

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF EFI PUBLICATION TRUST

aim

FEBRUARY 2023 ❖ PAGES 63 ❖ ₹ 20/-

A Journey of Faith





One in God; Together for Good.

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A Journey of Faith

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Vol. 52 / No. 02
 AIM Annual Subscription for
 India, Nepal & Bhutan Rs. 200/-
 (Other countries \$ 20)

A monthly publication of EFI Publication Trust

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Back Cover (Color) :	Rs. 5000/-
Front Inside (Color) :	Rs. 4000/-
Back Inside Page (Color):	Rs. 4000/-
Ordinary Page (B&W) :	Rs. 2000/-
Half Page (B&W) :	Rs. 1200/-
One third Page (B&W) :	Rs. 900/-
Quarter Page (B&W) :	Rs. 500/-

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Online payment details

Name : EFI Publication Trust | Bank : State Bank of India | Account No. **54015789597** | IFSC CODE: **SBIN0040415**
 Branch : Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019

For subscription query call us: 011-26431133; Tele/Fax: 011-26285350, E-mail: aimatefi@gmail.com, website: www.efionline.org

THE TREASURER, EFI PUBLICATION TRUST, 805/92, Deepali, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019.
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Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

The Love of God in the midst of turmoil

Each one of us thinks she or he is bowed and burdened with problems. But consider this: the world today faces numerous challenges, from the global to the very local. They range in severity from climate change, which seems to threaten the very existence of life on the planet, to economic and political inequality that may bring nations to the brink of civil war. Religious intolerance, racism and caste have caused immense bloodshed, creating hate and fear in the hearts of people who now look at their neighbour with trepidation and suspicions.

For many across the globe,

amidst all the chaos and confusion, there is one constant that remains: the Holy Love of God.

Social challenges such as poverty, homelessness, and hunger can be traced to a lack of access to necessities such as food, water, and healthcare, things that could easily be made available if it were not for the persisting unequal distribution of wealth. A report from Oxfam, for instance, shows that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, creating a sense of injustice and desperation among those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. It is disturbing

to note that over 40% of India's wealth lies in the hands of the top 1%.

Surely the founding mothers and fathers of our nation did not envision this future for our country.

Global issues have an impact on each family. Unemployment is on the rise in the world, and many layoffs are reported worldwide. The International Labour Organization has warned in a report that “global unemployment will rise by 3 million for a total of 208 million this year with similar projections for 2024,”. Our own unemployment rate surged to 8.3% in December 2022, the highest in 16 months.

Families are struggling to make ends meet. As the cost of living increasing, it forces families, who are already struggling, closer to the edge. Tensions rise within and impact the young. This, in turn, is leading to increased levels of crime, from domestic violence to murder on the street.

Communal and sectarian

challenges are perhaps the most worrying of all. Religious intolerance and prejudice are on the rise, leading to increased conflict and violence in many parts of the world. This is particularly true in regions where different religious communities live in proximity, sometimes competing for scarce domestic resources. The result is a world increasingly divided along religious lines. Harmony, even fraternity goes for a toss in this dystopian scenario.

We see this noir social landscape in our own country where targeted hate has become normalised in the toxic political and social discourse. The politicizing of religion and the religionizing of politics has been used by every political party in India to mobilize masses and build vote banks, with disastrous consequences.

We saw this during the Christmas season in Chhattisgarh when mobs attacked hapless Christian tribals in different villages of the Bastar region. The terrified men and women were beaten up,

looted, and chased away from their homes. There has been little to no action by the law enforcement agencies or the government because now, religious minorities seem to be seen as a liability by all political parties.

Despite these challenges, we have a hope as a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls (Hebrews 6:19) because of God and His Holy Love. When we are overwhelmed by our situations, it can be easy to forget that God is with us and that He loves us unconditionally. We need to remember that regardless of our circumstances, His love for us never changes but gives us the strength to endure, and the courage to face whatever obstacles come our way.

The love of God is not only a central aspect of the Christian faith and a profound mystery that has been the subject of contemplation and study for centuries, but a divine attribute that is fundamental to God's very nature.

The Bible teaches that God is love (1 John 4:8) and that this love is expressed in his self-giving on the cross (John 3:16). Through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, God demonstrates his love for humanity and offers salvation to all who believe in him. This 'agape' love of God is characterized by a willingness to give without expecting anything in return, and it is this love that God has for all his creation, and not just to mankind.

God's love is also a source of comfort and strength for believers, bringing them hope, encouragement and providing the foundation for a meaningful and fulfilling life. Even though the Love of God is a mystery that cannot be fully understood, it is a reality that can be fully experienced through faith in Jesus Christ and a relationship with the Triune God.

However, to experience the fullness of God's love, we must be willing to let go of our fears and doubts. We must be willing to trust in His goodness and to surrender our lives to Him. When

we do this, we will find that God's love is more than enough to carry us through even the toughest of times.

The Bible frequently speaks about the importance of maintaining a steadfast love for God and staying true to one's faith. Revelation 2:4-5 says, "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first."

These verses were a warning to the church in Ephesus, which had grown complacent in their love for God. The people were encouraged to remember the passion and devotion they once had, and to renew their commitment to Him. We will do well to remember that the Church in Ephesus was a persecuted Church and in a setting that was hostile to the Gospel. The Church was also in a pluralistic setting and was under temptation to sell itself to the political powers of the city. They are reminded not to forsake their first love.

To remember our first love is to return to our original love and devotion for God, and to rekindle the passion and joy that comes from a close relationship with Him. It means putting aside distractions and focusing on Him, seeking to deepen our relationship with Him through prayer, worship, and obedience to His will.

In John 14:15, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Loving God involves not just feeling love for Him, but also actively living out that love through obedience to His commands and teachings.

Obedying Him may cost us dearly, sometimes by putting us on the wrong side of the powers that be, but it ultimately brings a deep sense of fulfilment and purpose to our lives. So let us remember our first love and return to the basics of faith and rediscover the love and joy that comes from a close relationship with God, which enables us to face everything with hope and confidence.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal

Remembering our True Love

Dr. Shantanu Dutta



Stories and visuals sometimes say it better. Recently, I heard a sermon which alluded to the movie "51 Dates" to make its point. In the film, Henry Roth, a veterinarian falls in love with Lucy, a visiting tourist and wants to woo her. But after an accident, some years later, Lucy only has short term memory. When she wakes up in the morning after a night's sleep, she has forgotten all about the previous day and what happened then. Henry thus, has to start wooing her all over again the following day as Lucy remembers nothing of their past conversations. Over time, Henry has to devise new and creative ways to re-win Lucy's love and as he gets to know her more and more, he becomes more and more adept in his courtship.

The sermon went on to point out that when it comes to Jesus, we, His followers also have frequent memory loss and He has to win our love and allegiance over and over again, day after day, and year after year. Of course, this is vividly illustrated in the Old Testament, where repeatedly God has to remind the people of Israel of what He has done for them and what He expects in return, but betrayal is what He gets over and over again. But true to His nature, He never stops pursuing and wooing. That is the God we worship. The heart of our Christian faith is the love of God. Love is the heart of God; it is stronger than death and it never fails. God does not suffer from memory loss. He remains faithful even as we forget, falter, fall, fail.

Forgetting has always been a real problem for God's people. Now there are several reasons why Christians suffer spiritual short-term memory loss. For one thing, we are human beings with weak, fallen minds. We do genuinely forget things that we've just learned. But forgetting can also be due to an active rebellion in our hearts. Our sinful hearts can jettison the truth from our minds and replace it with lies. Or, we really aren't committing truth to memory, nor paying attention to the important things in life.

Just look at the Old Testament. I think it's fair to say that the Israelites were nothing short of a mess. The Old Testament chronicles their journey with God and Psalm 50 is an intermediate snapshot. They were an unruly bunch, hypocritical, and temperamental. The phrase "inconsistently consistent" comes to mind. They would take one step forward and then two steps back. If God didn't move fast enough according to their demands, it was no problem. Off to idol worship or other disobedient revelry, they would go. And then when everything fell apart, as it always did, they'd cry out to God for forgiveness and restoration. So, from time-to-

time, God's response would be to send them to a thinking chair, manifested as oppression, nomadic uncertainty, or another struggle. God is in-charge; a fact often lost on the Israelites. Nevertheless, through it all, God continued rescuing them from the clutches of permanent demise. No matter their folly, God's reply was always rooted in love -- love not always easily understood by mere mortals, but love still. It's been said, "Most men forget God all day and ask God to remember them at night." The Israelites were caught red-handed in this transgression thousands of years ago, just as we are also guilty today.

The crucial importance of remembrance recurs throughout the Bible. On the horizon of his own death, Moses entreats the people whom he's shepherded for forty years to *"take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life"* (Deuteronomy 4:9).

Moses's plea draws from his own memories: he witnessed the idolatry into which his people sank when they forgot God's care for them in the wilderness. God

freed them from slavery, parted the seas for them, and provided food from heaven and water from stone. Yet, so distractible is the human mind, and so ingrained our proclivity to sin, that soon they forgot God's steadfast love and placed their hope in things forged by their own hands (Exodus 32:3–4). When we forget God, we stumble astray of the path he founds for us. When we remember him, our natural response is worship.

Remembrance as worship not only glorifies God, but also gives life when we struggle with affliction. In Psalm 77, Asaph laments, *"Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love forever ceased?"* (Psalm 77:7–8) In the midst of his turmoil, Asaph derives assurance from his memory of God's provision: *"Then I said, 'I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.' I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old"* (Psalm 77:10–11).

But the responsibility to remember is not solely an institutional one. Moses's plea rang out to every Israelite within

hearing. Jesus taught over a meal, in the company of those closest to him. As each of us considers our past, we too are individually called to remember God. His character. His provision. His marvelous deeds in the Bible, and also along the winding course of our own lives. When we view our memories through the lens of the gospel, we see God's grace at work, revealed in moments that suddenly take on new depth, meaning, and nuance that exceed the limited capacities of our senses. If we have no memory, we are adrift—because Biblical memory anchors us to the past, interprets the present, and charts a course for the future. So, let us not forget to remember.



