

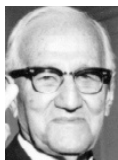
THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF EFI PUBLICATION TRUST

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January 2024 ❖ PAGES 43 ❖ ₹ 20/-

A Journey of Faith

*And whatever you ask in prayer,
you will receive, if you have faith.
Matthew 21:22*



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A Journey of Faith

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Vol. 53 / No. 01
AIM Annual Subscription for
India, Nepal & Bhutan Rs. 200/-
(Other countries \$ 20)

A monthly publication of EFI Publication Trust

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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

Ringling in the New Year with Hope Despite Darkness

As the new year dawns, many look ahead with optimism, making resolutions that embody hope and the promise of fresh starts. The allure of the "new" captivates us, beckoning embarkation on journeys of self-improvement. Yet while commendable, the ephemeral nature of resolutions often leaves disappointment.

Amidst this, a steadfast hope can sustain our aspirational New Year's spirit. Rather than striving alone in futility, we can acknowledge God as the author of newness and goodness

(James 1:17). By surrendering imperfect lives to Him daily, we access His resurrecting power to bring renewed vitality.

God is the ultimate restorer, evidencing abilities throughout biblical narratives to profoundly renew lives and identities. As Jacob became Israel, Simon became Peter and Saul became Paul, God imparted new purposes. His plans give us hope and a future.

So, in this season of resolutions, may our aspirations root in the unshakable hope of God's

transformative power. Though another year passes, God faithfully authors newness.

However, for many, the new year unceremoniously persists in darkness, bereft of hope. As war rages, violence persists unchecked, injustice spreads, and persecution flourishes, celebrations seem inappropriate.

Ongoing conflicts continue to claim lives daily in the Holy Land. Violence rages unchecked in Manipur, where victims fall weekly, and reconciliation remains distant. Our own nation grapples with a wave of majoritarianism where Political Hindutva appears to have supplanted even mainstream Hinduism if the forthcoming events in Ayodhya are anything to go by. This, if true, has major ramifications for us as a nation and particularly for religious minorities.

Meanwhile, the persecution of Christians persists unabated, with many arbitrarily imprisoned in states like Uttar Pradesh under forced conversion charges.

Worship gatherings are prohibited while pastors languish in jail under conversion charges and their families left destitute and starving.

Considering these grim realities, New Year's proclamations of "happiness" ring hollow for many. However, biblical hope transcends circumstances. God's purposes are unchanged by darkness, His sovereignty unthreatened.

Followers of Christ must model radical hope in broken contexts, proclaiming gospel truths. Though darkness pervades, light shines brightly to eyes of faith. God works through suffering to redeem and restore.

Paul and Silas sang hymns in jail. Early Christians joyfully accepted persecution, trusting God's purposes. Likewise, we can faithfully steward suffering, not with blithe detachment but with bold witness to hope.

With the new year, much remains unresolved, injustice persists, evil flourishes. But God's story

continues unfolding. Through abiding in Christ, we participate in narratives of reconciliation and redemption. By walking in faith and persevering prayer, we partner with God to bring restoration.

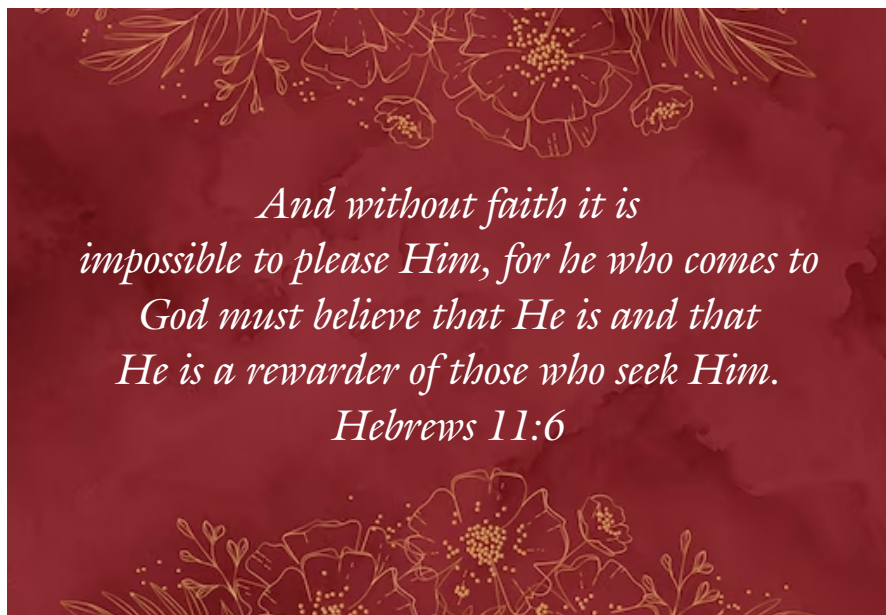
In all seasons, we affirm God's sovereignty. As we enter a new year, may we cling to eternal hope beyond resolutions, surrendering to God's plan day by day. Darkness is real but light prevails. There are always new possibilities with God.

start for many, but we must balance optimism with empathy for those still in the grip of injustice and suffering. Our hope rests in God's power to redeem brokenness. Even in darkness, light shines for faithful eyes.

As one writer expressed, "New year, new light, new day, new mercy, new hope, new possibilities, new opportunities, new confidence, new strength, new joy." May we ring in this year with resilient hope in God's unfolding story.

The new year represents a fresh

Rev. Vijayesh Lal





Faith is Believing God

“Have faith in God”. Mark 11:22

Mr. Chacko Thomas

Rev. R. T. Kendall, successor to “The Doctor” Martin Lloyd Jones at Westminster Chapel, London, tells the story of how he came to name his series of messages on Hebrews 11 as “Believing God”.

“One evening in October 1977, I was driving with Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones to Chipping Norton. I asked him to come up with a definition of faith that would introduce and carry me through my new series of sermons on Hebrews 11. We tossed several apt definitions around, both before and after the sermon, he later preached that night.

“The next day the telephone rang, and I answered it. “Believing God,” the familiar voice replied on the other end. “Believing God.

That's your definition.” I knew at once that I would do no better than that. So, I adopted Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones's definition – then and now.” (taken from the preface of the book “Believing God” by R. T. Kendall.)

What is faith?

Quoting George Bernard Shaw, “We have not lost faith, we have transferred it from God to the medical profession”, RT says that “Shaw's statement is more theological than many sermons that can be heard today. It is a day in which church's faith has become man-centred

“The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, well known as the “faith” chapter of the

Bible, in fact it describes the only kind of valid faith that there is. Any faith other than that which is depicted in Hebrews 11, is a spurious faith – whether the object of such faith be the medical profession or a false God.

“This is not to say that the events described are the only ones in which faith may be present, but there is to be seen in that great chapter a cohesive principle to which each of those stalwarts was consciously connected. ...

“The first principle to be grasped, then, is that if we are to have their faith, we must know their God.”
(RT Kendall)

People of Faith and action

We owe much to these men of faith listed in Hebrews 11 and need to be thankful to them and to God for them. Some of them saved the human race from total destruction through their faith (Noah and his wife, sons, and daughters-in-law). What a contribution! Remember to thank the Noah family when you get to heaven.

