

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF EFI PUBLICATION TRUST

# aim

January 2025 ❖ PAGES 63 ❖ ₹ 20/-

A Journey of Faith



*"We love because he first loved us"*

*1 John 4:19.*



Let us come before  
His presence with  
Thanksgiving  
and make a  
joyful noise unto  
Him with psalms

— Psalms 95:2



# A Journey of Faith contents

Vol. 54 / No. 01  
 AIM Annual Subscription for  
 India, Nepal & Bhutan Rs. 200/-  
 (Other countries \$ 20)

A monthly publication of EFI Publication Trust

## Editorial

Rev. Vijayesh Lal .....04

## Walking with God in the New Year

Rev. Dr. Samuel Richmond .....39

## Do You Doubt God's Love

Rev. Dr. David Mende .....07

## In His Image: A Journey of Renewal and Transformation

Mr. Willingson Shingnaisui .....45

## Reflecting God's Love

Dr. Shantanu Dutta .....12

## How Goes the Enemy

Rev. Kuruville Chandy .....16

## A New Beginning for Yourself Finding an Epiphany within you

Rev. Dr. Vivek Gundimi .....51

## The Love of God

Dr. Chacko Thomas .....23

## Grasping The Four Dimensional Infinite Love of God!

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj .....55

## Theological perspective of Marriage

Ps. Grish Lal Tamta .....28

## Prayer

.....59

## Embracing the New Year with Christ and the Holy Spirit

Rev. Dr. Richard Howell .....36

### ADVERTISEMENT RATE

Centre Spread (Color) :	Rs. 7000/-
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/-

### Editorial Committee

Rev. Vijayesh Lal	: Hon. Editor-in-Chief
Mrs. Sara Chonghoikim	: Associate Editor
Dr. John Dayal	: Editorial Consultant
Mr. Manish Walter	: Design Consultant
Mr. Hansraj Jain	: Nagpur
Mrs. Sonia Daniel	: New Delhi

Send your advertisement matter 6 weeks in advance, along with payment by DD or M.O. in favour of 'EFI Publication Trust' Add Rs. 20/- for outstation Cheques.

### 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](mailto:aimatefi@gmail.com), website: [www.efionline.org](http://www.efionline.org)

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

Please Note: No article in AIM should be reproduced /translated without Editor's written permission.

**Editor's Note: Each Author is responsible for the point of view presented, which does not necessarily represent the view of Evangelical Fellowship of India.**

*Editorial*



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

## **Standing Firm in Faith: A Call for Justice and Hope in 2025**

As we step into 2025, the Indian Christian community stands at a critical moment that calls for both reflection and renewed commitment to our faith journey. The past year has witnessed unprecedented opposition, with the Religious Liberty Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India getting reports of more than 720 incidents targeting Christians through mid-December. These numbers represent not just statistics, but stories of faith tested, and resilience demonstrated across our nation.

The Christmas season – a time meant for peace and celebration of our Saviour's birth – bore witness to the painful reality of religious intolerance. In Unnao, Uttar Pradesh, extremists

reportedly stormed into Pastor Ajay Rajput's Christmas morning service, shouting slogans, harassing worshippers, and later filing false conversion charges. This incident, one of fourteen documented attacks during the Christmas season, reflects a pattern repeated across states from Palakkad to Jodhpur, from Rishikesh to Maharashtra. Each disrupted service signifies not merely an assault on religious freedom but embodies a congregation's shattered peace and a pastor's tested faith.

The crisis in Manipur stands as a particularly sobering testament to how religious and ethnic tensions can tear at our society's fabric. The loss of more than 250 lives, the displacement of thousands, and the destruction of

hundreds of places of worship since May 2023 demand justice and healing. As believers, we must intensify our prayers and efforts for peace in this region, remembering Paul's words that our struggle is not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12).

In the face of such trials, one might ask where hope can be found. Yet it is precisely in such moments that our faith offers its deepest wisdom: we find strength not in despair but in the unfailing hope that defines our identity in Christ. This transcends mere optimism, calling us to participate in God's transformative work while trusting in His future. As Paul reminds us in Romans 5:3-4, "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope." This promise sustains us not just in endurance, but in pursuing justice and reconciliation.