Dr. Shantanu Dutta

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Celebration of Love

Mr. Chacko Thomas

"The greatest doctrine in the Bible is Love" George Verwer

"The God we are looking for is Loving, Pure, Just, Powerful, Eternal and above all Personal – INTERESTED IN US." Mike Hencher

Valentine's Day: The world celebrates "love" this month, on February 14th to be precise. It is easy for us to dismiss Valentine Day as a pagan practice. But for the people who receive a card, flower, a visit from people on this day, it is a welcome day, it is a very special day. And to the ones who give to bless someone in these ways must be even more special. As the Lord said, "it is more blessed to give ...". Our

world is starving for love. The love deficit is all around us.

I am not suggesting that we take on wholesale Valentine's Day, but if my spirituality only consists of not observing certain special days or things that I did not do, I am found lacking before God who weighs my life, as Daniel rebuked Belshazzar (Dan.5:27).

Many good things, even if paganised in the process, have their roots in Christian love. Here are a few other examples I was surprised to learn: Football, Embassies, Red Cross, Hospices, Polytechnic Institutes, Colleges, Hospitals, Beer to improvise strong vine, Orphanages, Old Age Homes,

Disability privileges, to name a few. They exist due to Christian values and influences on our world. Christianity does more than save souls, it is more than a mere religion. It gives dignity to all. It puts smiles on people's faces, a spring in their heels. It elevates burdens and suffering, lifts people from oppression. We are not darkness, but light of the world.

St. Valentine, the Real Story:

"Flowers, candy, red hearts, and romance. That's what Valentine's Day is all about, right? Well, maybe not. The origin of this holiday for the expression of love really isn't romantic at all—at least not in the traditional sense.

"St. Valentine was a Priest at a time when there was an emperor called Claudias who persecuted the church at that particular time. He also had an edict that prohibited the marriage of young people. This was based on the hypothesis that unmarried soldiers fought better than married soldiers because married soldiers might be afraid of what might happen to them or their wives or families if they died."

"It was a very permissive society in which Valentine lived... Polygamy would have been much more popular than just one woman and one man living together. And yet, some of them seemed to be attracted to Christian faith. But obviously, the church thought that marriage was very sacred between one man and one woman for their life and that it was to be encouraged. And so, it immediately presented the problem to the Christian church of what to do about this."

"The idea of encouraging them to marry within the Christian church was what Valentine was about. And he secretly married them because of the edict. Valentine was eventually caught, imprisoned, and tortured for performing marriage ceremonies against the command of Emperor Claudius the Second. ..." He became a Christian martyr. (Wikipedia, adapted)

God is Love: Although the actual words "God is Love" come only towards the end of the Bible (1 John 4:8, for good reasons I believe), it is a prominent attribute of God described throughout the Bible. God is a balanced Being

and easy to live with. Grace and Truth are found in Him. So is Holiness and Love.

God's love is the most pure, unselfish, self-sacrificing, and eternal love. It is better than a mother's love. Or father's love, as our Lord pointed it out in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24.)

In answer to Moses' request "Show me your glory" we see that the Lord passed in front of him. We are not told of what he saw of God, if anything. But we know what the Triune God, declared. "The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unending love and faithfulness. I lavish unending love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. ... "(Exodus 34:5-7 NLT. Please compare this verse with Jeremiah 9:223-24.) God is Love.

Once I had the privilege of leading a Bible study on Genesis 1, on the Creation story, or better the Creator's story. I asked the class to pick up an attribute of God from the account Creation in Genesis 1. A first-generation

follower of the Lord from a Brahmin background, a medical student, raised her hand and said, "God is Love" because He made us in His own image". I was delighted.

We can see that "God is love" from the Ten Commandments. They were given at least 3500 years ago written by the finger of God and given to Moses on the mountain, Sinai. How many millions of lives would these commandments have saved, for time and eternity? I can only imagine!

One loving and lifesaving Commandment for India and South Asia, for example, is the Fourth Commandment. It is the longest of all the Ten Commandments. It looks back to Creation, it is based on God's example. It is for the good of humanity. This Commandment has been praised as the first ever labour law. You can see God's love for all creation in it. He loves the animals, female and male servants, girls and boys, men, and women, he loves the family. Below is the fourth Commandment from Exodus 20: 8-11:

'Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labour and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. "(Exodus 20:8-11 NLT).

Christian leaders leading with Love:

If God is leading us in Love, what choice do we Christian leaders have, but to lead with Love? A couple with young children in Singapore found themselves more and more involved in pastoral work while holding down good jobs. Recently, the wife wrote and asked me to give five points of advice to aspiring pastors. The scene of our Lord asking Peter three times, "Do you love me ...?" came to mind. Shepherds need to be lovers, loving God and loving the sheep.

Dr J. N. Manokaran has provided

us with a review on Alexander Strauch's book, "A Christian Guide to Leading with Love" (available in India). Below are some extracts from it, pardon me for quoting almost half of the review. "There are many books on Christian Leadership focusing on vision, mission, knowledge, skills...etc. However, the author Alexander Strauch has brought to focus the core of Christian leadership that is love.

"Love produces joy, creativity, responsiveness, and energy. ... "Unlove is deadly. It is a cancer. It may kill slowly but it always kills in the end." (Page 22) It is deadlier than a cobra.

"Leaders with love have the mindset of humility that makes them more teachable, more receptive to constructive criticism, able to work in a team, willing to submit to others, quick to reconcile and qualified to deal with people's failures. C.S. Lewis was available to scholars and children. Met all kinds of people. Personally, wrote to thousands of people. He said: "It was through Pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice; it is completely anti-God state of mind." (Page 59)

"Loving people are full of gratitude, and they express it openly." (Page 92) God is verbal, hence leading with love means to be generous with our words of praise and thanks. People should not be guessing what the leader thinks, they should hear from leaders. "The church should be a place where people express love and appreciation, thank one another, and encourage one another." (Page 93)

"Hospitality is a ministry outflow of leaders who lead with love. Martin Luther used his table as a splendid pulpit. "Shepherding people cannot be done from a distance." (Page 101) John and Edith Haywards hosted Bakht Singh for three years in Winnipeg, Canada. They helped him to mature, learn important life lessons, making commitment, accepting the Bible as the Word of God, the importance of hospitality, prayer and doing God's will in all things. Bakht Singh led a great church planting movement that brought thousands to His fold. (Page 105)

Love is demonstrated in compassion. "Compassion is the empathy, the tender emotion a

person feels when confronted with another person's suffering, coupled with the desire to relieve the suffering." (Page 107) The Good Samaritan did all for a man he did not know, without any promise of reward. Love of Christ compels us to deny ourselves to meet the need of others.

"Loving leadership is incomplete without intercessory prayer." (Page 117) Leading with love means to pray for others. In prayer: we take their burdens upon ourselves; we intercede before God for them; we commit ourselves to their wellbeing. We demonstrate true care and compassion. Everything we do in the Christian life is easier than prayer. To improve our praying, it is essential to increase our loving. "Lack of intercessory prayer is not only a sign of lovelessness, it is an indication of our failure to see the dark spiritual realities surrounding us." (Page 120) Failure to pray is negligence of ministry.

"Good shepherds love their sheep and spare no effort when leading them to green pastures and clear water. For the lazy shepherd, however, any pasture

or water hole will do." (Page 125) People are moved emotionally when they see children are starving. Love cannot bear the spiritual poverty as people starve for Word of God. "Whether we are defending, proclaiming, instructing, or informally sharing divine truth with others, we must always wrap it in love." (Page 131)

"Like sheep, people are prone to go astray. Shepherds at every level are needed in the church to protect from the savage attack of wolves. Seeking those who go astray, speaking to them with gentleness and love, and being guided by the Holy Spirit will lead to healing and restoration. "Christian love demands action-even painful action-to save a sinning member and an entire church." (Page 152) We are our brother's keepers.

"Love of God in our life is evidenced by obedience. Obedience is a condition to have fellowship with God. "If we do not teach and model obedience, we will not teach and model Christian love. We cannot rightly talk about love without addressing obedience. Love can

grow only if it is rooted in the soil of true obedience." (Page 184)

"This is an excellent book for all Christian leaders to be reminded once again that the call and core of leadership is love."

May the Lord make Indian Christianity a loving fellowship. Let us celebrate love every day of our lives. 1 Corinthians 13 love. Love is our trademark.



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

Loving What You Should Be Shoving? Loving What You Should Be Loathing?

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj



In 2014, a movie released in India titled, PK. Amitabh Varma's Hindi Lyrics featured in a particular song from that movie, went this way (translated into English loosely):

(Boy to girl)

Looking at you, continuously
I keep on listening to your jibber-
jabber

Forgetting all my work
I keep on just following you
This is a waste of time
Love is a waste of time

Still I have thought to myself
That once in my lifetime
I can go for 'this waste of time'
Love is a waste of time...

Young people fall in love very well

knowing that falling in love is a waste of time. But, it is also true that we love 'wasteful' things.

The greatest command in the Bible is of course this command: Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matt. 22:37-38).

The tragedy of our time is this: we love many-a-thing, but we don't

love God! We love what we should shove! That's sad!

The Bible talks about people loving the wrong thing on various occasions. Let us journey through the pages of Scripture to figure this out, so that we would be wary of these 'waste of time' loves.

The Love of Silver

Michael Douglas, in the 1987 movie, Wall-Street, said this: "Greed, for the lack of a better word is good. Greed is right. Greed works." Yes, we live in a world where the love of silver, the love of money in other words, is considered good. But, the Bible is categorical when it says, "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10).

How do we exhibit love for money as a believer? We skip our quiet time with God to work extra-time in our workplace so that we could make some more money! That is love of money in action! How do we show-forth love of money as preachers? We preach things that tickle the ears of our listeners so that they would give us big offerings instead of preaching the unadulterated Word of God!

Do you love gold instead of God? Don't. Do you love silver instead of the Savior? Don't. Don't love what you should shove! Don't love what you should loathe!

The love of STONES

Prophet Jeremiah explains this strange love of the people of Judah. They say, "I love foreign gods and I must go after them" (Jer. 2:25, NIV). Which foreign God did they love? They loved Baal, the Prophet Jeremiah had clarified just two verses above (Jer. 2:23). Instead of worshipping the living God who was called the Rock (1 Sam. 2:2), the people of Judah not just worshipped stones, but loved these lifeless objects as well.

