening to your broadcasts, I decided not to get my minor daughters*

*married, but to let them study and learn a skill that will make them self reliant."*

Another man said, *"Your teaching is very different. If an Indian man would listen to your broadcasts three times, his objectifying women and considering them inferior, will stop forever."*

- And then there are those who b e c o m e o u r partners/counselors in their respective areas to champion that, girls be treated as human beings.

However, the response of the Body of Christ in the face of today's context, has largely been silent as the adversary continues using the Indian culture to degrade and devalue women.

I have often found myself wondering about who and where the sons of Issachar were. *"Issachar, men who understood the times, chiefs with all their relatives and under their command (1 Chronicles 12:32).*

As I have prayed and asked God

for more and more of such men who would understand the times and speak up for the vulnerable girls and women, I came across a book written by Pastor Omar Garcia, and his friends titled, *Men of Courage, Biblical manhood devotional guide*.

I share below a few excerpts in the hope that we will know what God expects from His Body during such times that we live in. Pastor Omar writes

*I have long admired the sons of Issachar in the Old Testament. While we don't know a lot about these guys, the Bible describes them as "men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. 12:32). We can safely conjecture that the sons of Issachar were not passive but instead were men who thought deeply in order to live wisely. The kingdom of God needs men who understand the times — men who have the requisite courage and audacity to push back on a culture that seeks to redefine manhood. More than ever before,*

*we need men who will embrace God's vision and design for biblical manhood and who will shine as lights "in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation" (Phil. 2:15).*

Further, Gil Harris, rightly observes in this book:

*I am convinced that if we are going to see God move in our day, we must have empowered churches. To have empowered churches, we must have empowered homes. To have empowered homes, it is imperative we have empowered husbands and dads in these homes. It all starts with asking the right questions. What is authentic biblical masculinity? What does this man look like, act like, and live like? As men of God, let's provide our home, our church, and our culture with the right answers.*

Brian Stone, in the same book further says;

*Did you know that God desires to rescue a beauty? Do you know who she is? His Bride, the Church*

*(Eph. 5:25-27). The church is His Bride, and she is highly valued! In the same way, we must realize the value of women in our community and in our homes. Genesis 1:26-27 teaches that women are made in the image of God in the same way as men are. Men and women are both equally made to reflect God to the world and are equally valuable in His eye. Why is this important?*

BOBBY COOLEY adds ;

*Many men today have become passive. They simply go with the flow, allow others to speak for them, and fail to take responsibility. They love the glory and are the first to stand up and take the applause for doing good. However, what about when things go wrong? We are good at making excuses and passing off the blame to others. When Adam ate from the fruit, he was being passive (Genesis 3). He should have told Eve to walk away from the tempter. Men of Courage take responsibility and are not passive. Men often think they are king. A biblical man understands*

*he is not the king, he represents the King and has been entrusted with His daughters. As men of courage, we must honor God by honoring women.*

Very direct, the book helps us to remember that if we claim to be followers of Christ, we cannot be like the Priest and the Levite who left the wounded and bleeding man dying till the Good Samaritan came along (Luke 10:30-37). We can't look the other way. We can't ignore the headlines over our morning cup of coffee.

In the Gospels, we read about Jesus engaging with men, women, girls, boys and people of diverse backgrounds. In Mark 5:21- Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus saying, "*Talitha Koumi (which means Little girl, I say to you, get up)*".

Time and again, we see Jesus showing compassion to women, "*Woman, why are you crying ? Whom are you seeking ?*" (John 20:15).

*"Leave her alone. Why are you*

*bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me",* He came to her rescue when the disciples pounced on the woman who broke the alabaster jar at His feet (Mark 14:6).

While the hurting girls and women are looking to be rescued, God is looking for sons of Issachar today.

I am reminded of a famous quote of Martin Luther king Jr :

*"The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who remain neutral in times of great moral conflict."*

As we struggle with the aftermath of the pandemic, it is the little girls who are being aborted in their mother's wombs, abused, trafficked, rape and as vulnerable at home as outside home.

Are we willing to listen to God's tug at our hearts, leave our comfort zones and take that leap of faith, is the question that a follower of Christ will need to answer.



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**International girl child day is observed each year on October 11. On this day, we focus on problems and challenges faced by girls, which are an impediment to their well-being and achieving a better quality of life. It also focuses on fulfillment of their human rights. The focus of International Day of the Girl 2021 in the aftermath of the pandemic is "*Digital generation. Our generation.*"**

Men of Courage-a devotional guide for men can be obtained, free of cost in English, Hindi and Bengali by mailing [vshaw3@gmail.com](mailto:vshaw3@gmail.com).

# YOU, A CHRISTIAN? REALLY?



Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

Do you call yourself 'Christian'? Do you brand yourself as a Christian?

What does that word mean? To answer that question, we must turn to the Bible – the book which used that word first. In the Bible, the word '*Christian*' is used three times. When we study those three instances, we get to see three characteristics that cannot be separated from any true '*Christian*' - a biblical *Christian*.

