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# aim

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A Journey of Faith

A photograph of an elderly couple smiling outdoors. The man on the left has white hair, a beard, and glasses, wearing a dark jacket. The woman on the right has white hair and is also smiling, wearing a dark jacket. They are standing in front of a dense background of green leaves and small yellow flowers.

**INTERNATIONAL DAY  
OF THE OLDER PERSONS**

# Walk in Christ

Put on new self (Do's) Put off old self (Dont's)		
1	Speak <b>truth</b> to neighbour	Shun <b>falsehood</b>
2	Shun <b>anger</b> before sunset	Don't sin in <b>anger</b>
3	Do <b>useful works</b> with own hands	Don't give <b>devil a foothold</b>
4	<b>Talks</b> : useful, beneficial to build others	Don't <b>steal</b>
5	Be <b>kind</b>	Don't <b>grieve the Holy Spirit</b>
6	Be <b>compassionate</b>	Get rid of <b>bitterness</b>
7	<b>Forgive</b> each other	Get rid of <b>rage</b>
8	<b>Imitate</b> Christ	Get rid of <b>brawling</b>
9	Live a life of <b>love</b>	Get rid of <b>slander</b>
10	Always be <b>thankful</b> (attitude)	Get rid of <b>malice</b> of every form
11	<b>Obey and honour</b> parents	Shun <b>sexual immorality</b>
12	Find what <b>pleases</b> God	Shun <b>impurity</b>
13	Expose doers of <b>fruitless deeds</b>	Shun <b>greed</b>
14	Live a careful life <b>wisely</b>	Shun <b>obscenity</b>
15	Make <b>use of opportunities</b>	Shun <b>foolish talk</b>
16	Be filled with <b>Spirit</b>	Shun <b>coarse joking</b>
17	Speak with Psalms, hymns, <b>Spiritual songs</b>	Shun <b>fruitless deeds</b>
18	Give <b>thanks to God</b> always (offer)	No <b>foolishness</b> in understanding God's will
19	<b>Submit</b> to one another	Don't get <b>drunk</b> of wine
20	Husbands <b>love wife</b>	Don't <b>deceive</b> others
21	Wives to <b>respect husbands</b>	Don't <b>exasperate</b> your children
22	Fathers <b>train children</b> in instruction of Lord	Don't <b>disobey</b> God
23	<b>Treat servants</b> serving wholeheartedly well	Don't be <b>partner of disobedients</b>
24	Be <b>strong in Lord</b> (faith)	Shun <b>unwholesome talks</b>

**Reference: Ephesians 4:22 – 6:10**



**Emeritus Prof. Henry Shepherd**

*is former Chaplain and Pro Vice-Chancellor of Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology & Science, Prayagraj.*

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# Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

“I feel helpless,” shared a concerned daughter, as she narrated the tale of her father who is slipping into dementia and now needs a special facility where he could be taken care of. But the family does not know where in their immediate vicinity can they find a facility like this. They have explored a few specialized centres that exist in the country but those are in faraway cities they are not familiar with.

Her father and mother, both fiercely independent and in their 80s, delayed deciding on how and where to spend their old age, even as their children settled at different places throughout the globe, and now the family finds itself in a situation so dire, that they do not know what to do. They

are dependent on house helps to take care of their parents, and to make decisions for them, as they are too old and sick to travel and be with the children and the children are unable to be present with the parents because of visa regulations and job responsibilities.

The situation described above is not unique as many Indians find themselves dealing with similar challenges even if they are not abroad as in the case above. Caring for elders, especially their health is a daunting task for many in our country. The situation is particularly dire in rural areas rather than in cities.

Though it is often thought of as a young nation, India ranks second

in terms of the number of senior citizens. Our elderly population is 144 million which makes up roughly 13 percent of all elders in the world, which is 1.81 billion. As our population is growing, so is the number of elders. In fact, our growth rate of elders is three times higher than our population and is likely to be five times higher in 2031.

According to the WHO projections, around 326 million Indians will be senior citizens i.e., 60 years and above by 2051. This would be close to 20% of the entire population. Hence, our nation will be transformed from being a nation of young people to being a nation of elderly.

It is estimated that almost 30 percent of elderly in India either live alone or with an aged partner with no young person to take care of them. This ratio too is higher in villages than in cities. An average Indian family normally has one or more elderly. Research says that 15 percent of Indian families have at least two elderly members

while seven percent have more than two elderly members as part of the family.

The health infrastructure of India only aggravates the problems of the elderly. The Indian public health policy has a largely urban focus and is heavily tilted towards maternal and child health care. This means that the elderly with health conditions like hypertension, arthritis, diabetes, or cancer, must seek treatment in cities rather than rural areas. If facilities are not available in nearby cities, these patients often have to travel to distant cities to get treated and not everyone can afford it.

According to data from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the pattern of current health spending in India suggests that 71% of health expenditure is met by households, 20% by government (centre, state, and local bodies), 6 % by firms and 2 % by external flows.

With families bearing the

maximum portion of health expense, and with estimates telling us that about 80% of all Indians do not have any insurance to cover them, most families are just one sickness away from poverty.

The recent government decision of privatizing government hospitals is likely to further widen the gap, at least in affordability as per the experts. It was two years ago, that the Niti Aayog declared a plan for district hospitals to be handed over to private healthcare companies to run attached medical colleges on a public-private-partnership (PPP) basis. As of now, at least five states have agreed to take up the idea.

Experts say that since there is already a lack of sufficient tertiary care facilities at the district level, adopting the PPP model for existing hospitals might result in more profiteering by the private sector, with the inevitable increased out-of-pocket expenditure for the public.

As Christians, we believe that the human life is sacred at every stage and worthy of respect. It is perhaps even more worthy when it is marked by age and sickness. T h e C h u r c h i s a multigenerational society with equal space for all ages. We as people of God should be “committed to creating the conditions of life able to fulfil the great potential that older people still have.”

Psalm 92:14 says, “In old age they will still bear fruit.”. The older generation have a lot to give and contribute and a lot of experience to guide us and so their dignity and fundamental rights must be upheld. There needs to be an intentional effort in the Church to serve them and this must be emphasized from the pulpit.

God used Abraham to make a nation out of him when he was in his old age. Similarly, it was through Zechariah that John the Baptist, the precursor of Christ, was born.

Although the Church has done commendable service regarding caring for the elderly in India, more needs to be done. Evangelicals need to rise to the occasion and leverage what resources they have including health agencies like the Emmanuel Health Association and others, along with various denominations and organizations, to step up care of the elderly not only within the Body of Christ but also in the nation in general.

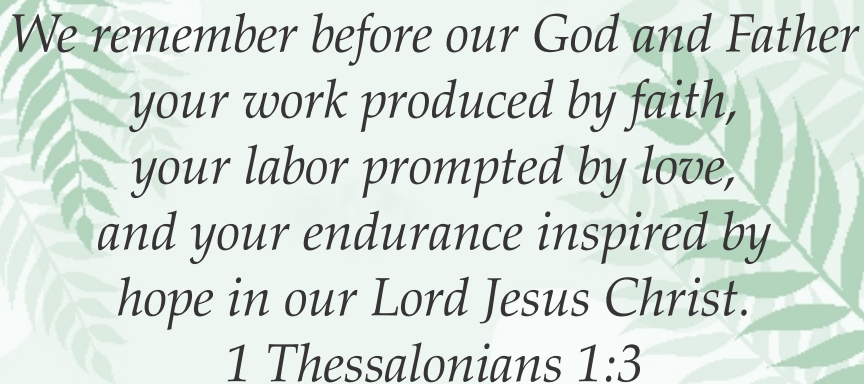
The voice of the Church is an important one and we can help advocate that the illnesses which are neurodegenerative like

dementia, depression, and other mental disorders, especially affecting the elderly, as treatable under primary health care package systems in the country.

We need to press on so that the elderly especially in the villages can be provided with essential and affordable medicines for their treatment.

But most of all, we should be sensitive to the needs of elderly care in our own local congregations and step up to help. This would be a good beginning.

**Rev. Vijayesh Lal**



*We remember before our God and Father  
your work produced by faith,  
your labor prompted by love,  
and your endurance inspired by  
hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.  
1 Thessalonians 1:3*

# God, Gandhi and Empires of the world.

Mr. Chacko Thomas



I am aware that the nation has different views about Mahatma Gandhi. Even among Christians, this seems to be the case. Thankfully we can disagree about Gandhi and still get to heaven. We can't all agree on any leader with everything he or she says or does. We just saw that on display as the Queen is sent to her rest.

I have more in mind, as I write this article, than the Mahatma (a great leader), India (a great nation) or the Empire (a great empire). And that is how I as a Bible student see world events such as the rise and fall of empires. Be sure that the fall of the British empire, that ruled a

quarter of the globe, is much more than human doing, although people certainly played a big role in it.

In the Bible we have the recorded histories of several nations and empires over a long period of at least two thousand years. We also have in it a God who holds the worlds together, although it may look chaotic from where we stand. But there is a plan, a purpose being worked out. I am not suggesting that it is all simple and plain. There are plenty of mysteries for the human eye.

## **The Gandhi Story (1869-1948)**

I was 17 years old in 1966, when I

met a man who had spoken to Mahatma Gandhi on three occasions. Billy Jones had come to India to fight the Japanese. Back home in Great Britain, he was politically active in the Labour Party. Billy and Gandhi met and they walked around a garden and talked politics. On one of those occasions, it was the day when Gandhi observed silence. So, Billy did all the talking.

Billy was an honest seeker after God. He was sure that if anyone knew how to find God, it had to be Gandhi. But Gandhi's answers did not satisfy Billy. He told me: "Gandhi did not know God any better than I did." Thankfully, by the time I met Billy, he had met God through Jesus Christ.

I was spellbound when I read "Freedom at Midnight". I was so very impressed by Gandhi's influence to prevent bloodshed in Calcutta. Apparently, he was more successful than Mountbatten's army on the western front. Mountbatten claimed that Gandhi was a one man army. A few years later in Singapore, I got to watch the

famous Gandhi Movie with my wife and her father, my father-in-law. Even as the film admits, I confess, that I did wonder if all that I saw on that screen was for real.

Dr Martin Luther King Jr. came all the way from the United States to learn about Gandhi and his politics of non-violence. Nelson Mandela also looked back at Gandhi in his search to free his people. They were successful. So was Lech Walesa in Poland, and Mrs. Corazon Aquino in the Philippines. Gandhi's philosophy worked for them. It may not work in every country, such as Myanmar, China, or former Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. Perhaps not even in India today.

The American Evangelical author, Philip Yancy has a long chapter (30 pages) on Mahatma Gandhi in his book *Soul Survivor*. He writes about 12 people, "notable people from all walks of life" whom he calls his "spiritual directors. ... mentors who transformed his life and work. ... In many ways, they are why I remain a Christian today, and I want to introduce them to spiritual

seekers." The list includes Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Leo Tolstoy, the famous Russian author, and the American Surgeon General C. Everett Coop.

Yancy confesses that "I do not write about Gandhi because he had the answers for our planet. To the contrary, I turn to him because he asked the questions most provocatively. We may reject his answers... Though not a Christian by belief or practice, **Gandhi attempted to an impressive degree to live out some of Jesus' principles. ...**" (emphasis is mine).

My friend, Rev. Moses Parmar tells me that, "Even today the Sermon on the Mount [Matthew 5-7] is being read every day in Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad." What a rebuke to us, Christians!

Gandhi led us from 1919 to 1947 and he got all India behind him. After hundreds of years of struggle and many thousands of lives lost, self-rule became a reality. He ran brilliantly for the last lap of Independence.

Independence was history, although the hard work of nation building remained.