Anything that takes the place of God in our life is an idol – we know that. Do we love such stones in our lives? These stones could be the gadgets we own, the gardens we have planted, the ministry we do! Let us not love what we shove! Let us not love what we should loathe!

The love of SENSUALITY

The naughty boy was told this by this flirty aunty: "Come let's drink deep of love till morning; Let's

enjoy ourselves with love!" (Prov. 7:18). This woman's husband had gone for a long trip and would not return in a hurry (Prov. 7:19,20). So, she filled her loneliness with a sinful love for sensuality. But the problem is this: you will never find in sin, what you entered sin to find (as someone said)! After the experience of sensuality is done and dusted, a gaping vacuum soon envelops the heart – does it not? Do you love to obey whatever your body says you must do because you are lover so sensuality? For example, when your body says, "Watch porn when you are alone", do you obey your Body even after knowing that what you do will displease the Lord because you have read 2 Samuel 11:27? Let's not love what we shove! Let's not love what we should loathe!

The love of your UNSAVED SWEETHEART

Let's talk to King Solomon. Let's interview him. "Solomon, whom did you love in your first phase of life as a king?" He would reply this: "The Lord! Have you not read I Kings 3:3?" That verse goes this way: "Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking

according to the statutes of his father David". One note-worthy statute for the kings of Israel was this: they must not take many wives lest their hearts be led astray (Duet. 17:17).

But as the second phase of his life dawned, the Bible has this to say about King Solomon: 'King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love..' (I Kings 11:1-2).

Do you stubbornly love your unsaved sweetheart with a plan to marry her/him soon hoping that she/he will become a believer though your influence? Stop! I Corinthians 7:39 is clear: a person who is already a believer, marries a believer! Let's not love what we shove! Let's not love what we should loathe!

The love of SLEEP

We loathe what we should love,

and love what you should loathe! What a sad route we have taken in life! There are those who love Sleep as the Proverbs Pen Man records, "Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; Stay awake and you'll have food to spare" (Prov. 20:13). Late-rising, Sleep-Loving King David eventually fell into sexual sin (I Sam. 11:2). Matthew Henry, the ace Bible commentator wrote, "The bed of sloth is very often the bed of lust," so wrote the Great Bible Commentator, Matthew Henry. Let's not love what we shove! Let's not love what we should loathe! If I had not sacrificed sleep, many of my Bible-teaching articles would have never been written (including this one)!

The love of STRIFE

One of the writers of the Psalms, writes about another kind of love, the kind that God hates, this way: 'The Lord examines both the righteous and the wicked; his very being hates anyone who loves violence' (Psa. 11:5). Are we not like the people of Ephraim? In Judges 8:1, they pick up a fight. In Judges 12:1, they pick up yet another fight. They use these uncouth words in their angry rant here: "We will

burn your house over you with fire!" This tribe seems to be always fighting! They love strife it looks like! Let us not love what we should be shoving like them! Let's not love what we should loathe, like the folks of Ephraim! Instead, let us strive to be peace-makers! Instead, let us get involved in the ministry of reconciliation! Instead, let us proclaim the Gospel of Peace (Eph. 6:15).

The love of STORIES

Prophet Jeremiah talks about the people of Judah who were "story-lovers", that is, lie-lovers! He writes, 'The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and **my people love it this way**. But what will you do in the end?' (Jer. 5:31). What lies did the prophets of Jeremiah's time, utter? They lied about the length of the exile. These 'story-tellers' said that the exile would last the length of just two years (Jer. 28:11,15,16) when God had clearly said it would be for 70 long years (Jer. 25:9-13).

There are false teachers in our time who also tell us stories. Stories, such as these: "hell punishment is not forever!; Lies such as these: "You can cross-

over from hell to heaven!" Deceiving words such as these: "Grace is there, so keep sinning!" What is worse is this: some people love such stories. What is appalling is this: some believers love such lies.

Let me refute just one lie from the above-mentioned list of lies: the lie concerning the length of hell punishment. Read Romans 16:26 and Matthew 25:46. Both the verses have the word 'eternal'. In Romans, that word is prefixed before the word 'God' and in Matthew, the same word is prefixed before the word, 'punishment'. If you say that punishment of hell won't be eternal then you also have to say, "God is not eternal!" But that is not possible! So, God is eternal! And Hell torment is eternal! And it is a folly to love what you shove! And it is stupidity to love what you should loathe!

The love of SLIPPING STUBBORNLY

Jeremiah's painfully true words express the final 'S' in this list of things we unfortunately perhaps love, instead of loathing: This is what the Lord says about this people: "They greatly love to

wander; they do not restrain their feet.

So the Lord does not accept them; he will now remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins" (Jer. 14:10). The people of Judah to whom Jeremiah ministered, loved to wander away from Yahweh! In the time of Judges, the people of Israel demonstrated their sickening love for slipping away by repeating the seemingly endless cycle of sin, bondage, deliverance following repentance, and peace!

This attitude of loving backsliding is dangerous. Why? There is no surety that we will ever come back to God if we choose to go away from him. Both Judas and Peter went away from Jesus. Only Peter chose to come back. Judas did not come back, mind you. He chose stubbornness along with his sin. And that proved to be catastrophic for him! Let's not love what we should loathe! Let's not love what we should shove!

It is my prayer that you stop your love for the wrong thing this Valentine Day season! Instead,

you will choose to love the Lord the way Isaiah loved Yahweh! Prophet Isaiah called God his Well-beloved (KJV)/my Greatly Beloved Lord(AMP)/the One I Love(CSB)/My Darling(WFC) in Isaiah 5:1! Let's copy him!



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graciously opened doors for him to preach in over 20 Indian states and in a few other nations, by invitation, with the organisers paying for the travel, right from the first time Duke preached, as a school boy of 16, in the year 1991. He has authored three books: 1. Straight Talk (Sex, Love, Marriage, Porn, Phone Addiction, married-sex, etc., – what the Bible says), 2. Daniel in Dell (practical study of the book of Daniel for modern working professionals), 3. Goodnews for the Google Generation (the Gospel presented the way Jesus did in Luke 13 and the way Paul did in Acts 17). Reach him via emailduke@gmail.com or WhatsApp, +91-8886040605, in case you want to buy these or have a question. Duke is married to Evangelin, An Odisha Missionary's daughter who post grad diploma from SAIACS in Biblical Leadership, and this couple are blessed with two children – Dale, 19, St. Stephens Delhi, and Datasha, 15, Class X.]

*Humble yourselves,
therefore, under God's mighty hand,
that he may lift you up in due time.
Cast all your anxiety on him
because he cares for you.
1 Peter 5:6-7*

Put on Love

Rev. Dr. David Mende



Introduction

I came across this interesting story of a pastor, who earlier served as a police officer which was published in a devotional:

Ken Robinson, who is now a pastor, at one time served as a police officer. He said people treated him differently when he was in uniform than when he was off duty and wearing plain clothes. Something about the badge and "blues" gained him instant respect and authority.

He was often addressed as "Sir." When he told people something, they believed him. And when he gave an order, they were quick to obey. Robinson concluded, "I guess the clothes made the

difference. And in uniform, I acted with more confidence."

Then, the author of the devotional goes on to write, "In Colossians 3, the apostle Paul told followers of Christ to put on a new uniform. First he described the clothes we are to "put off" (Col 3:8, 9). Then he told us what kind of uniform we are to "put on" (Col 3:12, 13, 14). In place of anger, wrath, slander, dirty language, and lies, we are to put on mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. Most people respond positively to someone with these virtues. Their respect grows, they talk and act differently toward such a person. They listen to his words, acknowledge his authority, and

are drawn to the God he represents. What you wear makes a big difference. So, ask yourself this question: Do I have my spiritual uniform on?"

That's a good question, isn't it? As we are aware, the world celebrates Valentine's Day on the 14th of this month, but people seem to have forgotten the true essence of love. However, the Scriptures remind us to love one another with God's love. In this article, let's meditate on the spiritual attire that the Lord wants us to wear which is mentioned in Colossians 3:12-14. Based on these exhortations of the apostle Paul, I have entitled this article, **'Put on Love.'**

Paul himself probably did not visit Colossae, but his fellow worker Epaphras seems to have brought the gospel to this city. Epaphras visited Apostle Paul while he was in prison and he probably told him about the false teachings that were circulating in the church at Colossae (1:7-8). So, the apostle Paul writes this letter to refute these false teachings. In 3:5-4:6, Paul gives them certain instructions for the Christian life. In 3:12-17, Paul exhorts the

Colossians to put on the virtues of Christ. In 3:12-14, Paul says that we must put on godly virtues which help us to forgive one another, and above all the virtues, we must put on love.

1. We must put on godly virtues.

In Colossians 3:12, apostle Paul writes, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." Earlier, the Colossians were "alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds" (1:21). But they were redeemed by Christ through his sacrificial death on the cross. Now, the apostle Paul describes New Testament believers using Old Testament terms for Israel (cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 1 Pet. 2:9). The term "holy" means that they were set apart for God. They must live differently. As God's people, we must live differently. We must not live like the rest of the world.

Also, Paul says that the Colossians are "beloved." We too are deeply loved by God. The word "beloved" is in the perfect tense in Greek, which signifies a completed action in the past with

present effect. God's love for us is enduring and steady. It doesn't fluctuate. When we sin, we displease God but he continues to love us. And since he loves us, he disciplines us when we sin (Heb. 12:6). We must know our identity in Christ.

In those days, Jewish writers would speak of putting on virtues. They would also mention some virtues in contrast to vices as Paul does here (cf. vv. 5, 8; Gal. 5:19-23). Since God chose the Colossians because of his sovereign grace, Paul encourages them to put on godly virtues. This list is similar to the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. God possesses all these qualities and he calls the Colossians and us to reflect them. He calls us to live a holy life that is consistent with our new identity in Christ. In verses 5 and 8, Paul exhorts the Colossians to put away sin. Now, he encourages them to put on godly virtues. In verse 10, he speaks of the new nature. Now, he explains what he means by the new nature.

All these virtues deal with our interpersonal relationships.