Abraham, what a faith! His faith

and action raised up a whole “Believing in God family” through whom not only the curse on earth was to be reversed but “all the families of the earth” are being blessed and will be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).

One of God's greatest gifts to humanity, came to us through his family, that of the Holy Bible. And yet, the greatest of gifts of all, the Lord Jesus Christ, also came to us through this blessed family line. Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham, Matthew tells us. And the Gospel, what a gift to humanity. It keeps on giving and giving. More blessings are promised through this family.

God's honour list does not end with Hebrews 11, as the chapter itself indicates. History continued to be made through the centuries and even to our day and if the Lord tarries, more will take up the baton. Men and women “believing God” are history makers.

One of the people we need to be thankful to and for is Martin Luther (1483–1546). His faith and courage changed Europe and the western world. His discovery of “Justification by Faith” saved

Christianity, in my opinion. His faith included making the Bible available to German people in their own language. He published the complete Bible in German in 1534, after a few years being shut in Wartburg Castle, “The Word of God for Germany”.

His teaching and writings led the way for Reformation which in turn changed Europe. He was willing to die for his stand on the Word of God. When summoned before the Roman authorities in 1521, to recant his stand, Luther responded by saying, “Here I stand – God Help me. Amen”. Many churches around the world celebrate the “Reformation Sunday” annually.

“Believing God” is not just for the mighty only. Hebrews 11 names many unsung heroes. Every act of faith counts for eternity. It could be a believing mother like Hannah, the mother of Prophet Samuel or the mother of King David or the mother of Jesus. It could be a blind woman like Fanny Crosby, who blessed us with many well-loved Hymns. Who can undermine the faith of Mother Teresa? Or Pandita Ramabai? Or George Verwer, to name a few I know of.

Whatever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23)

Knowing and believing the God of these heroes of faith is the need of the hour. I remember a friend of mine in the 70s who was given a flight ticket to the US and back. He went to the US consulate for a Visa. They “took one look at this short, dark young man and straight away denied a visa to the USA”. He returned home, quite disappointed. Below is roughly what he told me.

Next morning, he read the verse quoted above, “... and everything that does not come from faith is sin.” (NIV). He asked himself the question, “how much faith did I have in applying for the US Visa?”.

“By faith” A. Stephen took to his typewriter and wrote a letter to the then President of the US, Richard Nixon. “Dear Mr. President, I want to come to the US to preach the Gospel. But your Consulate in Madras has refused to give me a visa for the USA. ... “

Well, the letter reached the desk of the First Lady, Mrs. Nixon. And she replied saying, “Dear Mr

Stephen, You are most welcome to the United States. Please show this letter to the US Consulate, and you shall be given the needed assistance.”The rest was history. The press was there to welcome Stephen on his arrival to the USA, he showed me the different newspaper cuttings of the visit. I had no problem believing him. Because I had seen him exercise faith in a few other situations before.

Well, what is faith in God calling us as individuals and as a community to do today in India or the world? In these perilous times, we need a generation of men, women and young people who wants to get to know the God of the Bible and believe Him for India and His church in India. We need Christians who will stand behind men and women called of God to take action for Him. May the Lord lead us to the God of the Word, as well as the Word of God. He will not fail us. Let us not fail Him. Dare to be a Daniel, to throw in another name of a man of Faith.

“Have faith in God”, said our Lord Jesus the Christ.

We need faith not in man but in the God of the Bible.

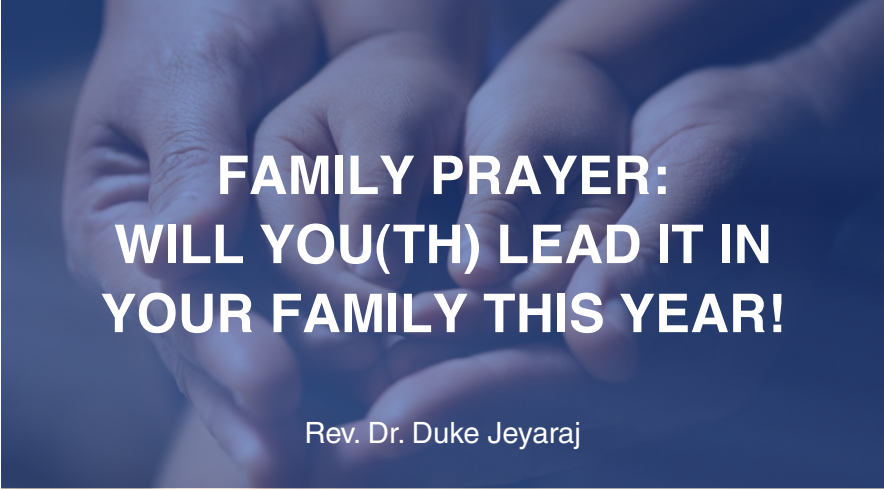
Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, gained what was promised, shut the mouth of lions,” Hebrews 11:33 (NET).

May God grant it!



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*Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe?
All things are possible for one who believes.
Mark 9:23*



FAMILY PRAYER: WILL YOU(TH) LEAD IT IN YOUR FAMILY THIS YEAR!

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

Can we all have regular Family Prayer in 2024?

Why is having a time of Family Prayer important? The Scriptures, from various sections, point to the importance of this key family discipline that has been tossed out even by those in full-time ministry. Let me point these Scriptures to you, one by one:

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE PROPHETS TO START FAMILY PRAYER:

Prophet Hosea wrote, “Since You have forgotten the laws of Your God, I will forget to bless your Children” (Hos. 4:6). His words to Israel, have an implication for us. All of us want

God to bless our children. Most of us are ready to do anything for our kids!

We had family holiday in October 2014. We went to one of the coastal cities. We were playing in a swimming pool in our hotel. Evan, my wife, my kids, Dale, 11 years, Datasha, 7 years were with me inside the pool. This swimming pool was shallow at one end (as low as two feet). It got progressively deeper and the other side was as deep as eight feet. None of us in our family knew how to swim, including yours truly. We were floating around in an air-filled swimming tube. It was fun. After staying in the side of the pool that was shallow for long, I eventually got bored. I wanted some excitement.

I decided to catch the sides of the rectangular shaped pool with my body in-between the tube and go all around it, jumping up and down. It was exhilarating to feel my feet floating in water, with my waist inside the circular tube and my hands on the side walls during some sections of my daring journey that brought jitters to my dear wife. Pretty soon, I got bored of doing this as well. I told my son, "Dale, let's go towards the other side of the pool by using the tube, right through the middle of the pool." Despite protests from my wife, I started off with Dale. Both of us held onto to the tube – with the tube around Dale's waist. Pretty soon, we were in a spot of the pool, where the height was over 7 feet. I suddenly realized that we were both sinking. It dawned on me that the tube could not hold both of our weights – my 80 kg frame and my son's 25 kg frame. It was then I made a snap decision. I let my son, hold on to the tube exclusively and pushed him vociferously towards the shallow side and released myself completely from the tube. In an instant, I was sinking into the waters. It was one of my most frightening few seconds on my entire life. My wife and daughter gasped. There weren't any others

by the pool side to help me at that point. As my wife cried out for help, a man inside one of the rooms adjacent to the pool was willing to help me. But alas, his door was locked from the outside. He was getting ready to jump to the pool-side from his room's balcony! Under the waters, meanwhile, I lunged towards one side of the pool in desperation. I wanted to somehow get to the side-wall. I felt a supernatural power upon me as I realized I had touched the side wall in a few seconds. I reached for the side-wall's top enabled by this supernatural power. It was as if someone under the waters had pushed me toward the sides! I pushed myself out of the water gripping the side-wall's top. I was saved! It was the Lord's supernatural and gracious help! Later that day, my son told me, "Dad, you were willing to die for me! I will not forget this! Thank you!" Yes, as parents we could do ANYTHING to make our kids happy. If that's the case, why don't we "remember God's laws so that God would remember our children" (the corollary of Hosea 4:6)? Why don't we have an ear-marked time when we read God's Word to our children and family each day?