## **Nation Building Story**

Nation building was primarily the task of our first Prime Minister, Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, and his able Cabinet. It included Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the first minister of Law and Justice, (not exactly a friend of Gandhi). Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (working with an accomplished administrator V. P. Menon), was celebrated as the unifier of divided India. Nehru's Cabinet included a woman, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the Health Minister. God appointed stewards, caretakers, of all people within its borders.

Nehru and his team were off to a good start. Their best gift to us was a secular State and Government. Nehru embodied it. That they did not chose to go the way of the countries around them, China, Russia, or Muslim Countries, is something that we can be thankful for.

Christians had been investing in the development of India long

before independence. One of the twelve Philip Yancy wrote about is Dr. Paul Brand, an accomplished Medical Doctor who dedicated his life to pioneer treatment and cure for leprosy. (Lepers may not be very high on Indians' list of priorities, as it is on Christ's).

Paul was a Brit born in Kolli Hills of Tamil Nadu. His English missionary parents served and died in Kolli Hills. Paul's mother who outlived her husband by a few decades was known as the "Mother of the Hills". She earned this name because she saved dozens of unwanted babies left to die along the roadsides and nurtured them, educated them and saw them going on in life.

Vishal Mangalwadi in a recent letter wrote "These missionaries came as educators, civil servants, judges, engineers, agriculturalists, doctors, nurses, researchers, writers, printers, translators, builders, soldiers, and politicians." "They washed our orphans, nursed lepers, taught reading, and writing to the blind and the deaf, uplifted the untouchables as they built universities and institutions of

governance. ... They taught us to rule with equity and justice . . . something that India had NEVER known."

## **History is "His Story"**

This well-known cliché summarises my understanding of God and the Bible. At the end of the day, this is the side of the mountain, I would want to come down.

"History is God's Story." All history that is, from the beginning of time till the end, and from India to the ends of the earth. Among other things the Bible is a history book. It is a road map of the past, and unlike other history books, it is also a road map of the future. In these days of great uncertainties and upheavals, is good to be part of a solid history.

We see a clear pattern emerging in the Bible, that helps us to make sense of the times we live in. The rise and fall of nations, empires and mighty leaders is not new. Mahatma Gandhi is among thousands of great men before him, and India is among many nations before her. Our world

leaders seem to grope in darkness. No, we don't have to do guesswork and reach false and dangerous conclusions and murder or oppress each other.

God's intention is to bless the whole world, all tribes, languages and nations through Abraham's seed, the Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 12:1-3). Please look up in a concordance for words like "earth" "nations" "world" and "peoples", they come hundreds of times in the Bible. They are all his, "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who live in it." Psalm 24:1.

Take for example the Books of Exodus, Isaiah and Daniel for God's involvement. He is involved in the nations and empires of the Middle East. He names rulers (Cyrus) and reveals empires to come hundreds of years before they came to power. (Babylon, Persian, Greece and the Roman Empires.).

Isaiah 13-23 are God's Words to about a dozen nations and empires surrounding Israel. Here we see that God is in full control of each of them and their future. We get a glimpse of how God evaluates nations and rulers.

God's anger against pride, wickedness and ill treatment of each other to name a few, are clearly revealed. (His standards are clearly spelt out in the Ten Commandments for example.) The God of the Bible is known as "the judge of all the earth". India is not exempt. God has no favourites.

Our God is not only the creator of the universe, but also its sustainer, ruler, guide, redeemer, and King. His Government oversees all governments. The book of Revelation shows how one day all kingdoms will become "the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ" Revelation 11:15. Jesus is LORD. He is God's appointed Saviour and King. Psalm 2: 1-12. He is King of all kings.

As I write these lines, "the Queen" has died and Prince Charles is now proclaimed as King Charles III of the United Kingdom and its realms. The proclamation asked for "the blessing of God by who kings and queens do reign."

Our Lord Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go

therefore and make disciples of all nations ... and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. [NASB Matthew 28:18-20]. Christian Hymnals are full of songs that speaks of the sovereign rule of God. I close with a stanza of a well known Hymn.



Crown him the Lord of heaven,  
Enthroned in worlds above;  
Crown him the king, to whom is given

The wondrous name of Love,  
Crown him with many crowns,  
As thrones before him fall.  
Crown him, ye kings, with many crowns,

For He is King of all.

History is His story and He is coming back soon to take the central stage.

### **Mr. Chacko Thomas**

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

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



# EMPIRES WITHIN

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

Once upon a time, God came to earth and lived the life of a poor village carpenter. God was still God, but equally He was the daily-wage-earning poor Carpenter of Nazareth. He was called Jesus (meaning, God saves). He lived with His earthly family for thirty years. Then, He left home to become an itinerant teacher.

The theme of all His teaching was that the time had come for the Kingdom of God (Mk. 1:15). Jesus wasn't talking of a geographical location. He was proclaiming the sovereignty of God, and that He Himself was fulfilling it by His redemptive, transformative, and uplifting deeds in society (Lk. 4:18-21).

Even though He proclaimed the rule (kingdom) of God, Jesus didn't go around flaunting His kingship. The only time He claimed to be a king was in a sort of casual reference to what He would do as king, when He returns to judge the people of the world (Matt. 25:31-46). Another time, when an earthly authority asked whether He was a king, Jesus did say that His kingdom didn't belong in the world (Jn. 18:36).

As the Bible concludes, it unequivocally declares that Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16). Curiously, Scripture never gives Jesus the title of "emperor", and though the Kingdom of God rules

over all, it is never described as an empire. That's because as far as God is concerned there are no kings and kingdoms, and that's why it is absolutely unnecessary to change the nomenclature from "kingdom" to "empire". None of the kingdoms of the world's rulers have any basis of existence. The Word of God says that God is the one who sanctions their existence and authority: "He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others" (Dan.2:21).

Kings and queens are mostly gone in today's world. In Europe, there are a few, but they are only figureheads and in Islamic countries there are some who exercise power like despots, resisting the winds of democracy from blowing through their kingdoms. In this world largely without kingdoms, how has the Kingdom of God fared?

French Roman Catholic theologian Alfred Loisy (1857-1959) famously said, "Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God and what came was the Church". It is true that the Church is made up of people who have been

"rescued...from the dominion [kingdom] of darkness and brought...into the kingdom of the Son [God] loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). In that much, the Church is the present embodiment of the Kingdom of God. However, by that pithy saying of his, Loisy seemed to suggest that the Church had hijacked the Kingdom.

Loisy recognized that Jesus did intend that a community of believers would form. His contention however was that Jesus never wanted His followers to imitate the kingdoms and governments of the world.

Loisy was right. That there are quite a few in the Church who have hijacked the Kingdom to build their own empires is undeniable. They have taken the Kingdom that was "not of this world" and made their own little empires that keenly imitate the kingdoms of the world.

## **Despotism**

The most essential component of an empire is its emperor. Without an emperor there can be no

empire. An emperor was one who overpowered and subjugated others taking away their sovereign rights. Empire-building had all to do with one person gathering all power and clinging to it. He has sole ownership of the empire. He does not share it with others. Everything that he surveys is his empire.

Those who want to find favour with an emperor must be willing to give up all rights and acknowledge that the be-all and the end-all of the empire is the emperor alone. The existence of hangers on is a given. Where there are emperors, there will be hangers on.

It's all about survival. For those working for the empire, their positions and jobs in the empire are their bread and butter, and they desire to keep the pay and the perks. If that means they have to flatter the boss and be servile, so be it.

Recall the late sycophant politician who sloganeered during the Emergency that "Indira is India, India is Indira." In theory, we may disagree with

such expressions, but subconsciously or unconsciously when we are part of an empire, we subscribe to its philosophy because that is the only way to get any benefits from the emperor. At some point, everyone receiving benefits from the emperor will chant a similar mantra and/or rise to defend the emperor's uprightness and benevolence, even when there are glaring instances of injustice. A few may even acknowledge that some injustices are to be expected: "Nobody's perfect...we have to accept the bad with the good, and what really matters is that there is more good than bad..."

If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that emperors and empires exist within the Kingdom of God. It was bound to happen when Christians embraced hierarchy as normal in Christian society.

The King had said to His disciples, "You only have one master, and all of you are brothers" (Matt. 23: 8). He wanted them to strive at being servants to one another, instead of allowing

the pursuit of mastery to cause strife among themselves (Mk. 10: 42-43).

At first, the disciples could not come to terms with the new idea of a kingdom without ranks. They were unwilling to give up their dreams of being number one in the Kingdom. They imagined that God's Kingdom was going to be no different than earthly kingdoms. They could not visualise a community that had no pecking order. Again and again, they had angry debates about who would be topmost in the Kingdom, and again and again Jesus had to correct them (Mk. 9:33-35; 10: 35-45; Lk. 22: 24-30; Jn. 13: 1-20).

Today, hierarchy exists everywhere in Christendom, from denominations to independent ministries to parachurch organisations. Since there is a top-down structure, nobody makes it their aim in life to be a servant. Attaining the topmost position is everyone's goal. It is the top position that is sought after. Everybody thinks that he himself or she herself ought to be the one to lead in an

organisational setup because he/she has so much to give to others, as though it is the benefit of others that is on their minds. Merely prefixing the word "servant" to the word "leader" doesn't make anyone a servant. No one is in a race to be a servant. They're aiming to be leaders and clearly, the person seeking leadership wants to be above others in position, authority, and function. They want to be the one calling the shots, giving the orders.

### **Territorialism**

Empires are territorial. Emperors wanted as much territory as they could conquer and keep.

Something similar happens when empires are set up in the Kingdom of God. Each emperor wants to have a larger slice of the pie than others. Each wants their share of the "market" to be bigger.

Though Christian ministries are about preaching the gospel to those needing to hear the gospel, the audience in itself is not the market. The business of a market is income-generation, and so, the

market consists of those who have money to contribute for Christian ministries, especially the bulk operators (funding agencies).

Thus, it could be said that the ultimate aim of empires is not the ministry itself but capturing the market. The emperor needs money to maintain his empire and live life like an emperor.

Capturing the market involves being at war with other empires. Isn't it sad that ministries that supposedly serve one Lord, view each other as rivals—as though they are not servants of the same Lord, serving in the same vineyard and building the same kingdom?

One of the ways in which this rivalry is manifested is in how jealously donors are kept under guard. One Christian ministry does not want others to discover their donors. They are afraid that their donors might spread their largesse among more people and groups diminishing what they themselves are getting. Even when it is known that a donor is unlikely to give more than what

he or she has already given to a ministry, empire-builders do not tell other empire-builders where they could find support. They don't share information on donors in the vain hope that donors may still change their mind and give some more to them. The late Sinhalese churchman D T Niles defined evangelism as one beggar telling another where to find bread. Maybe so, but it would seem that one evangelist will not tell another evangelist where to find bread.

Another way in which the territorial attitude manifests itself is in the way the boss projects himself or herself as the only one to represent the empire at important events, such as international conferences. Invitations are for consultations on all sorts of differing areas of expertise, and yet the boss trots off to each one without being qualified or able to make a contribution at the conference or workshop. The only time the emperor might delegate someone else is if there are two (or more) events taking place at the same time. Then, he or she would favour someone who is

known for their extreme sycophancy toward the boss.

### **Nepotism**

The last feature of empires is that they have hereditary succession. That was true of ancient empires (except when an empire breaks up as it happened with Alexander's). It's true today of business empires that are family-owned, and that is all right because it is their family wealth. Here in India, it's true of political parties that have turned into family dynasties, and that messes up democracy. When the principal of an educational institution appoints a son or daughter as vice principal, education suffers. But who gave anyone in Christian ministry succession rights?

In the Old Testament order of things, being a Levite or a priest was hereditary. On the other hand, being a prophet depended entirely on the Spirit of God taking possession of a person.