The prophet Micah's words light our path: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). This divine mandate compels us to seek justice while maintaining our commitment to kindness and

humility. In this pursuit, we must cultivate the spiritual discipline of recognizing both the injustice we face and the humanity of those who oppose us – a Christ-like perspective that enables transformation and restoration.

Pressing institutional issues confront the church in India today. The exclusion of Dalit Christians from Scheduled Caste status persists despite unchanged social and economic conditions after conversion. Anti-conversion laws face misuse, leading to baseless arrests, as witnessed recently in Madhya Pradesh's Kerpani village, where authorities reportedly detained Christians during Christmas celebrations in Burhanpur. These incidents reveal systemic issues requiring our engaged response. The heightened scrutiny of Christian educational and charitable institutions, which have served India for generations, demands wisdom and transparency while we maintain our commitment to serve all communities.

Looking ahead, we draw strength from Isaiah's promise: "Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). This sustains our mission to

uphold justice and share Christ's love.

Our path forward requires three key commitments:

- **Prayer and Fasting:** Let us deepen our intercession for our nation, its leaders, and those who oppose us. Jesus's command to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44) speaks powerfully to our present reality.
- **Unity in Action:** The Body of Christ must transcend denominational boundaries to support affected congregations and individuals. As Paul reminds us, "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Corinthians 12:26).
- **Constructive Engagement:** Beyond dialogue with government authorities, our commitment to justice demands broader participation. We must partner with civil society organisations advancing fundamental rights for all communities. Our advocacy should champion constitutional values of justice, liberty, and equality for every Indian citizen. This embodies Christ's love for all our neighbours and builds understanding across faith boundaries.

The early church faced severe persecution yet emerged stronger through their faithful testimony. Our present trials offer opportunities to demonstrate the transformative power of Christ's love and the resilience of faith-filled communities.

As we move forward, we do not merely await change – God calls us to become agents of transformation. Our response must flow from our faith's deepest truths: extending grace while seeking justice, building bridges while standing firm, and demonstrating love in the face of opposition. This radical obedience characterized the early church, and God calls us to the same devotion today.

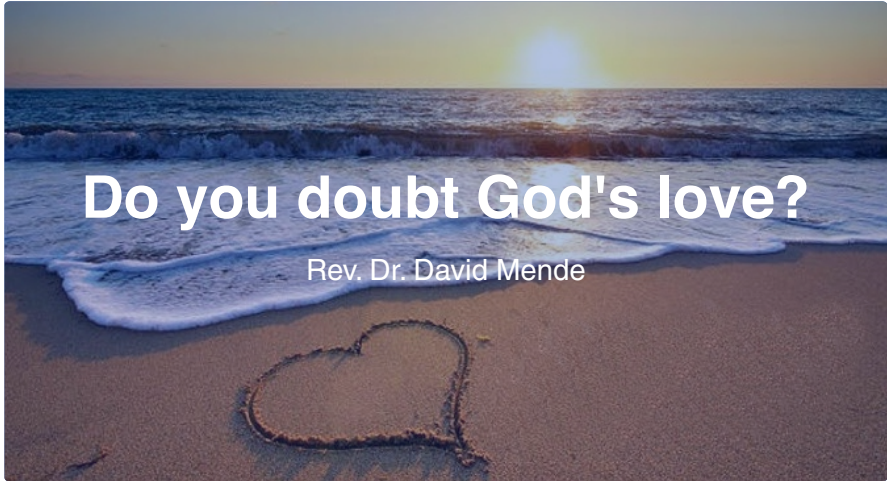
Let this be a time when Christians in India rise with renewed faith, unwavering hope, and Christ-like love to engage constructively with our society. May our actions display both courage and grace, our advocacy embody both truth and love, as we labour for an India where all communities thrive in peace, contributing to our nation's progress while remaining true to their faith.