After getting some inspiration to start Family Prayer from Prophet Hosea, let's move onto **Prophet Amos**. He warned Amaziah, a priest who told him, the Word of God preaching him, to shut-up this: But this is what the Lord says, "Because you have refused to listen, your wife will become a prostitute in this city and your sons and daughter will be killed" (Amos 7:16-17). What Amos was saying was this: the morality of your wife and the mortality of your kids, Amaziah, depends on whether you accept God's Word or reject God's Word. Our family's morality and mortality depends on our decision to embrace or evict God's Word in our lives. If we choose to embrace God's Word in our life, we will choose a time to expose our family to God's Word – it could be done during our Family Prayer time!

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM A PATRIARCH STORY TO START FAMILY PRAYER

Forty days of non-stop rain. Day in and day out. It was heart-broken God's judgment upon an evil generation whose "wickedness" was "great" and whose heart's "every

inclination.....was only evil all the time" (Gen. 6:5,6). It was then that Patriarch Noah built a boat in obedience to God's command to do so. And the Scripture says, "But Noah had gone into the boat that very day with his wife and sons – Shem, Ham and Japeth – and their wives" (Gen. 7:13).

The scene today isn't that different. Rapes and rioting. Terrorism and theft. Porn and pride. Our world is full of these. A sack full of sins. Our planet is full of sin as surely as oceans are full of water. We see these all around us. What's the solution? We need to get into the Ark. Which ark? Not the one which floats in water! But the One who chose to float in the amniotic fluids of Mary! The Lord Jesus! God in flesh! When we enter His presence as a family regularly, we will be safe from the barrage of sin-attack which the Devil unleashes against us!

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM A PATRIARCH'S SERMON TO START FAMILY PRAYER

The patriarch I am talking about here is Moses. Deuteronomy records his inspired-by-God farewell sermon to the people of Israel as they were about to enter

the Promised Land. This is what God wanted the parents of Israel to do according to Moses' Holy Spirit-driven words: "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:6,7). Let's zero-in on the phrase, "talk of them when you sit in your house." When a Family Prayer is on, that is a great time to systematically teach the kids in the family about the commands of the Lord (the message of the Bible via stories/passage meditation). So, from this call for compulsory Bible truth teaching to children, comes yet another inspiration for Family Prayer.

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM A PROVERB TO START FAMILY PRAYER

In the book of Ecclesiastes, we read the proverb, "When you demolish an old wall, you could be bitten by a snake" (Eccl. 10:8b). Family prayer is like a wall for a family. When that is neglected in a home, that home is open to attacks of the snake,

symbolic of the Devil. This is not to say that home with family prayer will have no problems! Jacquelyn Lindsey writes, "Father Patrick Peyton coined the phrase, 'The Family that prays together stays together.'" Considering the attacks upon family unity that are all too pervasive today, perhaps prayers is the best defense for maintaining families intact."

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM A PROVERB TO START FAMILY PRAYER

We find yet another encouragement for the Family Prayer discipline from Psalm 128. We read, "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine, flourishing within your home. And look at all those children. They sit around your table as vigorous and healthy as young olive trees" (v. 3, NLT). Sitting around the table is the first step for starting family prayer. The dining table can be easily converted into praying table! The family that is talked about in Psalm 128 fears the Lord and is blessed by the Lord (see v.1).

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM 'THE PERFECT PATTERN FOR

PRAYER' HIMSELF TO START FAMILY PRAYER

Jesus is the one I would like to address as the “Perfect Pattern for Prayer.” Did you know what He said in Matthew's Gospel? He said, “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven” (Matt. 18:19). True, the “two of you” that Jesus talked about here can be anyone of us! But how convenient it will be to make that “two of you” into a husband and wife who live under the same roof! Or it could be the case of a believing mom and teen-age son. Or, still, it could be the case of a Christ-following dad and his “apple-of-my-eyes” daughter! Agreement in a prayer made according to the Father's will by a duo would result in an positive answer for that prayer! This was Jesus' point here. What an inspiration then, this is, for duos in families – dads and moms, brothers and sisters, etc – to practice the holy habit of Family Prayer!

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM PETER TO START FAMILY PRAYER

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Apostle Peter wrote the following lines: “Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1 Pet. 3:7). These seemingly-baffling lines written by Peter are practically explained by beloved Bible commentator, Matthew Henry this way: “The husband's duty to the wife implies giving due respect unto her, and maintaining her authority, protecting her, and placing trust in her. They are heirs together of all the blessings of this life and that which is to come, and should live peaceably one with another. Prayer sweetens their converse. And it is not enough that they pray with the family, but husband and wife together by themselves, and with their children.”

There you have it – yet another Bible passage that inspires us to kick-start Family Prayers in our homes!

“Okay! Agreed! I do see that family prayer is important. How do I go about it?” If that is your

question, here is a practical answer from my own personal experience.

HOW TO RUN A FAMILY PRAYER:

1.COOL-OFF

“Cooling off” is the first step in Family Prayer. Two people who don't talk to each other, can't pray together with freedom, can they? Two people who can't stand each other, can they kneel together and pray? If they did, it could be all pretense. Husbands must take the lead here. If it is true that we husbands are the “head of the home”, then we are heads in the department of reconciliation as well! If that were true, we must lead reconciliation efforts with our estranged spouses. Waiting for wives to take the initiative is out of question! The Bible teaches that Christ's love for the church/the lost world serves as a model for our marriages (Eph. 5:25). How did Christ love the church/the lost world? He took the initiative to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus did not wait for Zacchaeus to come and meet him. He went towards Zacchaeus' tree. Will you husband – as you are reading this

article – go towards the room where your wife has perhaps locked herself in, sulking post a heated argument with you? Once you have reached there, would you knock the door? Would you hurry-up and say, “Honey, I am sorry!” and mean it from the bottom of your heart? Cooling-off with your spouse is the first step you can take for Family Prayers to take off in your home!

2.THE CALL

Once the cooling off is done, next comes the call. The call for Family Prayer. The dads should take the lead here. When the floods in Noah's time came, it was Noah who invited his family members and led them into the safety of the ark. In the same way, dads must call out, “It's family prayer time! Switch off the TV, son! Honey, turn off the milk on the stove! Daughter, turn all of our phones on the silent mode! It's time for our family to talk to God and to hear from God!”