The New Testament order did away with all hereditary offices. People could serve the Lord only if the Holy Spirit came upon them

and empowered them for their work by giving them the gifts that befitted a particular ministry. But the Church in the post New Testament era gave up the simplicity of its primitive days when it grew enchanted by the trimmings and trappings of the Roman court. It embraced a top-down structure, and with it came the corruption of nepotism—favour granted to relatives. The term "nepotism" originated in the church to describe the actions of popes and bishops in favouring "nephews" (sometimes a euphemism for illegitimate sons) by assigning them to important positions.

As the Lord's work is being carved into empires, nepotism and hereditary succession continue.

Most independent ministries are set up for a family member to succeed the boss. It could be husband to wife, father to son (or daughter), sibling to sibling, uncle to nephew...Doesn't matter how it's done, but it's all about keeping it in the family. When there is no family member interested in

doing Christian work, the boss looks for someone who will allow him/her to hang on until he/she is absolutely doddering.

From a biblical point of view, all Christian ministries are trusts and so, the person heading the work is only a steward, not the owner. Trouble is, most behave like owners, which is why they don't consider retirement. They justify that by hiding behind the concept that those who serve the Lord never retire from serving the Lord. True, that a person must go on exercising the gifts that God has given, but the Bible does advocate that people holding office should retire from official roles and duties (Num. 8:23-26).

A few years ago, in a post on social media, the head of a Christian organisation blatantly captioned the picture of himself with his son as that of his "son and heir", even though the properties were acquired and the whole ministry built up with donations from God's people. Even when a work is part of a denomination or an international agency, bosses are making sure that their sons and daughters or

relatives are in line to succeed them. When did the Lord's work become one's personal fiefdom to be handed down to a hereditary successor as though it was ancestral property?

John, the Baptist, announced that the Kingdom was coming. Jesus announced that the Kingdom had arrived and was arriving. He sent His disciples out to announce its coming. We pray, "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." The Kingdom is unstoppable. About that there is no doubt. Not enough to pray, though. Let's get back to seeking the Kingdom first, just like the Lord told us to (Matt. 6:33).



**Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy**

*is a freelance preacher and writer. He can be reached at: [reverendkuru@aol.com](mailto:reverendkuru@aol.com)*



# Necessary And Essential Prerequisite: **Be Holy**

Emeritus Prof. Henry Shepherd

## ***The Biblical Perception Of Holiness***

The intend of words 'holy' and 'holiness,' when used casually in day to do life, do not match with the biblical perception. Since, holy and holiness, in routine sense, are indicative of purity, cleanliness, revered things and places often associated with religious rituals. But the biblical perception of holiness means-objects or humans or places set apart or sanctified, dedicated or ordained in the service of Jehovah the Most Holy God. Therefore, word holy, as an adjective, has been frequently prefixed in holy Scriptures with: day, ground, mountain, nation, people, city, fear, prophet, life,

temple and kiss etc. Sanctification is an act of purging heart by the Holy Spirit and replacing sinful desires with godly desires. Sanctification happens after repentance when the person is born of the Spirit /born again and becomes a new creation. Since bought by the blood of Jesus, such a person becomes God's holy possession. Sanctification of heart leads to conscience death of old self ( Gal 2:20). God has promised holiness to His people: "I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a

heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Ez 36:25-26). Therefore, David also prayed after he was forgiven, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps 51:10). Once we are made holy, there remains no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The new creation thus has a new heart and a new spirit, dead to sin and live to Spirit to live in complete obedience to God. The new mind does not go with the lustful desires of the body and says 'No' to sin. Therefore, with the mind of Christ, God's children become as holy as their heavenly Father is holy. Holiness is as essential for godly life as oxygen is for earthly life. The Spirit, Truth and the Word of God make us holy by purging the mind from all type of filth (2Th 2:13).

Paul admonishes, "Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by renewing of your mind ....."

(Rom 12:1-2). He suggests to sacrifice the lustful pleasures of body and get mind renewed. Maintaining distance from worldliness is primary exercise to be holy, for the whole world is prisoner of sin but Jesus has set you free (Gal 3:22, 1Jn 5:19). So, until we are free (1Jn 5:4) and have also insulated ourselves from the world, the seed of love of God will not take root in our hearts (2Cor 7:1). One should always remember: 'Friendship with the world is enmity with God'. Dangerous are they who are known as believers but are not, so believer should not have fellowship with them (1Cor 5:10-13), until they come back in faith.

### ***Some Scholastic Expressions***

People, in the world, are practicing everything, right or wrong, to enjoy worldly life, but a few who are now not of this world crave for righteousness and holiness. God wants His children to enjoy and be happy, but not at the cost of holiness. Thus, "Holiness is doing God's will, for holiness not happiness is chief end of man" (Oswald Chamber). There is peace and joy beyond

imagination in obedience to God and in accepting His will as your own. It is holiness that gives power to overcome the worldliness. James E. Faust defining and explaining the process of holiness said, "Holiness is strength to soul. It comes by faith through obedience to God's law and ordinances. God then purifies the heart by faith, and heart becomes purged from that which is profane and unworthy". But those who are in the process of overcoming the world, experience inner conflict against the works of holiness. Mother Angelica's perception is: "Holiness in life is not privilege of a chosen few. It is obligation, the call of will of God for every Christian". The Bible says, "Both, the one who makes holy and those who are made holy are of the same family; so Jesus calls them brothers" (Heb 2:11). Paul therefore warns the Church, "God has not called us to uncleanness but unto holiness (1Th 4:7). Jesus, first restores the holiness in the life of believers, then reconciled them with Holy Father. According to C. H. Spurgeon, "Holiness is not the way to Christ, Christ is the way to

holiness." It is holiness that shows in its light, wrong as wrong and right as right. Whereas Leland Ryken has described the precept of puritans as: "For puritans the God centred life meant holiness and quest for spiritual and normal holiness is a great business of life." Holiness is not a feeling or psyche but a new godly characteristic attained due to continual fellowship with Holy God (Ex 34:29,35). Thus holiness is defined as conformity to the character of God. And everyone who has hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1Jn 3:3). There is no shortcut to holiness; it is business of our whole life (W.Wilberforce).

According to William Law: "This and this alone is christianity, A universal holiness in every part of life, a heavenly wisdom in all over actions, not conforming to the spirit and temper of the world but turning all worldly enjoyments into means of piety and devotion of God". Holiness is the mirror where one can see the scars and wounds of sin and it's real colour (Is 1:5-6, 18-20). Billy Graham has said, "Only when we understand the holiness of God

will we understand the depth of our sin." Other saints have also realized that there is no short cut to holiness; it must be the business of our whole life (William Wiberforce). Jesus described importance of holiness in the simplest and with the most practical way, he said, "Truly I say to you unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 8:5)". Finally, the perception of holiness also includes a caution, as Mathew Henry has stated, "No attribute of God is more dreadful to sinners than His holiness." Therefore, a man with holy mind clearly hears what God whispers and not what the enemy may be shouting.

John Wesley gave a new perception by separating the holiness into two segments – Social holiness and Personal holiness. He said the social holiness grows with social relationship with fellow believers in terms of love, care and fellowship. Whereas, the personal holiness he defines as the holiness which grows with our personal relationship with God in terms of obeying the truth. Paul

says, "it is because of him (God) that you are in Christ Jesus, who has for us wisdom from God that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption" (1Cor 1:30). We are to put on the new self created to be holy like God in righteousness and holiness. Peter has also emphasized on how to be holy particularly in his first epistle. He exhorts his readers how they are made holy: By sprinkling of Jesus' blood and by the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Then, in verse sixteen of the first chapter, he reminds afresh to be holy for he who has called is Holy and He obviously demands holiness to have close fellowship with believers. Peter then gives another reason in verse twenty two as to how and why we are made holy: By accepting the truth, so that love could flow for one another from pure heart. In the second chapter, Peter calls Jesus: 'Precious Living Stone,' in the fourth verse. He also reveals to the Church "you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering sacrifice acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Finally, in 1 Pet 3:21, Peter disintegrates

the cleanness of body from holiness of the heart using the symbolic act of baptism during Noah's flood. He says, "And this water symbolizes baptism that saves you also not in removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Though, as the Seriphore says without holiness no one will see God, but with holiness person is taken in God's family as His child and coheir of Jesus. Therefore, God has emphatically commanded, "Be holy because I am Holy."

### ***Why God Demands Holiness ?***

No earthy language is competent to describe explicitly the biblical holiness and none is holy like Most Holy God. Since man was made in the likeness and image of God, there is a natural craving in us to be like Him. But since the power of sin is still working 24x7 in human bodies and mind, Jesus, knowing human helplessness against the power of sin, came to deliver everyone, whoever believes in him as his Lord, as his Saviour and Redeemer. He who has

overcomes the world, desires that his believers are set free to serve God of heaven and earth. Nevertheless God, in order to take us in His fold, demands holiness, through obedience as prerequisite. So, the children of God; gradually learn to imitate the Lord and Saviour and diligently pursue holiness as commanded: "Be holy because I am holy" (1Pet 1:14-16). The holy Scripture exhorts: "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and be holy; and without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). He has called to set us apart to be holy and useful in serving the Lord. Therefore, the word of God warns us to shun sexual immorality, impurity of any kind and greed (Eph 5:3, Lev 20:26, 1Th 4:3). The holiness in believers welcomes the Spirit of God to abide in them for they are temple of God; we are not our own but bought at a price. Therefore, Paul admonishes to honour God with your bodies. A crisp answer for why be holy? has a clear reason in the Scripture – "We are people chosen to be holy" (Col 3:12). If one wishes to be part of the Body of Christ, then holiness is necessary and

essential condition. Also, anyone who gets introduced to the holiness is able to pray the right way, serve the right way and praise and worship the right way. Thus, with this, it is obvious as to – why to be holy?

Now, the next is, How to be holy? has always been a query of new believers, and it's biblical answer is – Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify desires of sinful nature (Gal 5:12). The Truth sets you free only when you know it. Author's experience says: The self-willpower does not help in this matter, for soon the body and mind start to rebel wildly, resulting in unjustified irritation, bad temper, fits of anger, and or self-pity etc. But, in the quest for holiness, one succeeds only when persuades prayerfully, for the Spirit of God now makes him holy. Also, there are other modes that lead us to holiness. Holy apostles Paul and James both have suggested their modus operandi: 'draw near to God but flee from temptation', and 'submit to God and resist the devil to make him flee'. However, in the middle of temptation, Jesus suggested his disciples, "Watch

and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41). On another occasion, Jesus had used the sword of Spirit that is word of God to make the tempter ineffective (Mt 4:1-11). As children of God, one should desist anger, lust, bad company of worldly people who may indulge us in filthy acts, desires, jokes and senseless arguments.

Though holiness and righteousness are different entities yet they are quite close to each other. Holiness is result of sanctification by Spirit (The Word), whereas righteousness is the new nature or characteristic of born in Spirit. A righteous man is holy and a holy man is essentially righteous. We are to put on the new-self created for us in the likeness of Lord Jesus (Gal 3:27). The blood of Jesus sanctifies them who believe and obey diligently (Heb 10:29). We are made holy exclusively for and by godly provisions (Heb 10:10). Jesus suffered to make his people holy through his own blood (Heb 13:12). So, the one who is chosen and called is

purged by the water (Holy Spirit and Word) to be holy. In the state of holiness, one desires to be near the Lord, grow in him with time and eventually separates more and more from the worldly desires of the flesh that make him unholy. Paul also suggests to put on the whole armours of God and pray continually to overcome the power of the dark world.