In Christ's service,

**Rev. Vijayesh Lal**

*Editor in Chief – AIM Magazine*





# Do you doubt God's love?

Rev. Dr. David Mende

## Introduction

A little boy went to a mall along with his mother. As they passed a toy store, the boy politely requested his mother to buy him a toy. When his mother denied his request, he began to cry loudly. He said, "Mom, you don't love me." His mother replied, "I do love you, my son." Wiping the tears off his cheeks, the child protested and said, "If you really loved me, you would buy me that toy!" Sometimes, we act just like that little boy. As we go through our spiritual journey, we often measure God's love according to our circumstances. When we go through a financial crisis, sickness, hurt, or persecution, we question God's love. We think that God is unfair to us.

But praise God, he doesn't reject us when we doubt his love. Rather, he patiently assures us that he loves us. This is exactly what the Lord does with the Jews who returned to their homeland from the Babylonian exile. In Malachi 1:1-5, God affirms his love for doubting Israel by reminding them that they were sovereignly chosen. The message I would like to draw from this passage for today's context is that God's love for us is demonstrated in our salvation.

## 1. Sometimes we all doubt God's love (Malachi 1:2a).

"I have loved you," says the Lord. But you say, "How have you loved us?" (Mal. 1:2a). Though the exiles returned from Babylon with

a lot of enthusiasm, they were discouraged. At this time, Judah was a social and political backwater in the Persian Empire. The territory of Judah (32 km by 48 km) had a population of about 150,000. The Jews were still under the foreign rule of Persia (Neh. 9:36ff). Moreover, they were constantly opposed by their neighbors (Ezra 4:23; Dan. 9:25). Judah did not have a Davidic king ruling over them. Also, since the glorious promises of Haggai and Zechariah, including the promise of the coming Messiah were not yet fulfilled, the Jews were disappointed and discouraged.

Compared to Solomon's temple and the new temple that Ezekiel saw in a vision (Ezek. 40-43), the postexilic temple was physically and spiritually inferior. There was no visible manifestation of God during this period. It was a time when the Jews had to live more by faith than by sight. They needed assurance of God's love and also rebuke for their spiritual lethargy. In this context, the Lord begins with beautiful words: "I have loved you." But the Jews protest, "How have you loved us?" In other words, they were saying, "We deserve better." Like

these Jews, sometimes we too doubt God's love. We protest, "Lord, if you love me, why am I facing this situation?" We often ask this question when we go through a sickness, a financial crisis, a family problem, or when our prayer is not answered. We may feel unloved even when the Lord disciplines us because of our sins.

Now how do we know that God really loves us?

## **2. God's love is revealed in our salvation (Malachi 1:2b-5).**

"Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated (Malachi 1:2b-3a). God's response to Israel's protest is that he loved them with a sovereign and unconditional love. God contrasts Israel with the Edomites to prove that he loves them. As we know, Jews came from Jacob, and the Edomites from Esau. Here, "loved" refers to God's choice rather than affection. Similarly, "hated" refers to rejection rather than hostility. "Hated" basically means "loved less." Earlier, Esau had rejected his covenant with Yahweh (cf. Gen. 25:34; 26:34-35).



Though Esau was older than Jacob, God chose Jacob. Why? What was so special about Jacob? Nothing! Jacob was a deceiver. God chose Jacob because of his unconditional and sovereign love. In fact, God chose Jacob even before he and his brother, Esau were born (Gen. 25:23)! God chose Israel because of his sovereign will. This fact is emphasized in Deuteronomy 7:6-8: "6 For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

God loved Israel with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3). Further, God's love towards Israel is like a mother's love towards her

child. He has engraved them on the palm of his hands (Isa. 49:14-16). Now both Israel and Edom had sinned. But God showed mercy to Israel because of his sovereign love and left Edom in the misery they brought upon themselves due to their sin. This proves God's love for Israel.

The Lord says, "I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." (Malachi 1:3b). Jeremiah prophesied the same thing against Judah in Jeremiah 9:11: "I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a lair of jackals, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant." The Lord alludes to this prophecy in Jeremiah and says that he has made Edom a wasteland which was dwelt by jackals. But the Lord had brought back the Jews to their own homeland because of his sovereign and free love.

In verse 4, God's rejection of Edom is elaborated: If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the Lord of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country,' and 'the people with whom the Lord is

angry forever" (Mal. 1:4). Though the Edomites tried to rebuild their nation, "the Lord of hosts," the Commander of the heavenly armies promises to tear them down. The Edomites would be called "the wicked country" because of their wickedness. The Edomites had made an alliance with Babylon to destroy Jerusalem which provoked the Lord's anger (cf. Ps. 137:7; Lam. 4:21–22; Obad. 10–14). They would be referred to as "the people with whom the Lord is angry forever."