When we take the lead in the things of God, it is possible that our family members think we are just joking. It happened to Lot. “So, Lot went out and spoke to his

sons-in-law, who were going to marry his daughters. "Get up," he said. "Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city!" But his sons-in-law thought he was joking." That's the Scripture in Genesis 19:14. But we should not worry. We must still be faithful in calling out our family, for Family Prayer.

3.THE SWITCHING OFF OF THE CELLPHONE

After the call is made for Family Prayer, the cellphone and every other similar distraction has to be ruthlessly silenced for the entire period of the Prayer. I had briefly mentioned this under point one. But as this is very important, I am repeating it!

Several real-life stories can be narrated to talk about the untold dangers of being constantly hooked to the phone. A young woman IT professional. Waiting to board a cab. Busy with her cellphone. So busy with her phone that she did not notice that there is no way a Volvo can be a cab in the city of Hyderabad. So lost texting with her phone that she did not notice that there were two men in the front seats of the car and there was no one else in

the car when she got in. So engrossed with her phone messages that she did not notice that the Volvo car she was in was taking her not to her hostel room as she was promised but somewhere else. And by the time, she got alerted to the danger she was in – the two men were hatching plans to rape her by driving the car to a secluded spot – it was too late. She got into the car at about 8:20 PM in Hyderabad that tragic day in 2013. Four hours later, she was raped by the two men in that car. The cost of burying yourself in a phone can be pretty high in this evil, wicked world full of brute beasts.

If each and every person in a family gets hooked onto a phone in a family all day long, that family is headed for disaster. I am challenging youth through this article, to silence the phone, and sound a siren for Family Prayer in your home!

4.THE CONDUCTING OF THE FAMILY PRAYER

Let us now talk about various ingredients of a Family Prayer.

We could begin our Family Prayer

with a chorus, a song. In many ways, the disciples were like family to Jesus. He 'often met with the disciples' in olive groves of Kidron Valley (John 18:1-3, Voice). There were times when Jesus and the disciples sang hymns when they met up (Matt. 26:30).

Following the SINGING TIME, in our Family Prayer, we move onto the TESTIMONY TIME. Recall the time when Jesus healed a demonized man. He wanted to go with Jesus wherever Jesus went. But Jesus had other plans for him: "No, go back to your family and tell them all the wonderful things the Lord has done for you!" (Luke 8:38-39). In our Family Prayer, each one of us, is given an opportunity to share a testimony. Our son, Dale Nathan, 12 years of age, would speak up during the testimony time of our family. He would say, "I went to school and came back safely. The Lord Jesus gave me wisdom to get 18 on 20 in my class test. This evening, in the cricket game I played with Daddy, I made 24 in my allotted three overs!" Each one of us in our family would take time to testify that way. I discovered that the Bible uses the phrase, "Give Thanks..." over

sixty times using the ESV Bible Smart Phone App.

Even if your family had a rough day, you can still have testimony to share during your Family Prayer time. Matthew Henry, the great Bible commentator, had this testimony on a day when his purse was robbed. He gave a four-point testimony: "Thank you Lord, a) that I was never robbed before; b) that I never carried that much cash in my purse today; c) that though the robber took my purse, he did not take my life; d) that I was the not the robber but one who got robbed!"

Cheri Fuller writes, "One of the best ways to build a spiritual heritage as a family is by recording your prayers and God's answers to those prayers. In Deuteronomy 6:7, God told the Israelites to remember and share with their children what he had done to protect, deliver, and provide for them. In the same way, God wants us to remember His wondrous acts in our lives. As we record them now and review them later, our hearts will fill thanksgiving for the faithful God we serve. We will also be encouraged to trust Him in situations for which we do not see

a ready answer” (When Families Pray, page 15).

After the TESTIMONY TIME can come the BIBLE READING AND SHARING TIME in the Family Prayer. I believe Paul's young ward, Timothy, grew up in a home where they had Family Prayers in which systematic Bible Teaching happened. That may be one reason why Paul wrote the following words about Timothy: *“remembering the sincere faith in you, which lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am convinced that is in you also”* (2 Tim. 1:5). In our Family Prayer time, we read a portion of Scripture and each one of us gets to share what they learnt from that portion of Scripture that was read.

I recall that we as a family read Ecclesiastes 3 one night in our family prayer. That passage began this way: “There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens” (Eccl. 3:1). Following the reading of this passage, I began a short sermon for my children. I said, “There is a time for everything, God's Word says. So, there is a

time to turn on the TV. And there is a time to switch it off....” That's when my daughter (who was 6 years old at that time) spoke up. She said, “Daddy, if that is true, there must be a time for sleeping and there must be a time for prayer. Then why do you doze off during Family Prayer?!” I was stumped! But I quickly gathered myself to say, “Yes, indeed I have done that. I am sorry! I won't do it again! Thank you for mentioning this, Datasha!” I recalled how God spoke to senior Priest Eli through little Samuel who perhaps grew up in his home (1 Sam.3:13).

These times of Bible reading and reflection can be used to teach children growing into adolescence about key matters like sex, love and marriage. Let's say your family reads 2 Samuel 11 one day. You can teach the teen-aged kids that God is not pleased with porn-watching. “The thing that David did displeased the Lord. David watched live porn – the bath of Bathsheba, a woman who was not his wife and the Lord was not pleased, we read in verse 27.”

Following the Bible Meditation time, we must next move on to a

TIME OF INTERCESSION. In our Family Prayer, we pray for the needs of THE world first, before coming to the needs of OUR world. There is indeed a blessing in doing this. Don't we read that Abraham's wife miraculously became pregnant shortly after he prayed for the wife of Abimelech (Gen. 20:18 and Gen.21:1)? The Lord, according to His Sovereign Will, will release every blessing your family needs when you pray both for your family's needs as well as for the lost, the hurting, the perishing.

5. THE CUT THAT'S NECESSARY DURING THE FAMILY PRAYER

Family prayers should not become marathon exercises. Keep it short and sweet, especially when your family consists of small children. Billy Graham writes, "There is no reason why family devotions should be either dry or long. One verse wisely chosen will be remembered better than a whole chapter. Make it interesting, says Ruth (Billy Graham's wife), and make it brief" (Just As I Am, page 715). He also talks about a time when a visiting preacher preached a rather long message

in one of their Family Prayers. This, he records, put his young kids to sleep. What is the lesson here: we must not make Family Prayers long. It should be brief and to the point. Our Family Prayer often winds up before the 10th minute!

6. THE CONTINUATION THAT'S IMPERITIVE FOR FAMILY PRAYER

We must ensure that Family Prayers becomes part of our daily routine, except in cases of emergency. Let's learn from Job: 'Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' This was Job's regular custom" (Job 1:5).

ALTAR-CALL INSIDE MY HOME

On an eventful day during September 2012, my son, Dale, aged 8 then, with tears streaming down his eyes, received Jesus as his personal savior. My wife and I turned a time of discipline into a time of Gospel-sharing and Dale responded positively. It all happened during a Family Prayer time! We did not want to make the

blunder of sharing the Gospel with the entire world, giving an altar call for the entire world, without giving one to our own kids!