### ***Holy, Holy, Holy is Lord Almighty***

Once prophet Isaiah in a vision saw: the Lord God seated on His throne and above Him seraphs were flying and calling to one another, " Holy, holy, holy is Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of His glory." Seeing smoke filled temple and hearing the powerful voice of angels, Isaiah cried "Woe to me I am ruined.....my eyes have seen the King the Lord Almighty." Then, one of the seraphs took a live coal from the altar and touched his lips saying, " Your guilt is taken away and your sins atoned for" (Is 6:3-7). This gives a glimpse of the holiness of God's dwelling place. Only Moses

talked to the Most Holy God face to face but he never got the privilege to see His face. The word of God says that no man can see the Most Holy God and remain alive. Yet, even Moses was punished when he disobeyed the Holy God by striking the rock twice. The Lord God rebuked Moses for he did not trust the Lord God enough as holy. He lost the privilege of leading Israelites into the promised land, the purpose for which he was chosen to represent God before Pharaoh of Egypt and lead the people of God out of Egypt. Also, other nine leaders with Moses were allowed to see only the glory of God as consuming fire on the top of the mountain (Ex 24:9,17).

There is no grading of holiness; a person place or thing is either holy or unholy; there is nothing like 'partly holy' or 'almost holy'. The seraphs keep calling triune God, Holy, holy, holy. At this stage, in parishing bodies, we can't fully perceive the splendor of holiness of God, for God is Spirit (1Cor 13:12). Yet, humans could see Him in flesh and blood as Son of God, our Lord Jesus

and Christ, who lived a holy life on the earth. God wants us to be holy like his Son Jesus Christ. God's holiness is supreme, blameless, and absolute, but humans have to get purged regularly by word of God (the Spirit) to remain holy. Holy Spirit gives strength to our soul to say 'No' to sin, also enables us to see the ugliness of evil and stink of sin in and around us, but worldly people don't feel so as they are used to living in darkness and are used to the stink. Everything that belongs to Him is holy. May it be God's name, dwelling place, throne Word or Spirit. Blessed are they who obey Him and live a holy

life on the earth, by imitating His Son, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen



**Emeritus Prof. Henry Shepherd**

*is former Chaplain and Pro Vice-Chancellor of Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology & Science, Prayagraj.*

*“Fight the good fight of the faith.  
Take hold of the eternal life to which you  
were called when you made your  
good confession in the presence  
of many witnesses.”  
1 Timothy 6:12*



# OUR FELLOWSHIP IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

## (1 John, Chapter 1)

Rev. Dr. Francis Sunderaraj

We live in a context of disposable and shallow relationships. It is rightly said, "People frequently struggle with the idea of relationships rooted in duty and obligation. The idea of relationship based on self-denial and self-sacrifice is disappearing." Divorce for flimsy reasons, switching over relationships according to one's convenience, hopping from one fellowship group to another, have become very normal. Stable and secure relationships are fading away. We make all efforts to widen our contacts at the expense of deepening our relationships. What are we to do in such a situation, as the people of God? What does the Word of God say?

The Apostle John makes very clear the basis of our fellowship, the reason for the failure of our fellowship and how to regain fellowship (1Jn.1).

### **I. The Basis Of Our Fellowship**

He shares with us about his own personal, vital, and dynamic relationship with Christ (vv.1-3). He was in his father's fish business. A moment came in his life when he heard the Master calling him and his brother, to follow Him. That was the beginning of entering into an intimate fellowship with the Master. He became a beloved disciple of Jesus. He says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we

have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared, we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His son, Jesus Christ". John had the life eternal and life-giving fellowship with His Master. Often, we make the mistake of just centering our fellowship on a particular ministry, a particular person, a particular denomination, or a particular Christian organisation, instead of on our Saviour. But our fellowship is based on what Christ has done for us on the cross and our personal intimate relationship with Him.

## **II. Fellowship Is Two-dimensional**

Our fellowship in Christ must lead us to be in fellowship with other believers. Take any two points on the circumference of a circle and let them get closer to the centre. As they approach the centre, they come closer to each other.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer points out, "our communion with one another consists solely of what Christ has done to both of us. What does it mean? It means a believer in Christ need other believers in Christ, and a believer in Christ comes to other believers in Christ only through Him."

Christian fellowship is more than just attending the local church. It is assimilating into the Body of Christ. The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia* which means 'to share in common.' Our fellowship with Christ is strengthened by our loving, caring, and sharing fellowship with His people. The Word of God says that, "the blood of Christ purifies us from all our sins" as we walk in Him and have fellowship with His people. Therefore, our fellowship with others is not an optional addition, but a spiritual necessity.

## **III. Failure In Fellowship**

Unfortunately, there is failure in fellowship among many of us. The cause is sin. What are the sins which cause breakdown in fellowship? Let me mention a few.

1. Sin of selfishness. Mr.

Selfishness always looks for personal benefits, "What can I get out of the church, from others?" He looks for it and if he does not get it, he keeps himself out of fellowship.

2. Sin of pride. Mr. Pride is conscious of himself, his status, position, and his achievements. He wants to be on the centre stage. He may teach others but is not at all teachable.

3. Sin of pretension. Madam Pretention advises others by miles, but never practises by an inch. You do not know when she acts and when she does not act. As a matter of fact, she always acts.

4. Sin of hyper-sensitivity. Madam Hyper-sensitivity always wants others to be very sensitive to her and her needs, but she is never sensitive to others and their needs.

5. Sin of rashness. Mr. Rashness is very quick in forming opinion about others and passing comments. Some people think and talk and do, but Mr. Rashness talks and does without thinking.

6. Sin of contentiousness. Mr. Contentiousness always talks in contradiction. You say, yes, and he says, no. You say, no, and he says yes. To him, two plus two is five.

7. Sin of immorality. Mr. Immorality argues for anything. He is not concerned about Christian living. He wants to know issues like "Whom did Cain marry?" The issue in his life is some moral issue, which he will never admit. He covers it up with his irrational arguments.

8. Sin of over-activity. Mr. Over-activity does not sit in one place. He runs here and there and everywhere but goes nowhere. You ask him, "How are you and your family?" He says, "Just this morning I came from Delhi, and I had a wonderful seminar." You tell him, "I am asking you, how are you and your family, and not where are you coming from." His reply is, "We are fine. Excuse me. I have to go as I have another seminar coming up."

9. Sin of imaginative fear. Madam Imaginative Fear always fears what others think of her. "If I get

closer to others, they will come to know my ignorance, weaknesses, and shortcomings, and about my family.”

10. Sin of dissension. Mr. Dissension always kindles division in the church or fellowship. He cannot tolerate unity among the believers but thrives in disunity.

#### **IV. Regaining Fellowship**

We must fulfil certain conditions laid down in the Word of God.

A. "Walk in the Light" (v.5). Light symbolises righteousness. We must make all efforts to walk in righteousness as God is righteous. We must have right relationship with Him and others in the Body of Christ through Christ, and with the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

B. "If we confess our sins..." (v.9). When we confess our sins in repentance to Him as He assures us, He will forgive us our sins because He is faithful and just and gives us His grace to be in right relationships and to deepen our relationships.

C. "Your joy becomes complete" (v.4). When we are in right relationship with Him and with others, our joy knows no bounds in all situations. We become winsome and attract others to Christ.

Beloved, you and I need encouragement from each other; you and I need to be accountable to each other to grow in Christ; there is a great power when we pray together; you and I are obligated to build up each other; and when we are in fellowship with Christ and His people, His Church will be edified and grow.



**Rev. Dr. Francis Sunderaraj**  
*former General Secretary,  
Evangelical Fellowship of India  
and Asia Evangelical Alliance*  
[fsunderaraj7@yahoo.in](mailto:fsunderaraj7@yahoo.in)



# Foundation of Christian Faith

Rev. Dr. Samuel Richmond

## ***Jesus: The Son of God***

Till today, there are different views about the very being and nature of Christ Jesus. Some believe that He was a good teacher; others think He was a prophet; a Jewish rabbi; a good man; a holy man; a peacemaker; a philosopher. These interpretations do place Him on the highest human pedestal, but it is from the human mind only. Even in Jesus' time, people addressed Him with different titles. The rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16 called Jesus, "good teacher", while Nicodemus called him "Rabbi" in John 3:2. In Matthew 16:13-20, When Jesus inquired about Himself, "Who do

people say that the Son of Man is?" His disciples answered, "Some say He is 'John the Baptist,' 'Elijah,' 'Jeremiah' or 'a prophet'." That identified Him with one of the national heroes of the past. But when Jesus asked the disciples' opinion, then Simon Peter answered in vs 16, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." This answer was not Peter's interpretation, but from God the Father. And immediately after this, Jesus begins to teach them what kind of a kingship this will be. In line with all that he had learned from the Scriptures, he taught them that the one who reigns in God's name must be the one who suffers, who is rejected, who is humiliated but who will

finally be vindicated. It should be noted that there had been other confessions of faith prior to this one. Nathanael had confessed Christ as the Son of God (John 1:49), and the disciples had declared Him God's Son after He stilled the storm (Matt. 14:33). Jesus was acclaimed as the Son of God at His baptism (Mark 1:11). But He was also given this title by the angel Gabriel at the annunciation: "That Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Through this, God communicated to the whole world that Jesus was the Messiah (about whom it was prophesied in the Old Testament) and also that He is the Son of the Living God (the Second Person of the Holy Trinity). As per the scripture, Jesus is the begotten of the Father and reflects God's glory, and He is the exact representation of God the Father.

### ***Jesus: God of the Universe***

Jesus, as Messiah, is not just the Son of Man coming from the lineage of King David: He is also the Son of God, our Immanuel. Repeatedly Jesus asserts, He

was sent into the world by the Father, shares with the Father in giving life, raising the dead, and judging the world. He does the will of the Father who sent Him (Jn. 5:30, 36; 6:38-40, etc.), hears Him, and passes this on to His disciples (Jn. 15:15, and so on). John 1:3-4 describes the activity of logos. He is the cause of creation ('all things came into being through him'), and He is the source of true life which is the light of all people. John 1:14 describes the incarnation of the logos (the word became flesh). 22 This is echoed by Paul (Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:1-4). John uses flesh to signify the very nature of the incarnation. Wesley captured the essence of John 1:14, 'Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the' incarnate Deity, Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.' He as one Person has two natures, that is, fully divine and fully human. Through these distinct natures, Jesus was able to reveal God to us and also connect us with God. The early Church fathers in the first four centuries stood against the heresies related to the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. The

issues related to Jesus' divinity (Council of Nicaea), humanity (Council of Constantinople), unipersonality i.e., one person (Council of Ephesus) and two natures in one person (Chalcedon) were dealt with strongly and settled in different Councils. The "Son of the living God" refers to Jesus' deity and it points to the following:

(1) His virgin birth: He was born of a virgin (1:18–20);

(2) His name: He was called Immanuel, meaning, "God with us" (1:23). In John 1:18, it is written, *"no one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made Him known."*

Bishop John Chrysostom (347–407 A.D.) said beautifully, "I do not think of Christ as God alone, or man alone, but both together. For I know he was hungry, and I know that with five loaves he fed five thousand. I know he was thirsty, and I know that he turned the water into wine. I know he was carried in a ship, and I know that he walked on the sea. I know that

he died, and I know that he raised the dead. I know he was set before Pilate, and I know he sits with the Father on his throne. I know that he was worshipped by angels, and I know that he was stoned by the Jews. And truly, some of these I ascribe to the human and others to the divine nature. For by reason of these, he is said to have been both God and Man."

### ***Jesus: The Saviour of the World***

*Ho Christos* is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament *Massiah*, which means, 'the anointed One.' As the Messiah, Jesus is the divinely-appointed King who brought God's Kingdom to earth (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20). His way to victory was not by physical force and violence, but through love, humility, and service. There are still many people who are not able to accept Him as the Lord of their lives, because of certain reservations. Many intellectuals have tried to understand Jesus with the help of their knowledge, but God supernaturally revealed

Himself to Peter and the other disciples who belonged to the fishermen community. Even after the coming of Jesus, Jewish Pharisees were still waiting for the Messiah. On the other hand, the Greeks were seeking wisdom. But God used the foolish to confound the wise. In Matthew 11:25, Jesus gave thanks to the Father for hiding great mysteries and spiritual truth from the wise and prudent, but revealing it to those seeking God's will and purpose.