## **Converted**

Let's race to passage number one: Paul stands before King Agrippa as a prisoner. His crime – preaching Jesus. Paul gives Agrippa a blow by blow account of his conversion experience: the ride on the road to Damascus...

his passion to persecute followers of Jesus... the blinding light from heaven... the voice that said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting!".... his U-turn... his repentance...etc.etc.

After having shared his terrific testimony, Paul did not stop. He did not shut up. He went on. He got a touch personal with King Agrippa. He posed a personal question to him: "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe!" You see, Paul was not just trying to save himself from further imprisonment by sharing his testimony – he wanted to save King Agrippa from going to hell too! After this abrupt and daring invasion of his private space by Paul, King Agrippa said, "In a

short time, would you persuade me to be a Christian?" (Acts 26:28). There, you bump into the word we are trying to understand the meaning of – the word '*Christian*'. Ask King Agrippa what he meant when he used the word '*Christian*'. This would be his answer: "To be a Christian for me is to be someone like Paul – to be someone with a CONVERSION experience!"

Yup, the word *Conversion* and '*Christian*' go together. **A Biblical Christian cannot be a Christian without the conversion experience.** Absolutely. Do you call yourself a '*Christian*' without an experience of conversion?! If so – forgive me for being blunt – you simply are not a Christian. You are just pretending to be one! You don't have to hire a horse and ride on the road to Damascus to make this experience your own. Right now, I invite you to kneel down by your bedside with a repentant heart and ask Jesus to forgive you and come into your heart and life. If you have done that, you too are converted! You too are a Christian!

### **Committed**

Let's talk about yet another time

the Bible used the word '*Christian*': The setting now is the city of Antioch. A new preacher is sent to this church from the church in Jerusalem – the headquarters. His name? Barnabas. What was his message? "Remain faithful to the Lord!" In other words, he was trying to help believers graduate from merely being a believer into a disciple. One believer he searched out and discipled was Paul. For one full year, Barnabas preached messages that typified what his name meant: encourager. He preached messages that encouraged wobbly believers to become solid disciples. Who could be called Jesus' disciples? Those who remain faithful to Him – no matter what the cost is or how challenging the condition is. Such COMMITTED folks were nicknamed Christians by the folks in Antioch (Rom. 11:26)!

Are you the sort that will desert Jesus at the slightest provocation – such as in times of a tantalizing temptation or perturbing persecution? Then you can't be called a Christian according to the Bible. **Christians, according to the Bible, are those who stay**

**committed to Christ, even when the going gets tough!**

### **Celebrating**

This aspect of being a Christian was so important that another Bible writer also talks about it. Yes, Peter also brought together these two words: commitment and Christian. He did by writing his first letter thus: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name!" (1 Pet 4:15, 16). If you have carefully read those two verses you will grasp that Peter's understanding of the word, 'Christian', goes one step further than that of Luke – the author of the book of Acts, the source of our first two references for word, 'Christian', in the Bible. Here is how: a Christian is someone who **CELEBRATES** God even while suffering because he stays stubbornly **COMMITTED** to Christ! **Yes – a Biblical Christian is someone who glorifies God even when the going gets rough and tough!** Are you that sort of Christian? Are you a complaining Christian or a celebrating Christian?!

Stop. Think. Introspect. Look inwards. Are you a Christian merely by name? I pray that after you have read this piece, your understanding of the word 'Christian' is never the same! Would you surrender your life to Christ so that He will change you into a Biblical Christian? Would you do that, right now?!



### **Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj**

*is the founder of Grabbing the Google Generation from Gehenna Mission, a ministry that reaches out to present day people via writings, pulpit preaching and counselling. Find out more at [www.dukev.org](http://www.dukev.org) or by WhatsApp to +91-8886040605. He is a fulltime itinerant preacher and writer-in-residence with this ministry*

# Intercessory *Prayer* Points



October 2021

**1 FRIDAY** Thank God for the new month. Pray that God's blessings would be upon you and your family in abundance. Pray also that you would be a blessing to others too.

**2 SATURDAY** International day of non-violence (Gandhi Jayanthi). Pray that every citizen of India would uphold and value non-violence. Pray for peace and prosperity in your respective states.

**3 SUNDAY** Pray that every senior citizen of our country may get a dignified life and a loving home. Pray for the caregivers too, to serve them with compassion and grace. Pray also that God may comfort them.

**4 MONDAY** Pray for Kerala. Continue to pray for Covid19 patients in the state. Pray for their healing and restoration. Pray also for those families who have lost their loved ones to Covid.

**5 TUESDAY** Pray for Manipur. Pray for security and peace for the people of Manipur. Pray that believers would live out their faith

and display God's glory. Pray for revival and growth for the churches.

**6 WEDNESDAY** Pray for Lakshadweep. Pray for God's amazing grace and love to reach every individual in these 36 islands.