WILL YOU(TH) TAKE THE LEAD TO RUN FAMILY PRAYERS?

It is possible, that no one in your family is a believer, except you – the Google Generation youth. So, what do you do? Shelve Family Prayer? Abandon the Family Prayer Altar? No way! Why don't you get inspiration from a Bible Prophecy in Isaiah 11:6 which goes this way: “Young men shall lead them (the people of Israel)!” Why don't you, as a young person, take the lead to call your family for Family Prayer? You know to take the lead to go to the United States to study there, even if no one in your family is inclined to that, perhaps! Then, why do you have to give step-motherly treatment for the things of God! Let's repent! Let us – born-again youth – take the lead in calling for Family Prayer when others in the family fail to do so! Young people can not only

kickstart and run successful start-up companies but also do the same when it comes to Family Prayers!



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For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7



Lessons of Faith From the Fig Tree

Rev. Dr. David Mende

Introduction

Today, there is so much confusion about faith among Christians. Some Christians think that if they can work up enough faith, they can do anything they want to do. Some teach that faith is a law that works like the gravitational force. They say that every time you believe God for some miracle, it will happen. But that kind of teaching is not biblical. On the other hand, there are many Christians who are passive and faithless. They never exercise their faith. They doubt God's word. Jesus said that in the last days, many will not have faith (Lk. 18:8). We must be people of faith. I pray that this article based on Mark 11:20-25 will be a step forward to develop a balanced and biblical faith. In this article, I'll

be sharing very basic, but important truths.

In Mark 11:20-25, we see that Jesus uses the incident of the withered fig tree to teach lessons on faith, prayer, and forgiveness. Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday. On the following day [Monday] (v. 12), as Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem from Bethany, He became hungry. He saw a fig tree from a distance and went to it to have some figs. But when He went near the fig tree, He saw only leaves. Then, He pronounces judgment on the fig tree. Immediately after that, we read that Jesus cleansed the Temple and thereby pronounced judgment on the religious establishment. After cleansing

the Temple, He went out of the city of Jerusalem to Bethany.

As Jesus and His disciples were on the way to Jerusalem from Bethany, they saw the fig tree withered to its roots (v. 20). Mark tells us that this tree was totally withered and there's no way that anyone would eat from this tree as Jesus prophesied in verse 14. This signifies the judgment of Israel. Mark tells us that Peter, who is probably the main source behind Mark's Gospel, remembered Jesus' words when He saw the withered fig tree (v. 21). He was startled that the words of Jesus came true so soon. Jesus uses this occasion to teach a few valuable lessons on faith, prayer, and forgiveness. Let's meditate on these lessons.

1. We must have faith in God (Mk 11:22-23).

When Peter pointed to the fig tree, Jesus didn't respond to Peter by talking about the withered fig tree. Rather, He responds to Peter's words by teaching him and the other disciples a few lessons on faith and prayer. Jesus' simple, yet profound reply was, "Have faith in God" (v. 22). Some people say that this verse must be translated

as "Have God's faith." However, Greek scholars say that this translation is incorrect as the case of the word 'God' is objective genitive, and not possessive. Here, the object of faith is God. Jesus is saying that such a display of power is possible through faith. But the main subject is not faith itself, but faith in God.

As I was writing my thesis for my doctoral studies, I came across a few 'faith preachers' who teach that we must have faith in our faith. That's ludicrous! We must have faith in God. We must trust God, His promises, His character, His power, His purposes and plans, and His will. We must trust God even in our difficult circumstances. We must trust God when we go through a crisis. We must trust God when we go through financial difficulties, when we go through emotional upheavals, when we go through family problems, and when we go through sickness. Faith is absolutely essential in a believer's life.

Hebrews 11:6 says "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists

and that he rewards those who seek him.” Matthew writes that Jesus “did not do many mighty works there [Nazareth], because of their unbelief” (Mt. 13:58). Also, before raising Jairus' daughter from the dead, He asked those who were unbelieving to leave (Mk 5:40). Generally speaking, but not always, Jesus required people to have faith before He could heal them.

The earnestness of the command in verse 23 is emphasized by the phrase, “Truly, I say to you.” Jesus is saying, “Forget the fig tree. If you trust God, you can even uproot mountains.” Jesus is probably referring to the Mount of Olives as “this mountain” on which He was standing. And he was probably referring to the Dead Sea when he talked about 'the sea' which could be seen from the Mount of Olives. The word 'mountain' was a common figure of speech for an obstacle or problem. For instance, that's how it is used in Zechariah 4:7: “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'”

Jesus is saying that if we believe God, we can overcome insurmountable obstacles. These words are for every one of us, not just for apostles or super-spiritual people. Observe that Jesus says, “whoever.” That includes you and me.

Matthew and Luke include similar teachings in their Gospels (Mt. 17:20; Lk. 17:6). Matthew tells us that if you have faith which is the size of a mustard seed, you can move mountains. Even in John 14:12-14, Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” Jesus says that as we speak to the mountains, we must not doubt in our hearts. We must not doubt God. James 1:6 says, “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.” Doubt is deadly!

In Matthew 14:22ff, we read that Peter dared to trust Jesus to walk

on water. However, “when he saw the wind, he was afraid” (v. 30). Jesus rebukes Peter and says, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (v. 31) On the contrary, look at the faith of Abraham. In Romans 4:19-21, apostle Paul writes, “He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.” Don't doubt God or His character or His promises or His Word. Don't look at your circumstances. Don't allow fear to rule your heart. Faith is the opposite of doubt and fear. So, look to God and trust Him! Keep reading and meditating on His Word so that you can develop your faith in God (Rom. 10:17). So, we must have faith in God.

2. We must pray in faith (Mk 11:24).

In verse, Jesus says “whatever you ask in prayer.” Now many people claim this verse and

ignore the rest of the counsel of God found in His Word. Some teach that no matter what you want, you can “name it and claim it.” However, several scriptures rule out such an erroneous teaching. In John 15:7, Jesus says, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” In 1 John 3:22, apostle John writes, “And whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.” Further, he writes, “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us” (1 Jn 5:14). Apostle James reproves his readers, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions” (Jas 4:3). We must pray in faith, but we must always seek God's will as we pray.

The perfect model for such prayer is our Lord Jesus Christ. In Mark 14:36, Jesus says, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” We must have faith in God's power, but at the same time, we must be submissive to His will.

In verse 24, Jesus goes on to say, “believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” James R. Edwards says, “This expression reflects Semitic thought in which the certainty of a future act, based on the trustworthiness of God, can be referred to in the past tense.” When we pray with faith, we must believe that we have already received it because our God is trustworthy! Saints, there is power in prayer. If we want to be mountain-movers, we need to be people of prayer. If we want our lives to be counted, we must be people of prayer. If we want to be used by God, we must be people of prayer. If we want to be a blessing to others, we must be people of prayer. So, we must pray in faith.