In the earliest writings of Hinduism, the Vedas (1500-500 B.C.), the idea of sacrifice for the atonement of sin was very prevalent. In Rig Veda it is written: "Prajapati, Lord of creatures gave himself for them – he became their sacrifice." In Yajur Veda it is written, "God would offer himself as a sacrifice and obtain atonement for sins." Sadhu Chellappa was a staunch Hindu sadhu and when he read about Prajapati, the god who will sacrifice himself for sins of the world, he began the quest to find prajapati. After a long search, he gave up in frustration and

became an atheist. He was plunged into bad habits, finally deeply in debt, he decided to commit suicide. One day while he was in the preparation of committing suicide, he heard a voice saying from Proverbs 28:13, *He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.* These words struck him so strongly that he went to the venue and found a Christian meeting was going on. He heard the message and after that for three hours he discussed with the preacher and was convinced that the Prajapati that he was looking for was none other than Jesus Christ, Son of God who came into this world and died for our sins. Immediately, he accepted Jesus as personal savior. Within a year, his whole family accepted Jesus as God and he became an effective Indian evangelist.

### ***Jesus: The Lord of All***

Jesus is not interested in what the world thinks about Him, but He is interested in what we think about Him, who claim to be His children. There are many Christians who

are born in a Christian family but still, are away from the Truth, and are not bothered by such revelations. Satan's strategy is to keep us away from the revelation of God. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul says, *"the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers,"* but the power of the Gospel reveals Truth in our lives. It is through the divinity of Christ that we are made new beings, because the old nature is incapable of knowing Him. In Him, we *"are no longer strangers and aliens, but are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone"* (Ephesians 2:20-21). Hence, in Jesus, we attain perfect humanity that qualifies us to be the sons and daughters of the Living God. Also, our foundation is built upon the immovable rock which is Christ the Lord. What God promised to Peter: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,' is beautifully fulfilled in us. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ and confesses Him as the Son of God

and Savior, is a "living stone" (1 Peter 2:5). Jesus Christ is the foundation rock on which the church is built. Paul also stated that the foundation for the church is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). This foundation was laid by the apostles and prophets as they preached Christ to the lost (1 Cor. 2:1–2; 3:11; Eph. 2:20).

Why Jesus is important?

- Through Jesus we receive the forgiveness of sins
- Through Jesus we develop personal relationship with God the Father
- Through Jesus we get all heavenly blessings and riches
- Through Jesus we get strength to do everything
- Through Jesus we receive eternal life
- Through Jesus we receive salvation
- Through Jesus we may access to our Faith in God – Roman 5:2
- Through Jesus we become spiritually mature
- Through Jesus we enter into heaven
- Through Jesus our distorted

image is repaired

- Through Jesus we get new birth
- Through Jesus we receive the love, grace and peace from God
- Through Jesus we receive the power of the Holy Spirit



**Rev Dr. Samuel Richmond,**  
*presently servicing as Academic Consultant at Caleb Institute, Farukhnagar, Gurgaon. Director, CARS, NECU, Dimapur, Nagaland & Research Faculty, Global Research Institute, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Los Angeles*

*Real Christians are not only with Christ, but they live in Him and He lives in them and because He lives forever, they also will live forever with Him.'*

**Sadhu Sundar Singh**

*For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.  
Jeremiah 29:11-13*



We begin October by observing the International Day of Older Persons on October 1. It is a good time to pause and reflect on the fact that India's elderly population (aged 60 and above) is projected to touch 194 million in 2031 from 138 million in 2021, a 41 percent increase over a decade, according to the National Statistical Office (NSO)'s Elderly in India 2021 report. This has implications for the country. An ageing population increases the demand for health services. Older people suffer from both degenerative and communicable diseases due to the ageing of the body's immune system.

The *National Policy on Senior*

*Citizens* aims to encourage healthcare, safety and security, safe housing, and protected welfare. The National Policy on Older People focuses on encouraging independence amongst the elderly, providing knowledge of resources and community involvement opportunities.

As one aged above 60 myself, the subject of older people is more than of academic interest to me. How India regards or disregards its senior citizens and how society views them and treats them will directly impact me and my wife. There was a time when senior citizens lived in the midst of large joint families and were

cared for there. Today, that is not the case. Joint families have become a thing of the past for some decades now, but now even nuclear families are becoming atomised as the children pursuing their own careers move away from their parents to other cities or countries. Not because they are selfish or uncaring but just because that is the way life is these days.

Interestingly although in many places, although the composition of church attendees is largely composed of older persons, ministry to older people is rudimentary or nonexistent. Older people like all others need spiritual nurture and Biblical inputs, but are likely to have a lot more practical needs. Nearly, all will be lonely and miss company, many will be shut-ins or have other mobility challenges, and some others will have health and or financial needs. An ageing population increases the demand for health services. Older people suffer from both degenerative and communicable diseases due to the ageing of the body's immune system. The leading

causes of morbidity are infections, while visual impairment, difficulty in walking, chewing, hearing, osteoporosis, arthritis, and incontinence are other common health-related problems.

The church I and my family attend today, is predominantly young and has very few people even above 50, let alone senior citizens like me. This was one of the reasons why we wished to be part of it and to an extent why the pastor also welcomed us. We are energised by the vigour and dynamism of the young and hopefully, are able to pass on some of our own wisdom too. A thriving senior adult ministry facilitates an atmosphere where older men and women can be intentional about reproducing themselves in the lives of younger church members. The Bible is clear that senior adults are not just to be respected because they are "old." Rather, they have an important place in the life of the local church.

There are actually some ministries of the church for which

senior adults could be better suited than younger men and women. They have more time. They have more life experience. They often have an extensive network of relationships within the community (family, friends, and business connections) that young people do not.

Senior adults can and should still "bear fruit in old age, healthy and green." Many senior adults have stories of God's faithfulness to them through the years that younger families desperately need to hear. If we do not provide avenues for senior adults to share their stories of God's faithfulness to younger church members, we are robbing the next generation of the proof of God's power and strength through all circumstances. God's plan for the church is that it would pursue wisdom. One of the ways that a church gains wisdom is by one generation passing it down to the next generation. This is what we see put on grand display in Titus 2.

The older training the younger. So, exactly how much wisdom is found in a church only full of

millennials who are discipling one another — where no gray hair can be found to speak into these conversations?

When a young Christian is seriously struggling through circumstances that test faith, he or she needs an older Christian to walk with him through the fire. The senior adult psalmist writes, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread." In moments that feel like forsakenness and deprivation, senior adults can testify that time will prove God's faithfulness.

Churches would do well to listen more imaginatively to older people's experiences and be ready to learn from them. Older people can provide a longer perspective in a time of change. They know about making mistakes and understand human nature, work, and faith. We need to find ways of valuing age and enabling older people to find a voice. We need to create and cherish the faith stories and life experiences of older Christians. During the sermon slot, the pastor could invite older

members of the congregation to give their testimony, perhaps through an interview-style dialogue.

We should work to build all-age communities, where older people are a respected part of the body of Christ. To do this, we must combat some of the fears that surround ageing. Older people are an overlooked majority, who deserve our energy and our care.



**Dr Shantanu Dutta**

*is a part of Interserve (India) and the Theological Research and Communications Institute and can be contacted at shantanud@gmail.com*

*“Love must be sincere.  
Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.  
Be devoted to one another in love.  
Honour one another above yourselves.  
Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your  
spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.  
Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction,  
faithful in prayer.”  
Romans 12:9-12*

# QUITTING QUESTIONABLE ONLINE COMMUNICATION!

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

Khaleda Rehman writing for Newsweek on 30 August 2022 reported this shocking news: 'The lead pastor of an evangelical megachurch near Dallas announced on Sunday (28 August) that he would be taking a leave of absence because of an inappropriate online relationship he had with a woman who wasn't his wife. (This pastor's) abrupt departure marks the latest fall from grace for an American evangelical leader, as recent years have seen a number of men removed from church leadership or disgraced by revelations they behaved inappropriately or engaged in sexual misconduct or abuse.'

Julian Mark, writing for The Washington Post, on 30 August 2022, reports further, this pastor's church leaders determined that the messages were not "romantic or sexual." However, this pastor himself admitted, "It was that our conversations were unguarded and unwise." This pastor and church officials went into scant detail about the nature of the messages. He said both his wife and the husband of the woman he was messaging knew about their communications. But church leaders thought the messaging was too frequent, familiar and resulted in "coarse and foolish joking," this pastor said.

Not just mega church pastors, but normal young people, home-makers, working professionals, fight this temptation of inappropriate texting or questionable chatting.

An uproar was raised in Chandigarh university when a girl student was accused of sending her bathing video along with the bathing videos of 50 other hostel girls (shot discreetly) to a boy in Shimla. In a much-watched NDTV YouTube video uploaded on 19 September 2022, a male student is heard asking the question, "Why is this girl even arrested if she only sent her bathing video (as some maintain) to the boy in Shimla? It does not make sense!"

These episodes made me ask a question, "What would the Scripture say about inappropriate texting, sharing inappropriate photos with a person not your spouse?" Understanding from the Scripture that doing this is sin, is the first step for victory over this technology-aided temptation.

What would the Scripture say

about inappropriate texts or chats between those not married to each other? Does the Scripture even talk about it? It sure does! Just check out Proverbs 7. It records the story of a "naughty boy". He had a sexual fling with an "aunty" whose husband was not at home. He was lured to her home – thanks to her what can be called as 'sexts' (in modern liturgy)! We can see it that way!! Check out Proverbs 7:14-20. It goes this way in The Voice version of the Bible: "The Immoral Woman: It was my turn to offer a peace offering, and today, I paid my vows. So, now I come to see you. I really want to be with you, and what luck! I have found you! You'll be impressed. I have decorated my couch, laid colorful Egyptian linens over where we will be together. And perfumed the bed with exotic oils and herbs: myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come in, and we will feast on love until sunrise; we will delight ourselves in our affections. You don't need to worry; my husband is long gone by now, away from home on a distant journey. He took a bag of money with him, so I don't expect him home until next

month" (Prov. 7:14-20). If what she said here was converted into a twenty-first century sext, it could read this way: "I am a believer who believes in hyper-grace! Even my future sins are forgiven! So, God has already forgiven, what we are about to do. Come home, dude. My hubby's gone on a long business trip to Dubai. His return flight date is far, far away. He is a stingy fellow – he never cancels his flights to come home sooner to give me a surprise hug! I have spread fresh linen on my bed. I have filled my bedroom with incense from Oman. Flavoured condoms are under the empty pillow beside me! Be here soooooooooon, my boy! Let's make love till the morning – nonstop!" Not only were her words calling him to do rubbish (have sex outside of marriage) but also her theology (using religious theology as an excuse for immoral life – read Proverbs 7:14) was rubbish.

The Scripture implies that this married woman's 'dirty text message' worked (Prov. 7:21). The young man raced to her home (Prov. 7:22). He sped to her

bedroom riding on his Bullet, so to speak! But what was the shattering consequence? He was like a "bull being led to the slaughter" (Prov. 7:22, Voice). He was akin to a fool who was caught in a trap (Prov. 7:22, Voice). When he said 'yes' to her sext, it was as if 'an arrow punctured his liver' (Prov. 7:23, Voice). He was as foolish as a 'bird flying straight into a net' (Prov. 7:23, Voice). 'He had no clue that his life was at stake' and 'everything was about to change' (Prov. 7:23, Voice). The naughty boy of Proverbs 7 experienced a terrible consequence for obeying a 'sext'. Does he resemble you? Does the married woman of Proverbs 7 resemble you?

I believe the Scriptures, through edicts and examples, warn us against the sin of inappropriate online communication.