Christianity is about community. The Christian life is not just about your relationship with God. It's also about how you treat others. Our spirituality and maturity can be measured in terms of our relationships with one another. In Greek, the phrase "put on" is in the aorist imperative, which indicates a sense of urgency. We have to act toward others just as God in Christ acted toward us. Man was created in God's image, but due to man's sin, that image is marred. But since we are a new creation now, we must reflect our new nature in the new community called Church. Brothers and sisters, if we have these five virtues, there will be no place for friction. All these virtues are manifestations of love.

"Compassionate hearts" refers to tenderness toward those who are suffering. Jesus showed compassion for the suffering while he was on this earth. "Kindness" refers to goodness or graciousness. A kind person does good for others. In Romans 11:22, it is contrasted with "severity." In Galatians 5:2, kindness is one of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit. "Humility" and "meekness"

are interrelated. Pagans didn't consider these qualities as virtues. But we are called to reflect God's nature. Christ is the role model for humility (Phil. 2:3-8). Humility is about putting the interest of others before ours. The Greek word, *prautes*, translated as meekness here can also be translated as gentle. "Meekness" is the opposite of pride and self-assertiveness. Even Christ was meek (Mt. 11:29). Gentleness is also a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). The people who belong to the kingdom are meek (Mt. 5:5).

"Patience" refers to the ability to bear wrong without retaliating. It can be literally translated as "long temper." Patient people refuse to be provoked. Patience is an attribute of God (Rom. 2:4). Also, it's a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). We must put on all these godly virtues.

2. We must bear with one another and forgive one another.

In Colossians 3:13, Paul goes on to write, "bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." The Colossians are

not supposed to tolerate false teachings. But they are called to be tolerant towards one another. Paul elaborates his discussion on the virtue of patience by mentioning that we have to bear with one another and forgive one another. Apostle Paul often uses these two verbs, bearing and forgiving, in his epistles. When we are together, we can see the weaknesses of one another. That's why we must learn to put up with one another. In Greek, the word "bearing" is in the present tense, which indicates that we must continue bearing with one another. God forgave us (2:13) and we have to forgive one another. When we are wronged by others, we must forgive others just as Christ forgave us. If we put on the virtues mentioned in verse 12, we will be able to bear one another and forgive one another.

Again, in Greek, the word "forgiving" is in the present tense, which indicates that we must continue forgiving each other. Bearing one another and forgiving one another must be our way of life (cf. Mt. 18:22). We can find an echo of the Lord's prayer here. In Matthew 6:12, Jesus teaches us to pray, "and forgive us our debts, as we also have

forgiven our debtors." Then the Lord goes on to say, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt. 6:14-15). Truly forgiven people forgive others. Since we are forgiven by God, we are obliged to forgive others.

If you find it difficult to forgive others, remember how much God forgave you. How did God forgive us? In Micah 7:19, the Bible says, "He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." God doesn't fish our sins anymore in the sea. Christ forgave us and he forgot our sins and we must do the same. Christ forgave us freely and we must do the same. Don't worry about the wrongs you suffered. Leave it to the Lord. Someone said, "An offense against your neighbor is a fence between you and God." Don't become bitter. Become better by forgiving and living a life of love and joy. We must bear with one another and forgive one another.

3. Above all virtues, we must put on love.

In Colossians 3:14, Paul tells the Colossian believers, "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Jews considered love as an important virtue. But since Christians followed the teaching of the Lord (Mt. 22:34-40), they considered it as the most important virtue. Love unites all the other virtues. It's like an outer garment or the belt that binds all the other virtues. It acts as a bond for all the virtues. It is the foundation of the other virtues. It is larger than all the virtues. It is the greatest of all virtues (1 Cor. 13:13). We have to wear love at all times. Above all virtues, we must put on love.

Conclusion

The big idea of this article is: **Put on godly virtues, especially the virtue of love.**

I read this moving story recently.

Juan Carlos Ortiz led a church in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and wrote a book called, Disciple. At one point, he realized his church was educated beyond their experience. They knew a lot more than they were putting into practice. Many of them were

getting 2 or 3 sermons a week, plus Bible studies in homes. Before they had time to digest and apply one message, they were getting another. He decided it was time for a change.

So one Sunday, he stood up to preach, opened his Bible and read these words of Jesus: "Love one another [Jn 13:34]." Then he sat down—he didn't say anything else, just sat down. The congregation sat there, waiting. So Ortiz got up and said again, "Love one another," and sat down. Now, the congregation began to stir nervously—when was the pastor going to preach? So, Ortiz got up a third time and said, "Love one another," and sat down again.

A man on the first row leaned over to the man next to him and said, "I think the pastor wants us to love one another." Then he asked him, "Is there anything I can do for you?" When his neighbor admitted he was having some financial difficulty, the first man opened his wallet and said, "Let me help you." Soon, all across the auditorium, people were talking and laughing and praying and crying and giving. They were loving one another.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord is calling us to put on godly virtues, especially the virtue of love. Let's put on love!



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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.



In 1991, as a young girl I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. It was not an easy decision on my part, for I was born in a Sikh family. Sikhism is a prevalent and well-respected religion as you would know. My father, an Indian army personnel, was a disciplinary man. I realized my decision to follow Christ would be costly. I and my older sister Anu lived in a hostel away from home. A senior girl in my school, Anita, shared the gospel with us. Even after my sister accepted Christ, I opposed Anita for the message she tried to convey. Finally, at age 17, few months after my sister believed, I accepted Christ. I was studying in 12th grade. When my mother shifted to the town we were studying, she took a house on rent, and we moved with her. It

meant that we could no longer spend quality time with Anita. But I had learned enough from my friend to understand that I needed to listen carefully to what the Bible taught me and what the Holy Spirit revealed to me.

Soon, we shifted to a new city to join my father and the complete family united. Since Anu and I had only one Bible between us, we divided it into two parts, swapping with each other whenever we felt a need. The short time we had spent with Anita prepared us to face the difficult situation we were now facing. When I was down, I sang the few hymns and choruses I had heard Anita sing. We had no church to go to, no fellowship with other believers, so we were entirely dependent on the

teaching from the Holy Spirit. Not allowed to pray in the open and because of lack of privacy in the house, we resorted to spending hours alone with the Bible, locked away in the toilet. It was during those quiet hours that the Lord led me one by one through the various stages of building me spiritually - from confession, forgiveness, reconciliation, and a verse after verse lessons from the Bible.

The family did not give up on trying to reconvert us. They physically assaulted us, took us to a psychiatrist to test our sanity, Sikh evangelists were called in to try to convince us of our folly; even Roman Catholic Priests were summoned to make us change our minds. All had only one purpose: prove to us that the family's Sikh faith was the best for us. But none of their efforts succeeded because, "The Lord held our hand steadfastly and guided us at every point."

The words of the Bible were the only tool that kept my feet grounded. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62) and "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me;

and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me..." (Matt 10:37) kept ringing in my ears whenever doubt or double mindedness rose in me.

God's various promises for my future was my only anchor, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life" (Mat 19:29).

My family separated me from Anu, my sister, and sent me away to my father's native state Punjab, to stay with my relatives, thinking that the environment would somehow break my faith and cause me to see reason. But even there, the Lord vindicated His Name through many signs and wonders that He caused to happen through me. So much so, that the entire village knew about this God of mine to whom I would pray and miracles would happen.

Seven years after my conversion, I was finally introduced to a church. Despite intense family pressure to marry, I waited upon the Lord to bring a Christian [believer] husband into my life. After both our families approved, I

married Vijayesh Lal on 28 January 2002, in Church, with my family by my side. This was another miracle God performed in my life. We have been blessed with three boys – Prakhar [19], Saamarth [14], Arav [8].

The Lord called me into full-time ministry with a revelation – “You must go to places I take you to and tell people what I have done in your life and all that I am about to do.” Since then, it has been 21 years and the Lord has taken me to 5 continents and several cities in them, to speak from my experience, teaching others what God has taught me from His Word and share from its riches.

I began my journalistic career while working with Evangelical Fellowship of India from August 2002, contributing articles, and releasing EFI News, and from there, writing for Compass Direct – a Christian Agency, now known as World Watch Monitor, later as South Asia Editor with Global Christian News. I continued as a Freelance Journalist periodically contributing to Morning Star News, The Media Project, Christianity Today and various agencies. I am presently employed with Christianity Today as their South Asia Editor.

Additionally, God is using me to address women leaders in urban settings and pastor's wives in rural settings, handling key issues that they face in their daily lives, and I travel extensively for the same.

Suffering first-hand persecution myself, I have been closely associated with the Persecuted Church and thus advocate for the cause and liaison with the police on behalf of the victims. The Lord is using me to counsel married woman, couples, children, and youth to guide them in the truth of God's Word.



Ms. Surinder Kaur Lal

is a freelance journalist and a woman leader based in New Delhi. She has been writing on religion, politics and spirituality for the past 21 years and travels as a women speaker within India and abroad. She is the wife of Rev. Vijayesh Lal, General Secretary of EFI and a mother of three lovely sons.



Beyond the Impasse

Dr. Babu John Vettamala

Proclivities of adolescence had still not left Fyodor Dostoevsky when he had a face-to-face encounter with death. This greatest writer of all time had a rather emasculated young age.

The Tsarist regime was threshing over every concept of humanity, and in its iron fist Russia was being crushed like a fragile egg in the hands of a fowler. As resistance against the cruelties of the regime emerged everywhere, radical ring leaders also burgeoned to spear head the cause of the trampled peasant community. "Kill off the Tsars and redeem Russia" was the slogan they aired.

The young Dostoevsky, thrilled by revolutionary ideas, joined these ring leaders, and got in a plot to kill the Monarch.

However, their apple cart was broken when the secret police spotted them and arrested all of them including Dostoevsky.

Then followed a quick trial and an instant verdict – "shoot them to death".

At once the abattoir was ready. The young lads were paraded in the shooting yard with their hands in shackles, feet in fetters and eyes and mouth covered.

Standing in the array, they could hear the clock ticking as they waited for the last order to be read and the gun to trigger. That was the impasse beyond which no one could see anything.

As heart beats went rising and the cold of the snow fall pierced

through them, they knew they had only few more minutes to reach the last breath. They found death in all its ferocity, dancing before them when the galloping of a horse hoof was heard approaching them from distance.