Here, there's a lesson for us. It is possible to live such sinful and rebellious lives that the Lord can be angry with us forever. May none of us ever live such lives that will cause the Lord to turn his back on us. When you commit a sin, run back to the Lord and repent. The words in Malachi 1:4 must have awakened Israel to the fact that God could have torn them also down forever. But he didn't. He brought them back to their own land after 70 years of exile. Why did he do that? Not because of their goodness, but because of his sovereign will and love.

Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!" (Mal. 1:5). We must have the passion to see the Lord glorified beyond the borders of our homes, churches, villages, cities, and nation! This verse also reveals that comprehending God's greatness through the judgment of the wicked helps us to comprehend his love for us.

Now, how can we really know that God loves us today? We know that God loves us because he chose us despite our sinfulness. We know that God loves us because he took the initiative in saving us. We know that God loves us because he saved us out of his sovereign and free will. We know that God loves us because he sent his only Son to die on the cross for our sins. Several verses in the Bible reveal God's awesome love towards his people:

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has

blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:3-5).

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are (1 John 3:1).

### **Conclusion**

The Lord loved us by choosing us and saving us despite our sinfulness. We never need to doubt God's love, as it was fully demonstrated in Christ! May we possess the same assurance that Apostle Paul had regarding God's love towards us. "38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39)!



### **Rev. Dr. David Mende**

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

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

*There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off. Proverbs 23:18*



From a Christian biblical perspective, God's love is the central theme that permeates the entire narrative of the Bible. It is a love that is unconditional, sacrificial, and transformative, providing the foundation for the relationship between God and humanity. However, whenever the theme of God's love comes up, the text most often quoted is the familiar John 3, verse 16. Of course, it is a very important theological text. It is one of the most cherished verses in Scripture: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." This single verse encapsulates the depth, breadth, and transformative power of

God's love, offering us a foundation for understanding His relationship with humanity and the hope it provides.

John 3:16 is more than a verse; it is a declaration of God's heart for humanity. It reveals a sacrificial, inclusive, and eternal love. This love changes everything. It draws us into a relationship with God, offers hope in the face of despair, and inspires us to live lives marked by grace and compassion.

At the heart of John 3:16 is the concept of sacrificial love. God's love is not just an emotion or feeling but an action. It is manifested through the ultimate sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ.

This act of giving is the epitome of unconditional love, where God offers His most precious gift to a world that often turns away from Him. This sacrificial love underscores the depth and sincerity of God's affection for humanity. It shows that His love is not passive but actively seeks to restore and redeem.

The phrase "God so loved the world" indicates the inclusiveness of His love. It is not limited to a specific group of people or a particular time and place. God's love transcends all boundaries, reaching out to every person regardless of background, race, or status. This universal love challenges believers to reflect on their capacity to love others. It calls for a love that is expansive, embracing, and all-encompassing.

The word inclusive is important to me. As an NGO worker for most of my adult life, I have often seen the word inclusive interpreted according to one's suitability. Ethnic groups often understand the word inclusive of people such as them, and so do tribal or

linguistic groups. In doing so, we have undermined the word and indeed God Himself.

One of the most profound aspects of God's love is its unconditional nature. Unlike human love, which can often be conditional and based on merit, God's love is given freely and without reservation. This is evident in passages such as Romans 5:8, which states, "But God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This verse underscores that God's love is not contingent upon our actions or worthiness but is instead a reflection of His grace and mercy. God's love reaches out to us even when we are at our most unlovable, offering forgiveness and reconciliation.

How inclusive is God's love, is shown to us in Revelation 21 where it says that the gates of the New Jerusalem will be open to all the nations of the world and all the kings will bring their treasures, glory and honour in and God will accept it all.