## • E D I C T S   A G A I N S T I N A P P R O P R I A T E T E X T S:

First, let us look at a few edicts (direct commands) in the Bible against questionable communication between two people. Paul writes in Colossians

3:8, "But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips" (NIV). We can perhaps change the ending of this verse to this: "...and filthy language from your phones...."! If Apostle Paul lived in our time, he would have perhaps written that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To the church believers of Ephesus, Paul writes thus: "Watch the way you talk. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, each word a gift" (Eph. 4:29 MSG). He goes on: "Though some tongues just love the taste of gossip, those who follow Jesus have better uses for language than that. Don't talk dirty or silly. That kind of talk doesn't fit our style. Thanksgiving is our dialect" (Eph. 5:4, MSG). The NASB version of the same verse hammers the point – the Scripture is against foul language in whatever format – powerfully: "and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks." When Paul writes to Timothy, he says, "But avoid profane foolish babblings,

for they will increase to more ungodliness..." (2 Tim. 2:16, MEV). We must be wary of innocent beginning when it comes to sexting – that is Paul's point here. What may start as "I wish I can see you now" can soon become, "I wish I can see you naked...."! Sexting can be the "extra word" or "extra picture" we type or we share over phone that will be brought to judgment on the final day – something Jesus himself warned us about (Matt. 12:36).

#### • **EXAMPLES AGAINST INAPPROPRIATE TEXTS:**

Next, let us look at two characters in the Bible and their handling of wasteful conversations. Let me start with a positive example of *Nehemiah*. He had a Government job in Persia. He requested his boss – the king – for long leave. He led a team to rebuild the broken walls of Jerusalem. While he was busy with work, a group of people – local leaders named Sanballat and Geshem and the rest – came to meet with him. They wanted to talk to him. The venue for this meeting was the plains of Ono.

What was Nehemiah's response to that Ono Conference invitation? He basically said, "Oh no – I am not coming to the plains of Ono!" He said, 'I'm doing a great work; I can't come down. Why should the work come to a standstill just so I can come down to see you?' (Neh. 6:2-3, MSG). When they repeated their invitation to have conversations of distraction with him, four times, he repeated his 'no' with great fervour and absolute fearlessness (Neh. 6:4)! Basically, Nehemiah did not have the time for wasteful talk! And to think this was his standard, even while talking with a bunch of men, reminds us for the taller standards of restraint we must show-forth when it comes to conversations with the opposite sex, who supposedly have so many thousands of extra-words to speak on an average day than men!! So, the example of Nehemiah from Nehemiah 6, inspires us to hit sexting for a six (that an imagery is from the game of Cricket, by-the-way)!!

Not only Nehemiah, Lot is an example for us in this regard! He

was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked," Apostle Peter writes (2 Pet. 2:7 KJV). What was the particular conversation of the wicked that vexed Lot? We must hit the rewind-button in our Bibles to recall that. We must turn to the Old Testament to get the answer. There, we come across this conversation the stiff-necked homosexuals of Sodom and Gomorrah had with Lot. When he gave shelter at his home to the angelic visitors to his sinful city, the men of Sodom told him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them" (Gen. 19:5 NIV). Lot got put off by this brazenly sinful request and is therefore called "righteous" by Peter in the New Testament (2 Pet 2:7). That brings me to this conclusion: one way, a believer demonstrates his righteousness, freely given to him by Christ, is to shun sexting and all modern forms of 'filthy conversation'.

## **V I C T O R Y   O V E R INAPPROPRIATE TEXTING HABIT**

Are you into flirtatious

conversation with a person of the opposite gender, not your spouse – through phone texts, WhatsApp messages or even via direct conversation? Do you use the occasion of a "business lunch" to indulge in idle talk with the other person? Do you send romantic messages to a colleague at work from the opposite sex and delete those messages on a regular basis – lest your spouse finds out? Marital fidelity is not just about "inter-course fidelity" but also about "internet-fidelity"; it is not just about "cot fidelity" but also about "cellphone fidelity". Repent. Stop. Take a U-turn. Say "tata" (goodbye) to "technosex"! What is the anti-dote for inappropriate texting and photo-sharing? How can we overcome these tech-temptation?

#### • **ARREST BAD THOUGHTS!**

Read Colossians 3:8 again. It goes this way: "But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth"(ESV). Bible Scholar Douglas J. Moo's explanation of this verse is helpful: "Paul's concern is that

Christians should avoid abusive speech. The first three sins in the list of Colossians 3:8 refer to those attitudes ('anger, wrath, malice') that give rise to such speech. Paul's purpose is to use the three words together to connote the attitude of anger and ill will toward others that so often leads to hasty and nasty speech. Jesus reminds us that 'the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart' (Matt. 15:18), and it is this principle that undergirds v.8." [Pillar New Testament Commentary: Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon]. Jesus' words in Matthew 15:18 can be put in our context this way: 'the things that get typed or sent via your phone comes from your heart'. So, going by the principles that Paul put forth as brilliantly explained by Moo, here is the way of escape from erotic texting: think clean thoughts and eschew unclean thoughts; do not allow garbage to settle in your mind! This can be done by our active cooperation with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit ('by the Spirit put to death the misdeeds of the body' – Romans 8:13).

Here is another biblical step one can employ to overcome this questionable-texting-between-those-not-married temptation:

- **ADORE GOD'S HOLY CHARACTER!**

I believe Prophet Isaiah's pet sin had to do with his mouth – he was a man of unclean lips (Isa. 6:5). His concern was this: how could he use the same mouth that was perhaps used for profanity, for prophecy? He called a 'woe' on himself (Isa. 6:5). In other words, he repented. He received a 'hot tong touch' and a complete cleansing from Yahweh (Isa. 6:6-7). Thereafter, God used him, mightily in the ministry. His strong messages called people who abused their mouths to repentance. Sample this: "Your lips have spoken falsehood, Your tongue mutters wickedness" (Isa. 59:3, NASB). How was Isaiah able to take a U-turn from his "unclean lips sin"? I would say that he consistently adored the holiness of God! His favorite name for God is "Holy One of Israel". John N. Oswalt, an Old Testament Scholar who spent over thirty years of his life

studying and writing about the book of Isaiah noted that the term, "Holy One" occurs in the book of Isaiah thirty-five times (Holy One of Israel: Studies in the Book of Isaiah, p. 4). Some of those references are in Isaiah 1:4, 5:19, 12:6, 30:11-12, 48:17 and 60:14. Isaiah's favorite name for God indicates to me a philosophy he perhaps had for his life and ministry. His philosophy was simple: "I worship a holy God and therefore I live holy and present him to others as holy!" His constant adoration of God's holiness resulted in a daily application of holiness in his life! This is so because, as the Scripture teaches elsewhere, we become what we worship (Psa. 115:8 - "Those who make them (idols) are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them").

If Isaiah could overcome his 'unclean lips' problem, we too can overcome the 'unclean texting' problem! The source of both is an unclean heart. Like Isaiah, may I invite you to spend time in adoring the holiness of God day-in and day-out? And before you know it, the pull of the sexting

temptation won't be powerful as before!

What is Scripture number three to tame the temptation of sending filthy texts or sharing objectionable photos?

- **ALLOW YOUR PHONE TO BE CHECKED BY AN ACCOUNTABILITY FRIEND!**

One of the practical ways to break the bond of sexting in your life, is to allow an accountability friend the right to access your phone. Then overcoming the sexting temptation becomes easy. "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up" (Eccl. 4:9-10 NASB). When it comes to handling temptation, a Scripture principle found in this passage from the book of Ecclesiastes becomes handy. King Solomon who was without an accountability friend wrote these words. It helps to recall that an accountability friend cum court

prophet named Prophet Nathan was in his dad's (King David's) life. Prophet Nathan narrated the "mutton biryani preparation story" (2 Sam. 12:1-4) to bring a sin-conviction to the stubborn-in-sexual-sin David, post his affair with Bathsheba. As he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes as an old man, King Solomon expresses in Ecclesiastes 4:10 how he missed a Nathan-like friend, who would not only clap when he did something right, but also slap, when he did something wrong – it can be seen that way! As he married seven hundred women and had further sexual intimacy with three hundred concubines, the Scripture does not record that a Nathan-like figure ever confronted him saying, "When the Word of God says, 'The King of Israel should not multiply wives,' how dare do you do it, Oh king?" (1 Kings 11:3; Deut. 17:19).

While watching a secular TV show with my wife, I heard a non-Christian counsellor give an advice that was very Christian with regard to the use of mobile phones. She said, "Leave your

phone in a common place. Allow your trusted family members to freely use your unlocked phone. This will help you when you are tempted to misuse your phone!" I could not agree with her more! My own phone is often in my wife's hands! When I do that, the Scripture that says, "Unbelieving husband is sanctified by his believing wife" (I Cor. 7:14), becomes true, by default! Did that stump you? Let me explain: when a husband decides to behave like an unbeliever (say by using his phone for unholy things like indulging in questionable chatting), the knowledge that his believer wife would question him, empowers him to overcome the temptation to be unholy! There are times, when I leave my phone in our living room and leave home for exercising, shopping or for a meeting! These habits serve as safety nets to keep the titillating tech temptation far away from my life!

Yes, we can win over these tech temptations!



**Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj** is the founder of Grabbing the Google Generation from Gehenna Mission. As an itinerant evangelist Dr. Duke has preached God's Word by invitation in over 20 Indian States and in a few other nations. His book, *Straight Talk*, brings frank Bible Teaching wrapped around contemporary events, on taboo topics like sex, love, marriage, porn, phone-addiction, sexting, masturbation, homosexuality, sex inside marriage questions, etc. His book, *Daniel in Dell*, makes the book of Daniel very practical for modern young working professionals. **W h a t s A p p h i m a t +918886040605** if you want to buy copies. Or you may email him at [emailduke@gmail.com](mailto:emailduke@gmail.com). Dr. Duke lives in Chennai with his wife, Evangelin, a trained youth/young professionals counsellor. This couple is blessed with two children, Dale (a college student at St. Stephen's Delhi) and Datasha (in class X)



# THY SERVANT, THY BROTHER

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

During my college years, I was a member of the Emmanuel Methodist Church, Madras. One Sunday evening, the preacher was Hyman Appleman – a Jew turned evangelist. His opening words shocked me, the gist of which was: "Look at all of you. You people are definitely not under the curse of Ham. You don't have thick lips and kinky hair." It was at best a backhanded compliment. It implied that he thought that all people of colour were under the "curse of Ham", but we escaped that classification only because we didn't have Negroid features.

While I knew the story of Noah cursing Ham and Canaan, I didn't know that any Christians used it

to classify black people as under the curse of Ham and therefore, free game for blatant and atrocious abuse.

However, it needs to be clarified that in America, Appleman was one who spoke out against racism among American evangelicals. He did preach inclusion at a time when mainstream Christianity in the US demanded separation of the races. Given that cultural background, I suppose, Appleman had imbibed some of the theological ideas underlying racism, and suffered a moment of indiscretion in the excitement of preaching in a place new to him and trying to make a meaningful

connection with the local people.

### **Scandal of Slavery**

Around the same time one of the nominal Christians attending the church's College and Career Class used Paul's instructions to slaves as exemplifying the failure of the Lord Jesus and His apostles to crusade against the evil of slavery. Though he used it as his excuse for not committing his life to following Jesus, I was embarrassed that the guy had a point, and I could not counter him.

On top of that, there was the history of slavery in so-called "Christian countries". The American Civil War was fought because one side was defending their right to own slaves. Abraham Lincoln was the hero who fought for "Negroes" to be free, but he was assassinated, and they continued to be treated as unequals for another 300 years. They were not allowed to vote, and they were required by law to give way to white people everywhere. They were abused, molested, raped, lynched with impunity (and to a certain extent that still happens) because such

whites believe in their superiority to other races.