That would be the last verdict, at the pronouncing of which guns would spit fire and these ring leaders would then be no more.

Their minds had already died, and the frozen bodies needed only a bullet to pierce through them.

"SHOOT" was the last word that the gun men were waiting for – but here came the thunder striking voice "STOP".

What! Everybody was shocked. To their surprise, the envoy read out the renewed verdict from the regime which meant – "Pardon them and sent them to Siberia".

Did life come back to us? The ring leaders including Dostoevsky could not believe it. They mustered up their strength back to breathe again as they heard the full reading of the verdict. Somebody in the regime was compassionate about them. Considering the tender age of the youths and foreseeing the possibility of a change in them,

the regime had decided to give them an extend of life. But as penitents, they had to live for many years in the spine-chilling prisons of Siberia, a place notorious for cruelties beyond comprehension. That was worse than death.

Along with his accomplice, Dostoevsky took his long walk to Siberia which took him many days to reach. The vigour of his youth and strength of his body he found, ebbing away.

As he was reaching the gate of the prison that offered him nothing but hopelessness, the dilapidated Dostoevsky heard a cry from behind calling loudly, "stop please".

Dostoevsky found a little girl running fast towards him. She was holding something in her hand which she was struggling to hand over to him. In the end, she made it – it was little book. Dostoevsky took it as he entered into the prison. Frustrated and hopeless, he never tried to look at the book for many days in the end of which he read its title; "THE HOLY BIBLE".

To him, it was the guiding rule of the ruling aristocracy. It had given them impetus to trample over the lives of the poor and the wretched

ones. Why should you read it? He found it abhorring. Days passed; the bare minimum quantity of food that the prison offered made him only hungrier. People who had money could buy more food to eat. But, he was impecunious.

Feeling all the more helpless and miserable, Dostoevsky picked up the Bible he hated, and just for curiosity sake, he decided to see what it held. To his shock, he found in it a currency note of 20 Roubles which the little girl had carefully inserted into the middle of its pages. To Dostoevsky that was enough money to grab an extra bite for his hungry stomach. But more than that, the thought of the little girl and her magnanimity started haunting him. What could be the motivation that prompted the little girl to offer him this undeserving favour? Was this the text that gave her this impetus of love for an unknown man moving to a despicable destiny? He knew not.

Anyway, Dostoevsky began to read the Bible. It didn't take him long to learn the text by heart. In it, he found Jesus, the greatest revolutionist of all time at whose feet Dostoevsky surrendered himself.

In the prison, Dostoevsky found himself emancipated – the

emancipation of the soul. There started the birth of a new Dostoevsky, one of the greatest philosophers, theologians, writers, and scholars of all times.

The little girl could call it a day, as she carried the Word of God to a needy man. Indeed, the need of the hour is the Word of God which alone can save mankind from its inextricable problems. It alone can make life meaningful and worth living. Let us also carry the Word of God towards the suffering human beings around us. Take that mission as the call and challenge of our life.



Dr. Babu John Vettamala, specialised in Biblical Psychology, Management, Law, English literature, Western history and philosophy is presently teaching the Bible and ancient Hebrew. He did M.A, Ph.d, English language and literature. He retired from prolonged professional life-Pastor, Teacher, Speaker, Columnist, and author. He Lives in the U.K with family for the last 25 years.



Love, Living New Beginning!

Mr. Hansraj Jain

Perspectives matter. Asking 24-year-old Deepak, for his take on the term "New Beginning" was a revelation.

After a 5-minute wait to consider my question, Deepak said, "New Beginning means "Resetting".

Deepak is a Software Programmer. His software-driven lingo IDs him.

Deepak continued, "I see it in the context of four 'Ps'. He defined these four "Ps" as a Perspective (*revealing who and how he thinks, hence revelation of his personality!*), as a Professional, his Passions and Purpose that drives life.

When challenged about the four 'Ps' if they were not woolly and subjective, he quickly admitted that they were. "But then life is just not black and white", he countered. His defensive mode surprised me briefly. *"There are greys in life, too", Deepak went on. "In reality, life's pendulum swings between black and white. That mid-way is the grey. Life takes us, as the situation may demand or dictate, from grey to either the black side or the white side just as life swings from black to white while passing through the grey zone."*

That perspective and philosophy, I believe, defines the new millennium. But, of course,

nothing is built on a solid, stable, firm notion. *"There are NO absolutes. All such claims smack of arrogance and pride that amounts to rejection and belittling of alternate worldviews"*. I am told there just cannot be such a viable claim to absolute.

How does a disciple of Jesus differ in perspective, purpose, passion and philosophy from the Millennials?

Every new beginning has its past! That past infers, Billy Graham suggests, that we cannot avoid, change or wish away. Yet, how we view our past and respond to it will determine who we are, what we have chosen to become and how these impact our behaviour and choice of lifestyle.

For example, our life experience of suffering, pain and failure. Add disappointments in life to these experiences. How do we respond to them? For example, our sense of failure.

Often we take the cause and responsibility for failure upon ourselves when we have failed to

live up to the expectations of parents, peers, teachers, coaches, tutors, or workplace bosses. Add to these is disappointment with self.

All of these make us bitter and angry.

Further, such experiences have the power to influence negatively. These feelings fill our hearts and minds with hatred, and a sense of rejection, raising a spirit of rebellion and blame.

On the other hand, if we could embrace failure, suffering and negative experiences as a natural part of life from which no person is exempt, we would not only be better off for it but also gain a sharper view of life's prism. As children of Father God, we know for certain that our Father is loving and that He is wise and astute. Nothing and no experience is wasted on us! (*"For all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose."* (Rom 8:28).

Of course, this is conditioned on

the tangible. This tangibility taken on flesh in us and becomes our life's challenge. As we live our lives daily in the market place it becomes tangibly clear to our colleagues, neighbours and all those we touch base with daily that we are who we are because of our trust and confidence in the incorruptible and holy nature of our Father God. (Heb 10:19ff).

Nonetheless, having built our lives on a relationship of trust & confidence in the very character of our Father, we, as his children, make decisions, choices, and associations in line with our inherited character of our Father God.

However, we must be cautioned. It would be naïve, if not wrong, to assure that our association with the Father God suggests or guarantees that memories of our past will be erased and that we will live trouble-free lives. Nothing could be further from life's reality and truth. It is also imperative to realise that as God's children, we are not ensured that our present or future will be free of the historical past.

As with all humans, we too will be tempted, attracted, desire, and seek for a fun-filled, party-driven, wealth-supported joyful life. We, as would our friends with whom we grow, play, study and train, be pulled towards the desire to become prosperous and live a comfortable and stress-free life.

Just as success will also come after us, we would chase after it and its accompanying friends (fame, display of wealth, position and power), too. The question that will guard us is: "Where and on what does my / our security originate and remain anchored?"

Take, for example, the Biblical model of the first king of Israel, King Saul. Saul knew he struggled with inferiority-driven insecurities. Yet he did not seek or ask for help. Neither did he deal with it himself.

One of the saddest lesson to learn from Saul is that although Saul knew that God had chosen him, filled him with Holy Spirit (so that the people asked, "Is Saul among the prophets?"), he allowed his weaknesses to engulf

him completely. As a result (or call it the consequence of his choices), they cost him not only his relationship with Jonathan his son but also broke his mentor, Samuel-the-prophet and judge of Israel.

In the final analysis, Saul lost not only his kingship and kingdom but his crown prince Jonathan too. He began well but ended badly, leaving a legacy that his future generation would be ashamed to recall. Some might even choose to deny any association with him.

Sadly, Saul and Jonathan were both killed on the same day. While Jonathan died as a noble prince in battle, his father committed suicide.

Are we exempt from turning out to be Saul of 2023? Unhappily, that holds true for us today. I am told that studies done by those who study human behaviour and relationships show that failures to deal with our past and those of present challenges, always have severe consequences. Regrettably, the victims are often those we claim to love, care for,

and invest our resources into, especially our lovers, spouse and children. Relatives, friends, and colleagues are not exempt from feeling the negative impact of our behaviour either.

On the flip side, for those who chose to deal with their past and heal, the New Beginning has enabled them to build a new future with skills gained, insights drawn and wisdom personified from yesterday's experiences. These become robust, confident, mature and wiser for it. The perception and discernment gained from past events make for great teachers and character builders. These help mature our attitudes and personalities.

Conclusion:

Therefore, it would be correct to say that our new beginning and love for life must not be viewed from an assumed position that insinuates that the wrongs of the past should always be denied and negated. Denial is death waiting to strike!

It would also be detrimental for us who seek a new beginning and

love-driven life that we close the closet with its skeletons. It merely amounts to mean that our passion for life is not only driven by our subjective perspectives and worldview. It is also a time bomb that waits to explode at the slightest hint of a shake-up, threat and adverse challenge. These are flawed ways to begin to construct and build our future.

Simply put, it amounts to building our lives on the sand, not solid, rocky, ground. We use the bricks of yesterday's life experiences as our valuable bricks to construct our lives and not just begin a 'fresh start' with a blank page. It could amount to rebuilding our lives on another part of the sandy beach!

The new beginning is the not rejection of our yesterdays. Instead, it is a New Beginning founded on lessons learnt from our yesterdays and love-driven zest for life. So we use the bricks fashioned on the material of yesterday's events and experiences to build lives, people and everyone with whom we

associate. We move forward having grown wiser, been better equipped, and with confidence, aware that we have a God [*whom we know for sure, thanks to the Bible, His spoken Word through His anointed servants revealed in Jesus' person*], to give us company right through fresh challenges that life will present us until the time of our 'completion' of race on Earth.

Let's begin 2023 in the company of the One, who started it all, "In the beginning, (God began...)" and accomplished it all when He arose from the dead!"

Now that's a life worth living and loving to live!



Mr. Hansraj Jain,
Managing Director, Family, Marriage & Human Relationships, INHERITORS.



Around the world, most churches observe Christmas and Easter. Though, there are some who take issue with the fact that they replaced ancient pagan festivals. There is no doubt that the Christian Year was developed around the various pagan festivals of the period when Constantine became a Christian. When the emperor himself had become a Christian, the hitherto despised and prohibited faith became the state religion of the Roman Empire. Suddenly, it became popular to become a Christian because there would be advantage in identifying with the dominant religion.