Scattered through the Bible's

pages are examples of people who were excluded from mainstream society but whom Jesus included. Jesus's genealogy, which is found in Matthew's gospel, has some names. Earlier, we read the story in 2 Samuel 9, where David seeks out any remaining members of Saul's family to show kindness for the sake of Jonathan, Saul's son and David's dear friend. David learns about Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, who is crippled in both feet. David brings Mephibosheth to his palace, restores to him all the land that belonged to Saul, and allows him to eat at the king's table. Others we read of are Zacchaeus, the tax collector, the Samaritan woman, the ten lepers who he healed, the once demon-possessed Mary Magdalene. In this, God's love demonstrated that for those who lived on the fringes and extremes of society, Jesus brought centre stage.

In Matthew 25 v 35 to 40, Jesus brings it all together by specifying the ones he particularly highlights. Matthew 25:35-40 offers a profound insight into the nature of God's love and its

expression through acts of compassion and kindness. In these verses, Jesus says, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." When questioned by the righteous about when they did these things, Jesus replies, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

These verses seem to be the ones where the rubber hits the road. It shows that God's love is not just an abstract concept but is demonstrated through tangible actions that meet the needs of others by His people. Feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting those in prison are all ways in which God's love is made manifest in the world. Moreover, these verses emphasize the importance of seeing Christ in everyone, especially in the marginalized



and vulnerable. By serving "the least of these," believers are, in essence, serving Christ himself. This reflects a divine perspective that every act of kindness and compassion extends God's love to the world. It challenges believers to live out their faith through service and to recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every individual.

In many ways, acts of mercy mirror the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Throughout his ministry, Jesus demonstrated God's love through his actions, healing the sick, forgiving sinners, and comforting the downtrodden. By following his example and engaging in acts of mercy, we participate in the ongoing work of God's love in the world, bringing about transformation in both the giver and the receiver.

The average person will only

experience, for the most part, the love shown by those professing to be Christians and so this train of thought is important. As we begin a new year, let us begin it with a response of gratitude, worship, and obedience remembering that believers are encouraged to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind and to love their neighbors as themselves (Matthew 22:37-39). 1 John 4:19 reminds us all that "We love because he first loved us".



**Dr. Shantanu Dutta**

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

*I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.*

*Ezekiel II:19*

# How Goes the Enemy?

Rev. Kuruville Chandy

The colloquial expression "How goes the enemy?" means: "What is the time?" *Brighton Gazette, and Lewes Observer* (Sussex) published the following explanation on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1826: "Appointments are made to the minute: and a delay of five or ten minutes in keeping one, is at the hazard of disarranging the next... 'How goes the enemy?' is one of the commonest inquiries; and everything testifies to the immense importance of time in the social arrangements in a great city."

## Doomsday Coming

As we all live in different time zones, the hours differ for people in various zones. But the Doomsday Clock places the whole world in one zone. Concerned about the devastating consequences of nuclear

weapons, Albert Einstein, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and University of Chicago scientists who helped develop the first atomic weapons in the Manhattan Project started the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* in 1945. Two years later, they created the Doomsday Clock, using the imagery of apocalypse (midnight) and the modern-day idiom of nuclear explosion (countdown to zero) to convey threats to humanity and the planet. It was arbitrarily set at 7 minutes to midnight – the hour of disaster striking.

## Doomsday Clock

1947



7 minutes to midnight  
Initial arbitrary setting

1949



3 minutes to midnight  
Start of nuclear arms race

1953



**2 minutes to midnight**  
U.S. and Soviet Union test first hydrogen bombs

1960



**7 minutes to midnight**  
U.S. nuclear testing moratorium

1963



**12 minutes to midnight**  
U.S., U.K., and Soviet Union sign Limited Test Ban Treaty

1991



**17 minutes to midnight**  
U.S. and Soviet Union sign Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

2020



**100 seconds to midnight**  
Rising dangers of climate change, nuclear proliferation, and breakdown in arms-control cooperation

2023



**90 seconds to midnight**  
Russia threatens to use nuclear weapons in its war with Ukraine

Based on the Doomsday Clock announcements of The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/timeline/>

The Doomsday Clock settings have been changed many times since 1947. It was reset for the first time to three minutes to midnight in 1949. The reason for that was the first atomic bomb test by the Soviet Union in August of that year, marking the beginning of the world's nuclear arms race. It was advanced to two minutes to midnight in 1953 after both the United States and the

Soviet Union tested their first hydrogen bombs.