3. We must forgive as we pray (Mk 11:25).

The Jews generally stood while praying (v. 25). You can pray in whichever posture you feel comfortable. Not only must we have faith as we pray, but we must also forgive. Jesus says, “forgive, if you have anything against anyone.” Jesus’ language is all-encompassing here. We must forgive others even before they apologize, ask for forgiveness, or change their behavior towards

us. William Barclay says, “The prayer of a bitter man cannot penetrate the wall of his own bitterness.” Since God is love (1 Jn 4:8), we cannot have bitterness or hatred towards others when we approach Him. The emphasis on faith is balanced by Jesus’ teaching on the need for forgiveness.

In 1 Corinthians 13:2, the apostle writes, “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” The theme of forgiveness is emphasized in the Lord’s Prayer as well. Our Lord taught, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mt. 6:12). He further says, “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). We are not in a state of receiving forgiveness from God if we are not able to forgive others. In Ephesians 4:32, apostle Paul writes, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

We must be in the right relationship with God and with one another if we have to receive answers to our prayers. It's not that we have a right to be heard by God if we forgive others, but forgiveness shows that we have a right relationship with God and others and thus opens the way for our prayers to reach God. In Romans 12:18, apostle Paul exhorts, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Faith works by love (Gal. 5:6). Faith without love is nothing!

There is a word of warning from the Apostle Paul when you don't forgive. He says, "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil" (Eph. 4:26-27). We open a big door to the devil when we are angry and unforgiving. So, we must forgive as we pray.

Conclusion

Our Lord Jesus perfectly exemplifies faith, prayer, and forgiveness. So, the main message of this article is: **Follow the example of Jesus in faith, prayer, and forgiveness.**

Let's resolve to have faith in God, His character, and His promises at all times. Let's pray with faith.

Let's not allow doubt to cripple our faith. Let's forgive even as we pray. Don't keep a record of others' wrongs. Forgive just as Christ forgave you!



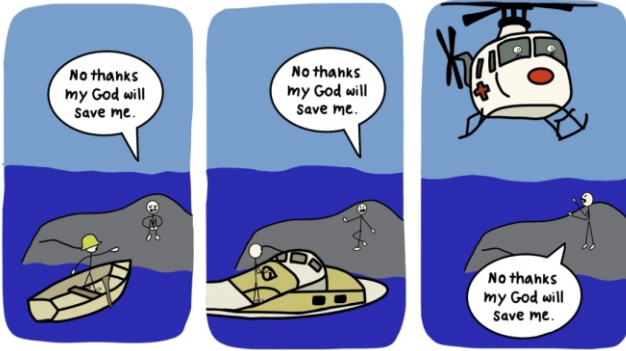
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SEEING GOD'S HAND

Kuruvilla Chandy



Graphics by Sophie Chacko

A man was marooned on a rock in the middle of the sea. Another man came by in a boat and asked, "Do you want any help?" The man on the rock said, "No, the Lord will help me." Then a ship that was passing that way sent a rescue boat to take him off the rock, and the man again refused help saying, "The Lord will help me." Some time later a helicopter spotted him, a ladder was let down and he rejected their help, saying, "The Lord will help me." Soon afterwards the high tide covered the rock and the man drowned. Reaching heaven he asked an angel, "Why didn't the Lord save me?" The angel said, "The Lord sent you a boat, a ship, and a helicopter. Why didn't you take His help? What were you expecting?"

That is not a story from the pages of Scripture, but the message is very definitely scriptural.

We need to understand how God works among people. Far too often, we imagine that only if something were to drop straight out of heaven can it be classified as God's work. We want an angel to visit us, or hear God speak to us in an audible voice. We want miracle cures, large supplies of wealth, or wonderfully "good fortune." We feel that only such things are the stuff of God's work. What does the Bible say? How does God do His work?

Through Ordinary Means Most of the Time

When Israel was wandering in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, God provided them

manna—miracle food from heaven. They had never seen anything like it before. They had not seen it growing in Egypt. Merchants from many lands had come to Egypt. No one had ever sold anything like it to them. So, when they saw manna they asked, “What is it?” In the end, they just called it “What is it?” or “manna” (Ex.16:14). Without fail, for forty years, the Israelites had found their food just lying around on the ground and gathered it with no other labour than simply collecting it. But after the Israelites had crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land (Jos.3:1-4:24), renewed the covenant with God through circumcision of all males born during the wilderness wanderings (5:1-9), celebrated the Passover afresh (v.10), and eaten the produce of the land they now owned (v.11), the manna stopped (v.12).

When the Israelites were leaving Egypt, they had been promised “a land flowing with milk and honey.” I wonder if there were any Israelites who expected to see an actual river filled with milk instead of water, and another filled with honey. Did any among them say, “Hey, there's no milk and honey flowing in the rivers here. Let's go back to Egypt”?

How did the land flow with milk and honey? The Israelites discovered they had to labour hard to make it happen. They could not just lie around lazing and get out of bed only to fill their cups from rivers that flowed with milk and honey. They found out that God was not going to do all the work and have them do none of the work. We must learn the lesson they learnt: God expects us to work with Him for our miracles.

Extraordinary Means Some times

Even as we learn this lesson, let's not forget that there was manna once. There was a time when Israelites did eat miracle food that they had not laboured for. When was that? It was while they were going through their wilderness experience. It happened when they were physically unable to do anything to take care of their needs. If they had not been given manna they would have starved to death. That is when they got manna from God. It had dropped out of heaven and almost into their laps. Yes, those sorts of miracles do happen. They are not more miraculous than the other kind where we have to do our bit to seek God's blessing. God is the one who decides what kind of miracles happen to people.

Based on the fact that the Israelites got manna only during their wilderness wanderings, we could say that that type of miracle happens only in the wilderness periods in people's lives. Jacob has a tailoring and embroidery work among poor Muslims that provides them with a means of using their skills to earn a living. Jacob holds a time of prayer for his workers. There is no compulsion that the workers have to attend. One woman had been antagonistic at first. As time passed, she grew open and started to attend and then she prayed to Jesus about some need and got an answer. So, she now prays for others. Miracles happen when she prays. Miracles didn't occur when Jacob prayed. But when this poor, illiterate new believer prays they do.

I've heard others who can vouch for similar happenings among the poor and illiterate that they work with. God does have a special care for those who are in the wilderness. That is because they have no one but God.

The equivalent of the Old Testament account of Israel being fed by manna is the story of the Lord Jesus feeding 5,000 with just a few loaves and fish. We

always call it the feeding of the five thousand, but there could have been about 15,000 to 20,000 if the women and children were counted. It is important to note some features of this story of feeding people with miracle bread. First, God still made use of the ordinary. There was a lad there with five loaves and two fishes, who had to be willing to give it to Jesus for the miracle to happen (Jn.6:9). They say that Sai Baba, much like a magician, used to snatch things like *vibhooti* (sacred ash) and *laddoos* from the air to give his devotees. But our Lord wasn't a magician or that kind of a miracle worker. He worked His miracles using ordinary means like a soothing touch, a gentle healing word, and a poor boy's generosity and trust.

Secondly, when Jesus fed the 20,000, He provided an ordinary meal of barley bread and fish, a poor boy's fare. Jesus didn't take that ordinary bread and convert it into *biryani*. Imagine the people of that day saying, "What's so great about this meal? This isn't a miracle. He isn't giving us *biryani*, is he?"