With so many new members, when the times of pagan festivals

came around, the clergy felt that the only way they could hold on to those who were not Christians by persuasion, was to substitute the pagan festivals with something Christian. And that is how the observances of Christmas and Easter developed:

25 December was the date of a Roman pagan festival inaugurated in 274 as the birthday of the unconquered sun which at the winter solstice begins again to show an increase in light. Sometime before 336, the Church in Rome, unable to stamp out this pagan festival, spiritualized it as the Feast of the Nativity of the Sun of Righteousness (*The New International Dictionary of the*

Christian Church: "Christmas").

The derivation of the name "Easter" is uncertain, but according to Bede (*De Ratione Temporum, XV*) it is derived from Eastre, a Teutonic spring goddess, to whom sacrifices were offered in April. The pagan festival probably gave way to the Christian celebration of Christ's resurrection (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of The Bible*).

That is how Christmas and Easter were designated to replace the old pagan festivals. They were christened so that Christians could have their very own celebrations and wouldn't sneak off to enjoy the riotous merrymaking among pagans.

Of course, Jesus wasn't born on December 25th, nor is the shifting date of Easter the day of His resurrection. By the way, Christmas is observed on differing dates by different traditions:

- December 25. Western Christianity and some Eastern churches
- January 6. Greek and Russian

Orthodox churches

- January 7 Coptic Orthodox
- January 19 Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem

The point is that all observe Christmas – celebrating the birth of Christ Jesus.

The observance of Christmas and Easter (and Pentecost and all the other days) are symbolic to the Christian faith. Symbolism is a means of communication. Symbols are visual aids. The Old Testament is replete with them. All the sacrifices were prescribed to demonstrate that God was concerned about sin in people's lives and in His mercy, He provided a way of propitiation. The call to holiness was symbolized by total withdrawal from pagan society and practices.

In the New Testament too, there are symbolisms such as Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper. It was of course, only in later centuries that symbolism came to be more developed in the Church.

Sometimes Protestants are

against the use of whatever is symbolic, forgetting that symbols are theological shorthand. It is the ritualization of doctrinal beliefs. No doubt, the trouble with the use of symbols is that too often their meanings are forgotten, and people then perform rituals mechanically.

The Christian calendar is one aspect of the symbolic in the Church's life that needs to be rediscovered. The Christian calendar is a teaching tool. The entire Christian Year is a theological statement. There are six basic movements of divine revelation that the calendar portrays. It begins with the Advent or Coming of Christ and is meant to prepare us for the Second Advent. The Year progresses through Epiphany (the presentation of Jesus to the Gentile world), Lent (preparatory to the observance of Good Friday and Easter Sunday), Pentecost (the coming of the Holy Spirit) and ends with the period called "Kingdomtide", envisioning the coming reign of Jesus as King of kings and the establishment of God's kingdom of justice and peace:

Christmas - Jesus is born
Epiphany - Jesus is revealed
Lent/Good Friday - Jesus suffers/dies for all
Easter - Jesus lives
Pentecost - Jesus sends the Holy Spirit
Advent - Jesus is coming

The advantage of observing the seasons of the Christian Year is that all the doctrines of the Church get to be taught during the course of the year. The preacher will not be able to ride his hobby horse. He or she is forced to teach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

ASH WEDNESDAY—February 22, 2023

Lent comes after Advent, and Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season. The word "Lent" is derived from the Old English word *lenten* meaning spring, probably referring to the fact that from spring the days grow longer in the Northern Hemisphere.

Lent is 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday, not counting the Sundays. Sundays are not part of Lent,

because as the Lord's Day (of Resurrection), they are feast days. Yes, you may eat meat and fish on Sundays in Lent. You may feast.

Many Christians habitually give up eating meat and fish during Lent, though they probably don't know why. Some of them must imagine that they do so to share in the sufferings of Christ. But that's not why the practice started. Easter was the day when those who had been preparing were baptized. They prepared for baptism through abstinence and other acts of devotion, commemorating the 40 days of fasting that Jesus went through (though, in His case it was after His baptism).

Human Mortality

The name "Ash Wednesday" was derived from the fact that ashes (obtained by burning the palm crosses distributed on Palm Sunday in the previous year) was applied to the foreheads of devotees attending the Ash Wednesday service. The ash symbolized penitence for sins committed. As people came in penitence to the altar, the

minister would apply the ash to their foreheads, and would say, "Remember O man (or woman/boy/girl), that thou art mortal. Remember that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return." Human mortality is tied to the Fall of Adam and Eve, and so to be reminded of our mortality is to be informed that we are guilty of sin. The ash reminds us that our ruin is complete, because when anything is reduced to ashes, there is nothing more to burn. That is what sin does to us. It ruins us completely making us unfit for God's company.

But when people sit in ashes or have ashes on themselves, it symbolized their repentance. Thus the churchgoer with ashes marking his or her forehead was saying that they had realized the error of their ways and was beginning to turn back to God. If you want to properly observe Ash Wednesday intend to start the journey back to God.

Made for God

Though mortal, we have been created in God's image, and God did that to have fellowship with us. The Bible doesn't ever say that

God had fellowship with any animals. Since we are made for fellowship with God, being disconnected by sin causes serious problems for us.

The book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible is the record of one person's pursuit of happiness and fulfillment: every road taken was an exercise in futility. Throughout the book, he had one refrain: "Vanity of vanities: all is vanity". Everything was empty and useless. He said that all his ventures were like "striving after the wind". That's because God has set eternity in the hearts of humans (3:11). There's a blank space in our lives and it has the dimensions of eternity so that nothing "under the sun" will ever fill it to satisfaction. It is an emptiness that only God can fit into. In the end, the author concluded that connecting with God is the essence of what it means to be human (12:13).

We're not here to follow our own plans and fulfill our own aims and purposes. If we think that and follow that agenda, we are going in for frustrations, disappointments and, in the end,

trouble. We need to remember who we are and what we are made for: "All things were created by Him and for Him" (Col 1: 16).

Living in Sin

We're made in God's image, but the sad reality is that we do what we want. The Bible calls this dissonance sin. Those of us who belong to polite society don't like to think of ourselves as sinful. One definition of sin in the Bible is that it is "missing the mark." God has set Himself as the standard of holiness: "Be holy, as I am holy." It is only when we compare ourselves with those that we consider to be the "dregs of society" that we feel good about ourselves. We're like the Pharisee who compared himself to the publican and felt great. The question that will settle the matter for us is, "Are you perfect? Do you think you are as good as God?" If the answer to these questions is "no", then according to the Bible we are sinners: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23).

The Apostle John says that sin is even more serious than just missing the mark. He says it is

nothing less than revolting against God:

All who indulge in a sinful life are dangerously lawless, for sin is a major disruption of God's order (1 Jn.3:4, TM)

John goes further and says that sin puts people in the Devil's camp:

But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil (v.8, NLT).

That is what sin is. It is nothing less than war against God. When we sin, we join the Devil's camp to fight God. Jesus came to destroy the Devil and his works. But praise God, Jesus came, not to condemn, but to save us. He came to rescue us from the Devil's camp. But whether we leave the Devil's camp or not is a choice we have to make.

Do You Nullify Grace?

Lent is a period marked off in the Christian Year to encourage believers to observe certain disciplines for the good of their souls.

Around the world, during Lent many Christians observe what might be described as a partial fast: they give up eating meat, fish, and eggs. But if you merely give up the things you like, all you are doing is saying to God, "Please do note how I torture myself to please you."

All religions are about working your way to heaven. But the Christian cannot believe that is the way to get to heaven. Paul took issue with the Christians at Galatia for allowing themselves to be diverted from the gospel of grace by Jewish Christians insisting that Gentile Christians needed to keep the ritual observances of the Jewish faith, especially practicing circumcision:

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? (Gal.3:1-3).

Any spiritual exercise we engage in doesn't get us points. We do not earn our way into heaven. No amount of fasting or doing good works, will get us into heaven. We need to believe that it is all of grace:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph. 2:8-10).

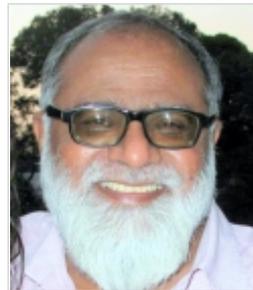
The Lenten Fast

For a fast to be a fast, what we give up through fasting must be offered to God. It's not about torturing yourself. God doesn't take pleasure in that sort of thing (See Isa. 58:5). The two things He wants you to do when fasting are:

1. Caring to share with others (vv 6-7, 10)
2. Drawing near to God (vv. 8-9, 13-14)

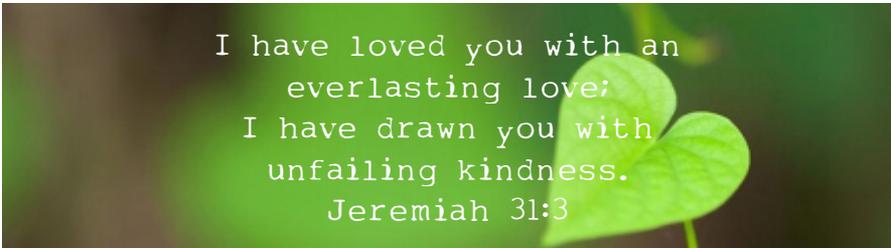
So, if you are observing the discipline of giving up something "for God" during Lent, draw near to God by doing the first part—give to needy people of God what you are offering to God. Collect your "savings" from giving up meat, fish and eggs, and offer it all to God by giving to those in need.

The Lenten Fast is not essential to salvation. However, it is a good spiritual discipline. And it is always good when we aid sisters and brothers who are in need.



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RESPONDING TO THE CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN INDIA

Mr. Jayvant Y. Vihigaonkar

Introduction:

Throughout the history of Christianity, mission challenges have always been significant, but how the Church responded to them made a difference. Earlier, issues and challenges to the Christian mission were primarily perceived and responded to more lightly. Not many theologians and church leaders have taken the serious time and effort to respond to these challenges. However, many wild attacks on Christianity, the Christian Church, and missions have been noted in recent decades. Many of these are carefully crafted intellectual and academic attacks to undermine Christianity and mislead the people. It is time that some serious attempts are made to articulate objective Christian

responses to such allegations and misconceptions. In a sense, the future of Christianity will be determined by how well the Church says its response to contemporary challenges, misperceptions, and allegations.