**7 THURSDAY** Pray for Maharashtra. Pray for the unreached millions in this state. Pray for more gospel workers to reach them. May the Holy Spirit would actively work among them. Continue to pray for the flood victims to have their needs provided and be comforted in times of trouble. Pray for full restoration for the state.

**8 FRIDAY** Pray also for Meghalaya. Pray that the churches in the state would focus more on witnessing. Pray the many youngsters from different parts of the NE would meet God personally during their stay in this state.

**9 SATURDAY** Pray for Tamil Nadu. Pray for spiritual renewal for believers in the state.

**10 SUNDAY** World Mental Health Day. Pray for awareness and active Church involvement on mental health issues in your communities.

**11 MONDAY** International Day of Girl Child. Pray for protection for each girl child. Pray for awareness that every child is special and are equal in the Maker's sight. Pray that parents would take extra care for their daughters with love.

**12 TUESDAY** Pray for believers in Odisha to be strong and courageous. Pray that they would share their faith boldly and wisely to their neighbours.

**13 WEDNESDAY** Pray for Madhya Pradesh. Pray for the churches in MP that they would shine brightly despite the many challenges they face. Pray that they would bear many spiritual fruits.

**14 THURSDAY** Pray for Punjab. Pray for God's servants to be strengthened despite many obstacles and challenges. Pray that the churches may grow.

**15 FRIDAY** World Students' Day. Let's pray for our children today that they would be good students in their secular studies as well as in their study of God's Word. Pray that they would grow both spiritually and intellectually.

**16 SATURDAY** Pray for the ministry of Evangelical Fellowship of India. Pray that EFI would effectively continue to serve as the

voice of the evangelicals. Pray for all the departments to reflect God's love and care as they function in their respective fields.

**17 SUNDAY** Pray for the ministry of EFI through the publication department. Pray that God may bless and use the articles in the AIM magazine to bring hope, peace, comfort, guidance, love and strength to the readers.

**18 MONDAY** Pray for the people of Daman and Diu to have fresh encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ in a new and fresh way. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work actively in believers' heart and minds.

**19 TUESDAY** Pray for revival in Jharkhand. Pray that the Word of God would be accepted and practiced and that it would change people's mindset and eventually their lives.

**20 WEDNESDAY** Pray for Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Pray that the people may learn to seek God in times of trouble and need. Pray that God would provide the way to draw people to himself.

**21 THURSDAY** Pray for Caleb Institute, Gurgaon. Pray for the students and the teaching staff of this institute that they may be equipped and empowered to share the Gospel very effectively.

**22 FRIDAY** Pray for Puducherry. Pray for spiritual awakening of the

people of this UT. Pray that their spiritual hunger and thirst would be quenched with the Word of God. Pray for God's mercy and grace for this land.

**23 SATURDAY** Pray for Evangelical Trust of North India (ETANI). Pray that God would give wisdom and discernment as they deal with church properties and legal cases.

**24 SUNDAY** Pray for all Christian agencies in our country to be accountable, faithful, consistent and focused. Pray that our works may display God's salvation grace that was revealed in and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

**25 MONDAY** Pray for Chandigarh. Pray for hearts that are teachable and ready to accept the message of the Cross. Pray that people who are sharing the Gospel would do it with the power of the Holy Spirit.

**26 TUESDAY** Pray for Nagaland. Pray for Christ to be the center of peoples' lives in this state. Pray for hunger and thirst for God's Word to grow. Pray for revival for the Churches in the state.

**27 WEDNESDAY** Pray for Rajasthan. Pray for God's light to shine on the people of Rajasthan.

May God reveal Himself personally to those who seek Him.

**28 THURSDAY** Pray for Delhi today. Pray that the love of God would overflow this city. Men and women would turn to God for help. Pray that the churches in this city would be revived and bear many spiritual fruits.

**29 FRIDAY** Pray for Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Pray that God would open the way for those seeking to know the truth. Pray for believers in this place to love the Word of God and obey it wholeheartedly.

**30 SATURDAY** Today let us pray for our pastors, evangelists, missionaries and all those in church leadership. Pray that they may serve their respective responsibilities with deep love and concern and put others ahead of them. May our churches display the love of God through our works and deeds.

**31 SUNDAY** Pray for all the worshippers today as they gather to honor, praise and worship Jesus Christ physically or through zoom. Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill their hearts as they empty themselves. Thank God for being with you throughout the month of October.

# PRAY CONTINUALLY

1 Thessalonians 5:17

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*One in God; Together for Good.*

## Introduction

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

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

## Our Vision

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

## Our Mission

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

## Networks

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

## Commissions

- EFI Women Commission
- EFI Theological Commission
- EFI Youth Commission
- EFI Religious Liberty Commission
- EFI Commission on Relief (EFICOR)

EFI is a Charter Member of the World Evangelical Alliance  
An NGO in special consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

### Support EFI with your gift

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