Many of us will not accept ordinary bread from God as a miracle. We tell God what kind of

miracle we want and go through life saying that we haven't witnessed a miracle in our lives, when all the time the miraculous is pressing in on us.

Thirdly, we learn that our miracle-working God doesn't waste His miracles. The disciples collected all the leftovers (Matt.14:20). They must have done that at the Lord's behest. When God can produce things out of nothing or very little, why bother with leftovers? Why not be prodigal with God's creation? We can always ask for another miracle. This story about not being wasteful is why Christians should care about the environment and become environmentalists who subscribe to the ethic of Christ Jesus.

Everything God Does Is a Miracle

When God uses ordinary means to make provision, there's nothing ordinary about it any longer. What He does is always extraordinary.

In God's world, a seedling grows from a seed. It's still a miracle. How do you explain that taking a seed and burying it in the soil makes it grow into something larger than the seed ever was? While the seed remained a seed,

it didn't seem to have any life in it. But after "burial", while the outer casing rots away a new plant springs from the ground. Paul said it reminded him of resurrection (1 Cor.15:36-38).

People sometimes tell a boy or a girl, "You need more meat on your bones." They are not suggesting that the young person should check into a hospital and have a surgeon lift their skin and get some meat glued onto their bones. We eat grains, fruits and "dead meat", and miraculously, what we eat becomes living meat in our bodies.

Today, many things are described as "miracles of science"—fast modes of communication and transportation, medical procedures, etc. However, all these "miracles" use God's raw materials, God's laws of the universe and the energy God has put into things.

There are no non-miracles. Everything God does is a miracle. What God's Spirit told Peter in another context is applicable: "What God has approved, don't call that common [or unholy or unblessed or non-sacred]" (Acts 10:15).

Recognizing the Lord's Hand

Paul asked a very pertinent question of everyone who thought that they in themselves were somehow special compared to others. He asked, "Isn't everything you have and everything you are, sheer gifts from God?" (1 Cor.4:7, *The Message*).

Everything about our lives is miraculous. There is nothing in our lives that does not have its origin in God. Everything is "of grace." What we have, what we have gained, what we have accomplished...everything comes to us by the grace of God. We must live our lives in this awareness of the presence of the sacred in our lives. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem says it well:

Earth's crammed with heaven
And every common bush on fire with
God.
But only he who sees takes off his
shoes,
The rest sit and pluck blackberries.

True awareness of grace leads to gratitude. Ten men suffering from leprosy were healed by Jesus. Only one turned back to thank Him. Jesus asked with some sadness, "Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" (Lk.17:17).

Gratitude to God is the last thing on the list for many people. If they have been cured of an illness, they think first of thanking the doctors and nurses who attended them.

Kumar attempted suicide and was taken to the hospital. While he hung between life and death, his pastor visited and prayed with him and the family. A week later Kumar's father wrote a letter to the local newspaper acknowledging the services of the doctors and the supportiveness of his colleagues. There was no mention that God had been gracious to them and answered their prayers.

Feeling grateful to God is an attitude. The thankfulness comes from within and finds expression in tokens of gratitude. Under the Old Testament order, believers offered their first fruits, tithes, and other sacrifices to God. Gratitude does result in giving to God. It is not payment though, because we have nothing of our own to pay with which to pay Him. Whatever we give comes from God Himself in the first place. But we give to acknowledge God—that He is there, and that we can relate to Him and that all we have has

come from Him. We are just like little children who want to buy mummy or daddy a present and ask mummy or daddy for money to pay for their gift.

We are at the beginning of a new year. Don't go through it without observing the Lord's hand on/in your life. Since the Lord will be there for you, there is no need to be apprehensive about the unknowns of the future.

As the world teetered on the brink of war, King George VI quoted a poem by Minnie Louise Haslins in his 1939 Christmas broadcast to the British Empire:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown".
And he replied:
"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way".
So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night...

A chorus we used to sing in Sunday School, has become a favourite in adult life because it is so reassuring:

God is still on the throne.
And He will remember His own;
Though trials may press us and

burdens distress us,
He never will leave us alone;
God is still on the throne.
He never for sakes His own;
His promise is true, He will not forget you,
God is still on the throne (Kittie Louise Suffield – 1884-1972)

Or, as Maltbie D. Babcock (1858-1901) penned,

This is my Father's world:
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world:
Why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King: let the heavens ring!
God reigns: let the earth be glad!

Guess what? There will be miracles galore in 2024. Keep your eyes peeled. See the hand of the Lord and live gratefully.



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Faith

Dr. Babu John Vettamala

Faith is a concept which is easy to speak about but difficult to practise. What it is, is quick to comprehend but hardest to digest. Apart from the Bible definition given to faith in Book of Hebrews, Christian sages have endeavoured to define its meaning from the real-life experiences of great stalwarts of faith in the Bible, and the German scholar Delitzsch is one of them.

Analysing the eventful saga of Abraham's sojourn as a nomad in the land of Canaan, Delitzsch remarks that faith takes hold on the word of promises and on the strength of it is ready to leave the present and visible for the sake of the future and the invisible.

Abraham had been living as a man in high estate, that too in the wealthiest city in the world of those days when he was called by God to leave his comfort zone and go to an alien land as a nomad. Jeopardising the safety of his life and existence, the Patriarch embarked on this venture, and thus, by setting an example by his actions to the word of promise he heard, Abraham proved what faith means.

There are two contradictory meanings ascribed to faith- the one is its etymological meaning involved in its original Hebrew root, and the other is a Western meaning attributed to it by the

Western world that has largely misunderstood its original meaning.

To the West, the word faith is an activity of the mind- it is something that happens in the mind of a person. Or, it could be rightly identified as the reactions of the mind towards what a person comes across in the world of reality or even imagination. If asked whether the body has got to do anything in the path of faith, mostly the answer is a big NO.

That's why when a person, especially an evangelist says that he lives by faith he simply means that he is not doing anything in the physical realm to make a living. This is even more so in the realms of Spiritual Healing, where the sick man or those others concerned don't have to do anything like exposing the man to treatment system, but just believe and pray with ever stronger faith so that God would heal the sick.

And they allude to Jesus' way of asking the sick man whether he believed in the Son of Man, and if

the answer is positive and affirmative, that is the only requirement for a healing.

As a pastor and Bible teacher for the last twenty-five years, I have no problem with this outlook. But my outlook is not what counts. It is the Word of God and what it means by Faith is all that matters.

According to its Hebrew origin, the word faith is the English translation of the Hebrew 'emunah'. The Hebrew vocabulary is basically based on concrete ideas, and hence, there is little room for abstract ideas in it. That means every Hebrew word has a concrete action associated with it. When I say concrete, it is very physical and absolutely and visibly practical.

Here Emunah means the way in which a person's body reacts to what his mind comes across. That means an action in the physical realm. So, faith means a person is doing something different physically as he has come to know something which has accepted. Suppose he has come across something new, but

his body does not respond to it with a specific action, then there is no faith being activated. This is the Hebrew concept of faith.

This aspect of faith is well revealed by apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost when the gathering crowd bewildered by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the subsequent speech of Peter asked him in awe: Brothers, what shall we do?