India, though still considered a country with a small Christian minority, emerges as a nation with an increasing number of people claiming to be Christian.³ Although it is tough to get precise figures of the Christian population, even the opponents of the Christian faith in India agree that the number of Christians is increasing in India. They predict that this trend will pick up strong momentum shortly. Such predictions are based on the data collected from

the Census reports, contemporary trends, and the socio-religious moods of people. This perceived growth will not necessarily be added to the traditional Christian fold, but a new 'breed' of followers of Christ will be emerging in India. In the wake of such predicted changes, the Christian mission in India will have to be prepared to face and respond to the challenges in a new and strategic way. Some of these challenges have already been there, and the Church in India has been aware of them. However, the twenty-first century brings fresher challenges that demand more concrete, contextually appropriate, and articulate responses. This article focuses mainly on the contemporary challenges that significantly affect missions in India in the twenty-first century.

The increasing influence of Christianity and the growing number of the Christian population, along with mushrooming new churches, have alerted the fundamentalist groups. Right-wing political parties and fundamentalist groups sometimes bring systematic persecution and harm to the Christian community. Cases of severe atrocity have

been reported all year round in different parts of India and especially in the areas where the growth of the Christian Church is reported. Several laws and bills have been enacted to prevent conversion to Christianity. Various militant and fundamentalist groups have begun to challenge the spread of Christianity, taking aggressive measures to curtail the increasing influence of Christianity in India. These measures include:

- Systematically attacking Christian leaders.
- Demolishing Church buildings.
- Intimidation.
- Producing anti-Christian literature.
- Forceful re-conversion.

In addition, there is an increase in the production of Hindu apologetic literature aimed to attack the Christian faith at an academic level and challenge the foundational beliefs upon which Christianity is built. This aggressive fundamentalism indicates awakening among the educated caste Hindus about the possible threat Christianity might pose to their traditional religion.

The Challenge of Religious

Fundamentalism:

Contemporary India is witnessing an increasing rise in religious militancy and fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalism¹¹ poses a significant problem to the cause of mission and evangelism in India. There are different shades of fundamentalism. One of the most prominent forms that have emerged in recent decades is called "Hindutva."¹² Hindutva is both an ideology and a way of life and a militant form of cultural nationalism emerging in modern India and orchestrated by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) into a fascist and entire state of political religion. It is a profoundly religious and aggressively political form of nationalism that was initially rediscovered and promoted by Vinyahak Damodar Savarkar¹³. Still, this ideology was revived recently and given a more fundamentalist shape,¹⁴ affecting the very center of the Christian mission.

Hindutva's roots go back to centuries of oppressive practices undertaken by the upper caste Hindus against the lower castes and the non-Hindus. But the modern form of Hindutva may be traced back to the formation of Hindu Mahasabha in 1907 and,

consequently, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS in 1925. Both organizations came into being to protect the cause of Hindus and unite them in the name of the religion. In the post-independent era, Hindutva took political shape in the formation of Bhartiya Jan Sangh in 1951, which merged with the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980. During the tenure of the BJP-led government, Hindutva was put into practice to such an extent that the non-Hindu minorities were severely and systematically harassed and persecuted by RSS subsidiaries like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal, the latter being an extreme militant organization recruiting members from the educated unemployed, and lower castes for bold action. The Dal declares that Christians are bigger enemies than Muslims because they want to take over the country and must be driven out. The Dal is the muscle power of the Hindu nationalists.¹⁵

Hindutva ideology and practice developed a kind of nationalism that carefully excludes non-Hindus from being part of this nation. For the *Hindutva wadi*, Hindu nationalism means one (Hindu) government, one

(Hindu) culture, and one (Hindu) state. It aims to revive and unite not only Hindu culture but Hindu people. Hindu nationalism takes pride in glorifying the past, i.e., making India great, a superpower, and a center of spirituality. They strive to conquer the nation with spirituality. They strive for geographical, racial, religious, cultural, and linguistic unity. Hence the slogan: "Hindu, Hindi and Hindustan." Unification of the Hindu nation may involve violence within Hinduism and with other religions for which most *Hindutva wadis* are prepared.

Though the concept of Hindutva is not new, what is new is its aggressive and violent expression in practice that has caused significant damage to the cause of mission in India. The Christian community in India was taken completely unawares by the assaults, atrocities, and arson of Hindu nationalists. During the past seven years, Hindu nationalists have systematically targeted Christians. There have been more atrocities against Christians in the past four years than in the preceding fifty years. There appears to be a tacit endorsement by the state of the

atrocities committed by Hindu nationalists coming under the umbrella known as the 'Sangh Parivar.'

Due to the change in government, the details of Hindutva are brought under control to a certain extent. However, the Hindutva wadis are still active and kicking in different parts of India. They will continue to pose a significant challenge to the Christian mission. Having experienced a tremendously tricky time under a government that believed in the Hindutva ideology, the Christian missions have to learn lessons to readdress the issues raised by the forces of Hindutva.

Responding to the Religious Fundamentalism:

The Christian response to religious fundamentalism may be articulated at various levels, as it is complex and all-encompassing. Therefore, this will require a multi-level response. First of all, our response should be at an ideological level and second at a practical level. The Hindutva forces operate from an ideology that fundamentally contradicts the Christian mission. The challenge lies in responding to Hindutva at the ideological level

by showing its fallacies and the ill effects it will have on this nation. The Hindutva intelligentsia has been effectively spreading their ideology through various media and particularly academic and popular writings.¹⁶ While being committed to the cause of missions; the Christians also have a responsibility to question the foundations and logic of Hindutva. The Hindutva worldview undermines every facet of freedom. Historically, a specious argument of fascism has been to equate social discipline with the loss of individual liberty. A strong nation is a product of a balance between form and space, authority and freedom, social discipline, and personal liberty. But in the Hindutva worldview, neither the individual nor the state, but the social order is the fundamental matrix of the Hindu nation. This has to be exposed and challenged at an academic and intellectual level.

Still, some efforts are urgently needed to respond to the intellectual attacks on Christianity, especially on Christian missions. Christian writers, theologians, mission leaders, and thinkers will need to come together to thoughtfully

articulate our response to so many false allegations and attacks that are unfounded and have a minimal history as well as contemporary evidence. These will need to be carefully analyzed to expose their falsehood and biased perspectives. Moreover, public debates, dialogues, and discussions could be organized on digital media and, wherever possible, on a neutral platform in various cities. These may need to be handled carefully and with utmost care as these are sensitive issues.

The second challenge of Hindutva is practical. While the Hindutva forces tend to be united in working on non-Hindu troops, the Christians need to develop a profoundly informed as well as systematically organized network that will prepare various Christian groups to not only face the onslaught of Hindutva but also respond in a more legal, political as well as social manners. While retaining our commitment to the Biblical mission in India, the Church must be prepared to respond to the challenge of Hindutva in a more robust and balanced way.

This will require educating the Christian constituency in a

strategic and timely manner. Relevant information and documents, as well as other resources, should be provided for them to be adequately informed about the reality of such fundamental forces. The lack of relevant information and proper awareness about these challenges keeps the Church inactive and passive. At the national and regional levels, such awareness seminars should be organized to adequately inform the Christian constituency about this dangerous trend that is drastically affecting Christian life and ministries in India.

However, 'informing the Church is insufficient; the Church in India must be properly and systematically equipped with skills, tools, and other means to handle these challenges effectively. Such equipping will require providing social, legal, and practical knowledge and skills. Various subject experts could be brought together to provide their legal and social insights on how to handle such legal, social, and political issues. Along with the Christian resources and resource people, various secular and neutral resources and resource people from the temporal field should be

invited. Their specialized knowledge, experience, and perspectives should be utilized to equip the Christian constituency in India.

Further, Christians should also be mobilized to defend themselves from such attacks and harassment and be equipped to protect themselves. As Indian citizens, they have their full rights and privileges in this country. In the wake of recent and emerging attacks, they must be educated to defend and protect themselves. This does not encourage them to indulge in any violent way but helps them stand their ground in the wake of such atrocities and attacks.

Finally, as Christians, we must stand on Biblical principles and know what the Bible teaches us to respond to such atrocities and attacks. Studying and using Biblical insights for times like this is the need of the hour. Comprehensive and in-depth Biblical teachings should be made available to pastors and leaders to equip their congregations to face and respond to such challenges Biblically. This would involve praying for wisdom and discernment to those in power

and authority so that they would act justly to prevent such attacks and atrocities on minorities. Further, in line with Jesus' teaching, Jesus's for the enemies- though we should not consider anybody as the enemy-

may need to be practiced. Praying for those leading such attacks, their organizations, and their followers is essential for us as Christians.

Mr. Jayvant Y. Vihigaonkar

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EFI South Gujarat Committee Leadership Retreat at Udaipur



The EFI South Gujarat Committee met from 9th – 11th January 2023 at Season Park Resort, Udaipur for a Leadership seminar. The three-day seminar was a time of spiritual fellowship with the leaders, in the presence of the Lord.

Rev. Hiren Rana, Rev. Julius Khristy, Rev. Vijayesh Lal, and Rev. Paul Mathews were the resource persons at this fellowship. The sessions were very encouraging and gave many spiritual leadership insights. The participants enjoyed the time spent there. Many new decisions were taken to lead the Christian Community in Unity and be firm in

the Christian faith. This retreat has encouraged and motivated them to work closely with specific purposes and goals. The participants also learnt to grow with positive attitudes and thinking to lead the Church as per the Lord's will.

In addition to the four resource persons, fifteen committee members also shared their learnings and experiences. It was a blessing to have them impart excellent teachings with life experiences, stories, activities and much more. We had a blessed time of fellowship with EFI South Gujarat Regional Committee.

EFI Gujarat Women's Commission Leadership Seminar at Dandi, Valsad, Gujarat.



Date: - 21st of January 2023

Venue: - The Wesleyan Church,
Dandi, Valsad, Gujarat.

Resource Person: - Mrs.
Surinder Kaur Lal

“Listen, you heavens, and I will speak; hear, you earth, the words of my mouth.”