White rule in South Africa was infamously oppressive and characterised by apartheid (Afrikaans: "apartness") policy that governed relations between South Africa's white minority and non-white majority for much of the latter half of the 20th century, enforcing racial segregation and allowing political and economic discrimination against non-whites. Whites considered it their divine right to exploit and abuse the black people of the land.

With all this happening in my world, I had an uneasy conscience about the Church's response to unjust practices of white oppressors of native peoples of Africa, Asia, Australia and America. Were non-believers right in saying that the foundation for all white oppression lay in the teachings of the Bible and the failure of Christ Jesus and His apostles to condemn slavery?

Our Lord never taught anything about how slaves were to conduct themselves. However,

He did populate some of His parables with slaves as characters, without condoning or condemning slavery as such. He just treated it as a fact of life in those days.

Teachings about the conduct of slaves and the treatment of slaves come in the letters of Paul (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1-2). The other apostles didn't say anything about slavery, just like Jesus didn't, and so, were regarded as having failed to confront the issue of slavery.

I had a tendency to just gloss over the apostolic instructions to slaves. In my world there were no slaves, and so I just understood it as how hired servants were to be treated. My unbelieving friend's challenge that slavery was not crusaded against by Jesus and the apostles made me take a closer look at the whole matter.

### **Overturing Slavery**

Paul's instructions about slaves and their conduct and treatment implied that there were Christians who owned slaves. Why didn't the apostles command Christian owners of slaves to set them

free? That was the question. I didn't come to an answer to that question until later.

My study of Paul's instructions, with the help of Bible commentaries, helped me to see that the instructions to owners were definitely revolutionary. They were asked to treat slaves fairly, even as they expected to be treated: "masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him" (Eph. 6:9, NASB). It was clearly an extension of the Old Testament law about loving one's neighbour as oneself (Lev. 19:18). More to the point, it was in line with what our Lord Jesus taught: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12).

Slavery was an accepted norm in all ancient societies. Conquerors enslaved those conquered. Classism was practised everywhere by those who had the advantages of property and

wealth, and there were also people who claimed religious rights to treat others as sub-human people.

In that sort of context, any direct onslaught on slavery as a system would have invited the wrath and punishment of the Roman government. If word had got out that the Church was teaching that it was wrong and immoral to own slaves, the preachers and teachers would have been condemned and imprisoned. In connection with casting out the demon from a slave girl who was possessed, Paul and Silas were accused of disturbing the social order – "advocating customs unlawful for...Romans to accept or practise" (Acts 16:21). How much more would the march of the gospel have been impeded if something that was actually systemic was attacked. So, they did it their way: the Church challenged its own people to change their attitudes toward their own slaves. It undermined slavery by teaching the fair treatment of slaves.

According to custom and law,

slaves had no rights. They could be abused, molested, maimed, and murdered without any guilt or punishment. However, according to the Old Testament, maiming a slave would require the owner to free the slave (Lev. 21:26-27) and the murder of a slave would be punishable (v.20). If economic deprivation made people slaves, in the year of jubilee, they had to be set free without their debts being paid off (Lev. 25:39-42), and during their time of slavery, they were not to be treated harshly (v.43).

In renegade Israel, these godly principles were set aside by people and the Lord sent prophets who called them to act justly (Jer. 34:8-20; Isa. 58:6-11). When Jesus came as the Messiah, He declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners...to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Lk. 4:18-19). Thus, the apostles and teachers of the Early Church stood in line with the prophets

and their Lord to call for the fair treatment of slaves. They taught that slaves were to be regarded as equals.

The story of Philemon and Onesimus was a case in point. Onesimus had run away from Philemon and then came in contact with Paul who led him to commit his life to Christ (Philem. v.10). Runaway slaves could be put to death when caught. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon, himself a believer through Paul's ministry in his life (v.19), urging him to receive his former slave as a brother (v.16) and even to give him the same treatment he would give Paul (v.17).

### **Feudalism Lives!**

My thoughts turned to all this because of Chetan Bhagat writing the article "Why we Need to Treat Domestic Help Better" (Times of India, Sept. 11, 2022). What occasioned his writing was the news of an IAS officer's wife ill-treating her tribal domestic worker.

Indians are feudalistic when it

comes to the treatment of servants. Not only the zamindars of rural India, but highly educated people in the upper classes of polite society have been found guilty time and again:

- A doctor in the top Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow, was guilty of beating up her 11-year old maid Renu. The doctor's daughter – following in her mother's steps, no doubt – also used to kick the girl.
- Rakhi Bhadra was murdered by an MP's wife and the MP covered up the matter. What is remarkable is the fact that the MP belonged to the Bahujan Samaj Party – the party that supposedly represents Dalits.
- Then, there was the case of India's deputy consul general in New York being arrested for abusing and exploiting her house help Sangeeta Richard. Indian officialdom rose in protest and many public demonstrations were also held. President Obama's effigies were burnt in some places. Preet Bharara, the US attorney in Manhattan, who

was prosecuting the diplomat, said, "One wonders why there is so much outrage about the alleged treatment of the Indian national accused of perpetrating these acts, but precious little outrage about the alleged treatment of the Indian victim and her spouse." Enough of examples of how Indians treat their domestic help.

The real question is, how did Bhagat get his ideas of fair treatment of servants when there is nothing in his cultural and religious background for him to come up with his suggestions:

- Minimum wage
- A day off per week
- No rudeness
- Don't call them servants
- Decent living conditions

For instance, the notion of a day off in the week comes from the Sabbath law of the Old Testament (Ex. 20:8-11). Bhagat's dictate that there should be "no rudeness" is straight from Pauline teaching on how to treat slaves. And best of all, he says that servants are not to be called servants! That's reminiscent of

Paul telling Philemon to regard runaway slave Onesimus as a brother.

### **Treating Jesus Today**

The novel *In His Steps* (1897) by Charles Sheldon tells the story of a church's one-year experiment with members asking themselves the question, "What would Jesus do?" before they did anything. According to the novel, that affected the lives of people both within the church and outside.

Youth worker Janie Tinklenberg after re-reading Sheldon's novel in 1989, challenged her church's youth group about living their lives asking what Jesus would do in their place. Friendship bracelets were the in thing then and so, she got a local company to make 300 with WWJD on them. Tinklenberg asked the group to wear them for 30 days. It caught on and spread from there to every state.

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

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

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

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

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

We love to croon about loving Jesus, but loving Jesus is not simply saying, "I love you, Jesus",

in song and prayer. Love must not just be love in words, but love in deeds. The only way to show love to Jesus today is to show love for His sisters and brothers. If you don't love the Lord's sisters and brothers, you don't love Him (1 Jn. 4:20-5:1).

In the end, Jesus will be saying to some, "I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was ill and in prison and you did not look after me" (vv.42-43), because they would not do it for His sisters and brothers (v.45).

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

"When it is in your power, don't withhold good from the one to whom it belongs. Don't say to your neighbour, 'Go away! Come

back later. I'll give it tomorrow'—when it is there with you." (Pro. 3:27-28 CSB). "Make no plans that could result in injury to your neighbour; after all, he should be more secure because he lives near you" (v.29, Voice).

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

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

Jesus is the man who is robbed

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

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



**Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy**

*is a freelance preacher and writer. He can be reached at: [reverendkuru@aol.com](mailto:reverendkuru@aol.com)*

*"We have this hope as an anchor  
for the soul, firm and secure."*

*Hebrews 6:19*



**For a such time as this (Es 4:14)** – the theme verse for the IMA India Mission Summit 2022 was chosen, given the situation the mission organizations are going through at large. The tagline helped us to visualize and understand what the organizations should do going forward: Change, Chase, Complete. The conference took place on 21st September 2022 to 23rd September 2022 at CEO Centre, SAIACS, Bengaluru, Karnataka.



Rev Rajasingh, the General Secretary of IEM, listed out the objectives of the summit. Mr. Joseph Vijayam was the Keynote speaker at the inaugural session of the summit. He laid the foundation for the Summit by highlighting and analyzing our time in the light of Esther's life.

Rev. Dr. R Lalthanmawia, shared a powerful devotion on the first day about 'Change'. He stated that the more everything changes, the more relevant the good news of Jesus, urging us to be a catalyst of change. Bishop Shirish Ahaley reassured us of our identity and security in Christ during the second day devotion, reminding us that compromising kingdom values create fear. He also reminded of three points

from Esther's story on the importance of being an accomplished person. The last day devotion by Dr Jacob Cherian from SABC emphasized the thought that the ministries are "Ours" and not "Mine." Quoting from the letters to the Thessalonians, highlighting teamwork.

Mr. Rajesh Tiwari in the first plenary, presented on



'unreached people group'. The deep-rooted caste system in India and the need to have a unique missional approach to each one of them. The second plenary by Dr. Rajesh Duthie and Dr. P.C. Mathew was on 'Urban Missions', showing ways to reach out to rich/elite groups, different families and emerging issues (gay and lesbianism, and addiction). The third plenary by CA Raja B Singh was on Finance Management. Outlining the

various scenarios that can happen with regard to FCRA renewals, he enlightened the members on what has to be done in each situation to face the challenges constraining the fund flow management.

The fourth plenary by Mr. M. K. Sheriff Daniel and Mr. Sushil Tyagi opened with a presentation



on Understanding Neighbours. Perceiving our neighbours in an empathetic light by changing our negative mind sets will help us to reach out to their growing communities. The fifth plenary by Mr. Ragland Remo Paul on Exploring the Opportunities for Education of Indian Mission Kids aided us to improve our awareness and understanding about mission kids and the importance of education in their life. The final plenary was by Mr. James Ragland and Mr. Jim Elliot Gergan on Media and Ministry. It is important to know about media

as it will help mission agencies, church planters and ministries to strategize their efforts in planning and to help them tackle issues related to it.

All the track sessions were based on recommendations to IMA on ways to deal with situations mentioned during the plenary.

The Challenging Hour by Dr JN Manokaran challenged anyone



with the question of how to reach India in the contemporary world. During the session he drew parallels between the book of Esther and the current situation in India especially on the domains of sponsored terrorism, Satan's conspiracy, being the voice of the voiceless and the method of how she faced the challenge. The second challenging hour by Dr. Prabhu Singh, the Principal of SIACS, shared on the theme 'The missional synergy: The Antiochian model' based on Acts.

11:19-26. He described the three important characteristics of the Antioch church as Gospel Innovators, Gospel Influencers and Gospel Instructors.

The final session before deciding the summit manifesto was the "way forward". In this summit the road map for IMA is clearly portrayed by the General Secretary IMA.



## OUR VISION

We want to see people hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ from every people group, village, town, city and be discipled into a community of believers (Church) so that in every nook and the corner of our land and beyond people will continue to worship the One and the Only God.

## OUR MISSION

### **We are committed:**

- To be an association for

organization and churches in Indian missions.

- To be a facilitator for cooperation, partnership and networks.
- To be a challenging voice in the church for increased commitment to missions.
- To be an initiator for training, workshops, consultations in new avenues
- To disseminate information for prayers and creating awareness on main issues
- To connect people in churches and missions both locally and globally.
- To be a catalyst in evolving in corporate vision, strategies & ethos
- To empower missions in management excellence

- To establish mutual accountability

### OUR VALUES

- To be guided by the Word and the Spirit
- A visionary and catalyst of Indian missions in national and multi-lingual teams
- Strive to be a model in Management excellence, financial accountability and Transparent in operation and statutory compliances
- Caring and building leaders in missions both present and future
- Advocating excellence in ministry performance
- Enriching indigenous leadership and finance

Partnerships	Member Missions	Global Partners	Community / People group	Unifying National Net- works
Standards of Excellence	Spiritual	Organizational	Statutory Compliances	Member Care
Research	Urban - Migrants	Christian Presence - Nation	Leadership & Succession	Technology & Media
Net-works for effective strategy	Neighbors	Tent - Makers	Missional Churches	Youth
Training	Empowering the Missions in Trg	Trauma Healing Groups	Generosity	Bandhu Seva

## SUMMIT MANIFESTO

India Mission Summit 2022 Manifesto, declared on the 23rd day of September 2022 at Bangalore are as follows:



**1.** We affirm our commitment and cooperation to the vision, mission and core values of the India Missions Association.