If it were an American evangelist of today who heard the question his answer would have been: "Nothing brother, just believe, that's all, then you shall be saved". That is salvation by faith, not by action, to the unscrupulous Western mindset.

However, this was Peter, a man well learned in the Hebrew meaning and connotations of the concept, faith. He gave them a list of things that they had to do physically so that they could be saved.

This is the need of the hour. Christian faith is not just an abstract ideology, detached from the need of any physical activity, but something to be proved and put to practice in the physical realm in our everyday 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.

Because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:3

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Intercessory Prayer Points



December 2023

1 MONDAY Thank God for the new month and the new year. Pray that the Lord would make you fruitful in all your endeavours.

2 TUESDAY Pray for Blood of Jesus International, Odisha that their readership would increase, and that the gospel would be spread far and wide through them.

3 WEDNESDAY Pray for Christian Education department of EFI (CEEFI). Pray that the new materials would be ready soon and that it may effectively be used by many churches.

4 THURSDAY Pray for children who are preparing for board exams. Pray for clarity of thoughts. Pray for good health, good retention power and good time management so that they would give their best in their exams.

5 FRIDAY Pray for Evangelical Fellowship of India that God would provide its needs and continue to

use it for the extension of His kingdom.

6 SATURDAY Pray for the homeless and the poor who are under the extreme weather that they would be provided for. Pray that people would have the desire to share their resources with them.

7 SUNDAY Pray for all the Church leaders in our country. Pray that they would love the Lord with all their hearts, minds, and strength. Pray that they would handle the word of God correctly and teach diligently.

8 MONDAY Pray for Episcopal Church in India Council, Madhya Pradesh that the church would grow in Christlike characters and be a good influence on the people around them.

9 TUESDAY Pray for growth of Fusion Church (Jan Milaap Samiti), New Delhi. Pray that it would impact many and transform them.

10 WEDNESDAY Pray for all the EFI Members both group members and individual members to be guided by the Holy Spirit as they start the new year.

11 THURSDAY National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Pray for those involved in human trafficking awareness programs that they would find ways to make people aware of this social evil. Pray for the victims of human trafficking that they would be restored emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

12 FRIDAY National Youth Day. Pray that the youth of our country may know and honor God in the height of their youth. Pray that they would live meaningfully in Christ. Pray also that God would provide and meet their needs in His right time and right ways.

13 SATURDAY Pray for your city today. Pray that God would raise more prayer warriors to intercede for the city. May the Holy Spirit actively work in the hearts and minds of His people to obey His commands.

14 SUNDAY Pray that God would eradicate Biblical illiteracy among His people. Pray that God would use you as His agent to fulfill that goal.

15 MONDAY Continue to pray for

our nation persistently. Pray that all in the leadership position would be faithful and caring guardians of the constitution. Pray that they would grow in wisdom, understanding, discernment and knowledge. Pray that people would feel protected, loved, and cared for under their leadership.

16 TUESDAY Continue to pray for students who are under exams pressure. Pray that God would enable them to handle it well and that they would do their best in their exams.

17 WEDNESDAY Pray for the Asia Evangelical Alliance D6 Online family conference to be held on 17-18 May, 2024. Pray that many families may be impacted through this event. Pray for all the speakers and organizers for wisdom and guidance.

18 THURSDAY Pray that the Gospel preached would bear many fruits and Christ's body would grow.

19 FRIDAY Pray for the finances of Evangelical Fellowship of India. Pray for God's abundant provision for the need so that EFI may continue to be the voice of the Indian churches.

20 SATURDAY Pray for the

persecuted church. Pray that the church would relentlessly spread the love of Christ despite oppositions.

21 SUNDAY Let us pray for ourselves again today that we would love giving more than receiving and be a blessing to many around us.

22 MONDAY Pray for the ministry of Heavenly Feast in Kerala that the church would serve the cause of Christ with compassion. May the Lord's name be glorified in and through them.

23 TUESDAY Pray for your neighbourhood today that it would be a safe place for all the residents as well as visitors.

24 WEDNESDAY National Girl Child Day. Pray for all the girls in our country that they would enjoy equal rights and build a bright and beautiful life.

25 THURSDAY Pray for all the schools in your neighborhood. Pray that there would be a place where our children are safe, taught, loved, and developed as good and responsible human beings.

26 FRIDAY Pray for our nation as we celebrate the 75th Republic Day today. Continue to pray for all the political leaders in your respective states as well as in the center for good governance and excellent leadership.

28 SUNDAY Pray for your church to grow in maturity to serve God and His people without reservation. Pray that God would draw many people to hear His Word through your church.

29 MONDAY Pray for all Indian Army families. Thank God for their sacrificial love and services for the country. Pray for protection and God's abundant blessings upon them and their families.

30 TUESDAY Pray for all the missionaries who are working relentlessly. Pray that God may comfort and rejuvenate them and bless the works of their hands.

31 WEDNESDAY Thank God for being with you throughout the month. Pray that you would grow closer to Him as days go by.

As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.' Romans 10:11



EFI Remembers Rev. H. Chungthang Thiek: A Legacy of Faith and Unity

In memory of Rev. H. Chungthang Thiek, former Secretary of EFI Northeast region and a distinguished evangelist, our hearts are heavy with sorrow. Rev. Thiek devoted 27 years of his life to EFI, from 1988 to 2015, leaving an indelible mark on the organization and the Church at large.

A graduate of the Union Biblical Seminary, Rev. Thiek's influence reached far and wide. His tenure witnessed the establishment of invaluable relationships across Northeast India. Notably, he played a pivotal role in fostering reconciliation and peace during regional conflicts, particularly mediating between the Hmar and Dimasa tribes in the early 2000s.

Renowned for his dynamic and humour-infused preaching and exceptional organizational skills, Rev. Thiek spearheaded numerous training programs, contributing significantly to EFI's growth in the Northeast. A sought-after speaker for revival meetings and conferences, his impact reverberated deeply within the community.

Rev. Thiek's visionary leadership led to the acquisition of EFI's current property in Guwahati, now known as the EFI Northeast Centre. His legacy continues to shape the ministry of EFI in the region.

Reflecting on Rev. Thiek's life, Rev. Vijayesh Lal, the General Secretary of EFI, shared, "Rev. Thiek was a revered Church leader across the Northeast, leaving a void that will be deeply felt. He completed his race with dignity and faithfulness. It was a privilege to minister alongside him and travel across the states in the region. He opened up the region for me and was a guide in every sense. His introduction of the 'Standing Strong through the Storm' seminars in the region impacted countless leaders. I remember his cheerful disposition, boundless energy, sensitive nature, and willingness to serve. Our shared trips particularly to Arunachal and Tripura remains etched in my memory. Though we were praying for his health, we also had the honour of briefly hosting him and his family at the EFI centre. I was looking forward to seeing him this new year, but now we will meet before our Master. As we reflect on his life, let's remember a faithful and cheerful servant of God. Our prayers are with his family. May his memory inspire us to press on faithfully and until we meet again, may his legacy lives on in our hearts."

EFI kindly requests prayers for the family of Rev. Thiek. If you have messages of condolences, we would be grateful to pass them on to the family. You may write to us at mail@efionline.org.

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



EFI wishes you and
your family a

*Happy
New Year*
2024

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