Deuteronomy 32:1. Such is the testimony of Mrs. Surinder Kaur Lal that echoed everywhere in the village of Gujarat called Dandi, Wesleyan Church. Simplicity of the coastal people and their curiosity to learn more about God and His work was clearly reflecting in their eyes.

Nearly 112 women and some

pastors attended the one-day seminar where the executive committee members were also present in the opening session. The women were not only excited about the sessions but also felt very important in God's beautiful plan and purpose of life. The theme verse for the Retreat was Proverbs 31:30 **“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised”**. Many suggestive guidelines for the women leadership in different role was given to the women leaders. The take-away from the seminar was *'Happiness and Contentment'*. *Surely God's presence was felt there.*

EFI Gujarat Women's Commission Leadership Seminar at Chadwan, Uchhal, Gujarat.



Date: - 27th of January 2023

Venue: - Philadelphia Fellowship Church, Chadwan, Uchhal, Tapi, Gujarat.

Resource Persons: - Mrs. Seema L Justin, Mrs. Kimalini H Rana and Mrs. Suhasini J Damore

Praise the Lord for his Grace and Mercy,

On 27th January 2023, EFI Gujarat Women Commission in association with Philadelphia Fellowship Church organised the Women's Leadership Seminar under the leadership of EFI South Gujarat Regional Committee. The seminar was attended by 116 participants. The theme

verse for the seminar was **“Focus on Jesus”** from Psalm 105: 4. This seminar became a blessing for many women. It showed them a new vision with a definite purpose in their life.

All the participants enjoyed the sessions thoroughly and had a wonderful fellowship in Christ. They also learned the qualities and needs of leadership in their homes and churches.

All Glory to the Almighty God!

Reported by Mr. Jimmy Damore, EFI Assistant Secretary, West India



Grace Academy
Unaided Christian Minority Co-educational Senior Secondary English Medium School
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STAFF REQUIRED FOR SESSION 2023-24

S.N.	Post	Minimum Qualification	Pay Scale
1.	Vice-Principal (Administration)	A post-graduate with B.Ed. Should possess minimum five years of teaching a main subject to Senior Secondary Classes. 02-03 years of Administrative Experience as Senior School Coordinator/Vice-Principal in a CBSE Senior Secondary School. Computer savvy and well conversant with online teaching technology. <i>(This post will require the candidate to stay on campus)</i>	37400-60000 with Grade Pay of 9000
2.	Vice-Principal (Academics)	A post-graduate with B.Ed. Should possess minimum five years of teaching a main subject to Senior Secondary Classes. 02-03 years of Administrative Experience as Senior School Coordinator/Vice-Principal in a CBSE Senior Secondary School. Computer savvy and well conversant with online teaching technology.	37400-60000 with Grade Pay of 9000
3.	Activity Coordinator	A post-graduate with B.Ed. Should possess minimum five years of teaching a main subject to Senior Secondary Classes. 02-03 years of Administrative Experience as Senior School Coordinator/Vice-Principal in a CBSE Senior Secondary School. Should possess the innate ability to plan, conduct and organize various sports, curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities of the school. Computer savvy and well conversant with online teaching technology.	9300-34800 with Grade Pay of 4200
4.	PGT-Maths	M.Sc.-Maths with B.Ed. and minimum two years of experience of teaching preferably in a Senior Secondary CBSE/ICSE school.	9300-34800 with Grade Day of 4800
5.	PGT-Political Science	M.Sc.-Political Science with B.Ed. and minimum two years of experience of teaching preferably in a Senior Secondary CBSE/ICSE school.	9300-34800 with Grade Day of 4800
6.	TGT-Hindi	B.A. (Hindi) with B.Ed. and minimum five years of experience of teaching preferably in a Senior Secondary CBSE/ICSE schools.	9300-34800 with Grade Pay of 4200
7.	TGT-English	B.A. (English) with B.Ed. and minimum five years of experience of teaching preferably in a Senior Secondary CBSE/ICSE schools.	9300-34800 with Grade Pay of 4200
8.	Male Receptionist cum Clerk	Fluent in spoken English, soft spoken and with pleasant demeanour. Diploma in Front Desk Receptionist, good typing speed and should be well conversant to use MS office.	5200-20200 with Grade Pay of 2400

Only Candidates who have done their Schooling & College Education in English Medium need to apply.

Interested candidates please apply with your Curriculum Vitae to the Principal, Grace Academy, 21-C New Cantt. Road, Dehradun-248 001, Uttarakhand in a sealed envelope clearly stating the post applied for at your earliest or can send their application by e-mail to principal@graceacademyindia.com. Only shortlisted candidates will be called for a personal interview.

Intercessory
Prayer
Points



February 2023

1 WEDNESDAY Praise God for His sustaining grace, His mercies are new every morning. Pray that much would be accomplished as we prayerfully start the month.

2 THURSDAY Pray for students who are preparing for their board exams. Pray that the Lord would protect them, encourage them, and strengthen them. Pray that God would replace hopelessness and anxiety with peace, comfort, and hard work.

3 FRIDAY Pray for religious freedom in our country. Pray that every individual would be able to freely practice and propagate their choice of religion. Continue to pray for the anti-conversion law hearing in Supreme Court today. Pray that minorities' rights would be protected and that every individual would have the opportunity to pursue and share their faith without fear.

4 SATURDAY Pray for ministries who are spreading the Gospel

through social media. Pray that God would give wisdom and fresh ideas to reach the unreached through them.

5 SUNDAY Pray for Christian parents in your circle that they may pass on their Christian beliefs and values to their children.

6 MONDAY Pray for EFI upcoming meetings in Gujarat. Pray for Gujarat Women's Seminars scheduled on the 25th of February at Songadh, the Youth Leaders' Seminar at Ahawa, Mandavi and Uchchhal within this month and also for the Sunday School Teachers' Training from the 16 - 18 February at Songadh that the meetings would be blessed and successful and that the Lord Jesus would be lifted high.

7 TUESDAY Continue to pray for the persecuted. Pray that their suffering would produce Christlike characters that would glorify God. Pray for nearness of God and His

guidance as they go through this difficult situation.

8 WEDNESDAY Continue to pray for the ministry of EFI. Pray for all the staff in different parts of the country to be used by God as they carry out their responsibilities. Pray also for the finances of EFI that God's works may not be hindered.

9 THURSDAY Pray for the Art of Survival meetings to be held in Punjab and Delhi NCR this month. Pray that this Train the Trainers meetings would be successful, and the churches will be encouraged.

10 FRIDAY Continue to pray for Punjab Mobile Bible Training that is scheduled in different parts of Punjab this month. Pray also that those trained will put their learnings into practice and bring glory to God.

11 SATURDAY Pray for all the leaders and elders of the church that they would make wise decisions and lead the congregation by example.

12 SUNDAY Pray that all the churches in India would take measures to make the study of God's Word essential. Pray that God's word would enlighten and empower every believer.

13 MONDAY Pray for Nagaland Bible College in Mokokchung, Nagaland. Pray that they would be able to effectively teach and train leaders who would serve God's kingdom wholeheartedly and in God's way.

14 TUESDAY Valentine Day. Pray that God's love manifested through Christ reaches all. Pray that people would respond positively to His love. Pray also that love would grow and bind people together irrespective of who they are.

15 WEDNESDAY Pray for students as their board exams starts today. May God shine His face upon them and fill them with hope, confidence, and calmness of heart.

16 THURSDAY Continue to pray for all the EFI Group members, Individual members, and life members today. Pray that the Lord would place them in a position and authority that they would offer God's gifts of love, hope, truth, unity, and grace.

17 FRIDAY Pray for the unemployment problem in our country that the government would find means and ways to create job opportunities.

18 SATURDAY Pray for the

people of India that they would respect, value, and pursue unity in diversity. Pray that people from different ethnic backgrounds would cohabitate peacefully and harmoniously.

19 SUNDAY Pray for all the missionaries serving God in India and abroad. Pray that they may not be discouraged but be strengthened and rejuvenated daily by the power of God's Word. Pray that they would bear many spiritual fruits.

20 MONDAY Pray for Adonai Ministries in Karnataka. Pray that God would bless their initiatives and also bless our partnership.

21 TUESDAY Continue to pray for all the political leaders in our country. Pray that they would come to know the truth and rule with truth and justice.

22 WEDNESDAY Pray for the CEEFI department. Pray that the biblical literatures produced by them would bless and impact many children and guide their path as they take their little steps of faith.

23 THURSDAY Pray for Berachah Prophetic Ministries in Tamil Nadu. Pray that God would use the ministry to be an

instrument for Biblical prophecies in such a time as this.

24 FRIDAY Pray for strength, endurance, and healing for those going through various medical treatments. Pray that Jesus would touch them and heal them. Pray that their faith in Jesus would growth through this experience.

25 SATURDAY Pray for the youth of our nation that they would encounter the Living God and experience transformation in their personal lives and influence others around them. Pray that God would bless them with wisdom and discernment to choose the right path in life.

26 SUNDAY Pray that our relationship with the Lord would grow deeper than ever. Also pray that we may love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, and strength.

27 MONDAY Pray that everyone would enjoy equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities. Pray for the leaders who are involved to make this possible.

28 TUESDAY Thank God for His guidance throughout the month. Thank Him for leading you to the next month safely.

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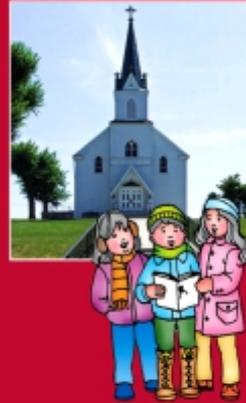
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Published date on 25 January 2023
Posting date 26/27 January 2023

RNI. Regd. No. 19728/70 / Postal
Registration No. DL(S)-01/3241/2018-20
Licensed to post without prepayment at
NDPSO New Delhi -110 002 / U(SE)-9/2018-20



LENT

FAST • PRAY • GIVE

*Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10*

Printed & Published by Mr. Vijayesh Lal, on behalf of EFI Publication Trust,
805/92 Deepali Building, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110 019.
Printed at Royal Press, B-82, Okhla Phase -1, New Delhi - 110 020.
Editor Mr. Vijayesh Lal