**2.** We affirm our adherence to the India Missions Association's statement of faith.

**3.** We affirm our collective responsibility to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people in every in every nook and corner of our land, discipling them into a community of believers (Church) worshipping Jesus the One and the Only God.

**4.** We affirm our commitment to employ innovative and relevant strategic ministry methods to counter various emerging challenges and issues.

**5.** We affirm our highest priority on the quality of Jesus followers besides quantity.

**6.** We affirm our commitment to make the churches in India,

"missionary" in their nature.

**7.** We affirm our common calling to equip and empower every believer to become a missionary to their respective people and regions.

**8.** We affirm that Christian family is the primary source of sowing the seeds of the gospel and nurturing faith in the Lord Jesus.

**9.** We affirm our commitment to legally comply to all government regulations with absolute integrity and transparency in the administration of our respective ministry organizations.

**10.** We affirm our common objective in make missions in India, indigenous in every aspect.

**11.** We affirm our commitment to probe understand "Unreached People Group" as a missiological classification in the contemporary Indian context so

as to reach “all” people through workable strategies.

**12.** We affirm the need for utilizing urban ministry opportunities and potential resources for greater harvest.

**13.** We affirm the need for professional ethics in our calling, “working in partnership” with a high level of competence, respecting and serving each other.

**14.** We affirm the role of Mission leaders as “Impactors,” “Influencers,” “Paradigm Shifters,” and “Movers and Shakers.”

**15.** We affirm the need for a ‘wake-up call’ to be given to the Church at large in India to strategically reach out the “Neighbours.”

**16.** We affirm the need for using advanced digital technology and social media platforms for profitable, creative, and vogue propagation of the gospel.

**17.** We affirm the importance of MK’s by prioritizing their nurture and future with due diligence.

**18.** We affirm the need for

handing over the Baton to the next generation leader by having a succession plan that paves the way for smooth transition with gladness of heart.

**19.** We affirm the need to raise women as positional leaders in Missions and Churches.

**20.** We affirm our loyalty to God and one another as we join hands in reaching our great country India with the Gospel.

The IMS concluded with Eucharistic service conducted by Bishop Sunder singh where he spoke about ten areas which were religiously practiced by the Apostles and is still relevant for Church Multiplication in our context.

This Summit was a blessing for everyone who attended given the plenaries on various issues and the breakout sessions which triggered the minds of the attendees. It is everyone’s prayer and wish that the things that were learnt and the thoughts that were rejuvenated during the IMS would stick close to every attendee’s heart in word and deed until everyone meet again.

# Give Me Neither Poverty Nor Riches

Rev. Dr. David Mende



Leonard Ravenhill, an English Christian evangelist once stated that "If Jesus had preached the same message that ministers preach today, He would never have been crucified." This is true of contemporary preachers as well. In an attempt to avoid offending their congregation, many ministers do not condemn sin. They try to refrain from preaching on topics such as suffering, self-denial, sacrifice, etc. Today, many preachers are abandoning "sound doctrine" and teaching what the "itching ears want to hear" (2 Tim. 4:3). Throughout history, the Christian Church has always witnessed aberrant teachings within its

ranks. One such teaching that has become extremely popular in the last few decades is the 'prosperity gospel' or the 'health and wealth gospel.'

One of the most controversial teachings of today's 'prosperity gospel' is their undue emphasis on material prosperity. This teaching has drawn sharp criticism from several churches and Christian leaders all over the world. The traditional teaching of the church for several centuries has been that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). However, the members of the churches where the 'prosperity gospel' is being taught

are promised riches, debt-free lives, and 'wealth transfer,' if only they give generously. Since many people in our world face financial difficulties or are in debt, it is natural that they throng the churches where financial prosperity is promised. The proponents of the 'prosperity gospel' promise their congregation that they can live like the "King's kids," never lacking anything.

However, the Bible does not promise that God's people will always enjoy material prosperity. The Old Testament shows that God promised wealth to his people as a part of his covenant (Gen. 12:1-3; 26:2-4; 28:13-15). Yet, the Old Testament laws and regulations prevented the Israelites from hoarding excessive wealth (Exod. 22:25-27; Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:26-28). Moreover, the Israelites had an obligation to share their wealth by providing for the poor and the distressed (Num. 15:15; Deut. 14:28-29). The Old Testament also demonstrates that

sometimes even the righteous face poverty and sickness (Job 1:13-19). Although the Old Testament generally views material blessings as a sign of God's favor, it also admits that even the wicked can become prosperous through sinful means (Ps. 73). The Old Testament even warns against the perils of riches (Prov. 23:4-5; Eccl. 5:8-17).

The New Testament focuses more on eternal riches rather than earthly possessions. It indicates that Jesus and many of his disciples were not very affluent (Lk. 2:21-24; Mt. 8:20). Jesus reiterates the Old Testament concern for the needy and destitute in his teachings (Mt. 25:31-46). The early Christians paid heed to the teachings of Christ and took the responsibility of taking care of the poor seriously (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-5:11). Apostle Paul warns against the temptations of riches and encourages generous giving (Eph. 5:5; 1 Tim. 6:5, 9-11; 2 Cor. 8 & 9). The Epistles condemn all kinds of covetousness and greed

(Col. 3:5; 1 Pet. 5:2; Jude 11). Overall, the New Testament stresses that one should work towards storing up treasures in heaven rather than striving for earthly wealth (Mt. 6:19-20). So, God never promises that he will always prosper his children financially.

We need to affirm that God does meet the needs of his people and sometimes even blesses them financially. However, wealth should not be the focus of believers. The Bible also emphasizes self-denial, sacrifice, contentment, and suffering for the sake of the gospel. These aspects are not taught adequately by the proponents of the 'prosperity gospel.' Moreover, Jesus does not teach us to seek material prosperity. Rather, he exhorts us to consider the cost of being his disciple (Lk. 14:25-34). God does bless his followers so that they can be a blessing to others. However, one should not seek God merely for material prosperity. Even if a believer has

to experience poverty due to persecution or any other unavoidable situation, he or she should be content and remain faithful to God realizing that God himself is our inheritance and joy!

While it is not true that God wants every Christian to prosper materially, it is equally not true that God wants his people to live in abject poverty throughout their lives. In denouncing the teaching on material prosperity, we should be careful not to advocate poverty as a means to achieve godliness. The Bible does not teach that Christians should live an ascetic life. Rather, the Bible encourages a strong work ethic (2 Thess. 3:10; Eph. 4:28). God expects his people to work hard and support their families (1 Tim. 5:8). Scripture teaches that Christians should give generously (2 Cor. 9:6). In fact, generous and sacrificial giving is a good antidote for greed and covetousness. Furthermore, Scripture also tells us that we need to be content with what we have (Php. 4:11-13). The Bible

does not encourage limitless greed which some of the modern proponents of the 'prosperity gospel' seem to be advocating. Since the Bible repeatedly warns against riches, it is advisable to seek neither poverty nor riches (Prov. 30:8-9). I think that Proverbs 30:8-9 offers an excellent alternative to the 'prosperity gospel' teaching. Preachers and teachers of the Word must strive to maintain balance in their teaching on wealth. Instead of incessantly working up our faith to become rich, we must first seek God's kingdom and his righteousness (Mt. 6:33), strive to know God (Php. 3:10), love him and people (Mk. 12:30-31), be transformed into the likeness of his Son (Rom. 8:29), and make him known to the ends of the earth (Mt. 28:18-20). This is our great calling. May we press on towards this glorious goal!



**Rev. Dr. David Mende**

*Rev. Dr. David Mende serves as the Lead Pastor at El-Shaddai Assembly of God Church, Hyderabad (elshaddaiag.in). He also serves as an adjunct faculty member at Southern Asia Bible College (SABC) in Bangalore, Hyderabad Institute of Theology and Apologetics (HITHA) in Hyderabad, and SUM Bible College & Theological Seminary in California, USA. He has authored seven books, including *The Dangers of the Health and Wealth Gospel*.*

*He is married to Sis. Susan Mende, who is also actively serving the Lord. They are blessed with a daughter, Karis Ruth. Dr. Mende can be reached at +91 9848004094 and [davemende@gmail.com](mailto:davemende@gmail.com).*

*"In the world you will have tribulation.  
But take heart; I have overcome the world."  
John 16:33*

# Intercessory Prayer Points



October 2022

**1 SATURDAY** Thank God for the new month. Pray that God would bless you and your family with many blessings that you may be a blessing to others in return.

Pray that every senior citizen of our country may get a dignified life and a loving home. Pray for the care givers too, to serve them with compassion and grace.

**2 SUNDAY** International day of non-violence (Gandhi Jayanthi). Pray that every citizen of India would uphold and value non-violence. Pray for peace and prosperity for our nation.

**3 MONDAY** 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.

**4 TUESDAY** 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.

**5 WEDNESDAY** 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.

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

**7 FRIDAY** 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.

**8 SATURDAY** 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.

**9 SUNDAY** Pray for the Art of Survival's Training of Trainers at New Delhi on the 19th of this month. Pray that the training would be meaningful and blessed.

Pray for focused, clarity and discernment for those working for the new CEEFI curriculum. Pray that the revamped curriculum would be meaningful, easy to learn and children would love study the Word of God through them.

**10 MONDAY** Pray for Punjab Mobile Bible Training programs scheduled during this month in Nadala, Khanna, Kharar, Phagwara, Malout, Amritsar, Mehtapur and Ludhiana. Pray for the Trainers that the Holy Spirit would give them instructed tongues as they teach and train leaders.

**11 TUESDAY** 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.

**12 WEDNESDAY** 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.

**13 THURSDAY** 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.

**14 FRIDAY** Pray for Punjab. Pray for

God's servants to be strengthened despite many obstacles and challenges. Pray that the churches may grow.

**15 SATURDAY** 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.

**16 SUNDAY** Pray for all the worshippers today as they gather to honor, praise and worship Jesus Christ. Pray that God's kingdom may be extended and many dying souls will receive salvation.

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

**18 TUESDAY** 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.

**19 WEDNESDAY** 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.

**20 THURSDAY** 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.

**21 FRIDAY** 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.

**22 SATURDAY** Pray for the Leadership Development Seminar organized by EFI and Billy Graham Evangelistic Association at Delhi next month. Pray that Pastors, Church Leaders and full-time ministry workers would be encouraged and strengthened through this seminar.

**23 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.

**24 MONDAY** Pray for Tamil Nadu. Pray for spiritual renewal for believers in the state.

**25 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.

**26 WEDNESDAY** 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.

**27 THURSDAY** Pray for Kerala today that believers would have fresh desires and commitment to God, His Word and His Church. Pray that lives may be transformed through study and obedience of God's Word.

**28 FRIDAY** 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.

**29 SATURDAY** 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.

**30 SUNDAY** 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 MONDAY** Thank God for His persevering love and His shepherd heart. He has been mindful of all needs. Praise and thank God for the new month ahead of us.

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**EFI North East centre is located in the heart of Guwahati city. The centre is open for members of EFI and those recommended by EFI members and can be used for conducting seminars, workshops, retreats or even for accommodation during transit.**

Please contact:

**Rev. T. P. Modecai**

Associate Secretary - North East India

M.: **+91 94360 33363**

Email id: **tpmordecai@gmail.com**

Address: **EFI North East Centre**, K.B. Road,  
Paltan Bazar, Guwahati, Assam – 781 008

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