However, a few times, the clock was pushed back from midnight. In 1960, it was set back to seven minutes to midnight because international negotiations were taking place in Geneva to end nuclear testing and to 12 minutes to midnight in 1963 after the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States signed the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, which banned nuclear testing in Earth's atmosphere, outer space, and underwater. In 1991, the clock was reset to 17 minutes to midnight – the farthest from doomsday thus far.

But from January 2023 onwards, it has been reset to 90 seconds to midnight because of international misconduct – especially Russia's threat to use nuclear weapons in its war with Ukraine. The Clock has become a recognised indicator measuring the world's vulnerability to man-made global disasters.

The *Bulletin* issued its 2024 Doomsday Clock Statement entitled "A moment of historic danger: **It is still 90 seconds to midnight**".

- Nuclear spending programmes in the three

l a r g e s t n u c l e a r powers—China, Russia, and the United States—threaten to trigger a three-way arms race as the world's arms control architecture collapses. Not to be left behind: Iran continues to enrich uranium to close to weapons-grade. North Korea continues building nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. Nuclear expansion in Pakistan and India continues.

- In 2023, the world suffered its hottest year on record, and global greenhouse gas emissions continued to rise. Current efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are grossly insufficient to avoid dangerous human and economic effects of climate change, which affect the poorest people in the world.
- The increased sophistication and efficiency of genetic engineering technologies, and the convergence of emerging artificial intelligence tools and biological technologies may drastically empower individuals to misuse biology.

"These threats, singularly and as they interact, are of such a character and magnitude that no one nation or leader can bring them under control. That is the

task of leaders and nations working together in the shared belief that common threats demand common action...the world's leading powers—the United States, China, and Russia have the capacity to pull the world back from the brink of catastrophe. They should do so, with clarity and courage, and without delay."

And on a personal level, mortal Bryan Johnson has been working on what he calls "the most significant revolution in the history of Homo sapiens." He spent a few millions developing a life-extension system called Blueprint, in which he transmits every decision involving his body to a team of doctors, who use the data to develop a strict health regimen to reduce what Johnson's "biological age." He has turned his body over to an anti-ageing algorithm. He believes that death is optional. His plan is to never die.

Paul refers to death as the "last enemy". While we can fight life-threatening illnesses and take precautions against mishaps, we cannot defeat death. Only the Lord Jesus can destroy the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26)

### **Mortality**

Humans imagining that they can

prevent death and destruction is so much like the man who penned the poem *Invictus* (Latin for "unconquered"). While it is admirable that the speaker in the poem proclaims his strength in the face of adversity, "My head is bloody, but unbowed..." it is nothing but sheer arrogance to claim,

I am the master of my fate;

I am the captain of my soul.

Again and again, mortal humans have imagined that they are in control of the outcomes of time. Collective effort will not change the climactic end of life as we know it. Nor can individual determination cast off mortality. The end is coming.

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Pro. 27:1, KJV). I memorised that verse while I was in college, and I don't need to keep reviewing it to remember that.

James wrote, "Some of you say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to some city. We will stay there a year, do business, and make money.' But you do not know what will happen tomorrow! Your life is like a mist. You can see it for a short time, but then it goes away. So, you should say, 'If the Lord wants, we will live and do this or that.' But now you are proud, and

you brag. All of this bragging is wrong" (Jas 4:13-16, NCV). As a pastor, I have conducted several funerals and pronounced the Word of the Lord, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:19). Another verse I cannot get out of my head is, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

The Doomsday Clock cannot tell us the time of the end, nor can its warning help us to push back from the end that is coming. The end is just not in our control. Jesus said, "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mk. 13:32, ESV). Again, when Jesus had risen triumphantly from the dead, the disciples asked whether He would restore the kingdom then. Jesus said, "The Father is the only One who has the authority to decide dates and times. These things are not for you to know" (Acts 1:7, ICC).

### **Vision of the End**

The Apostle John saw a vision of Jesus in glory. John was given a revelation about the state of churches in his time and what would happen in the end. The Book of Revelation records what John was shown in that vision and what was spelt out in

explanation to him.

In the vision, John saw that God had a sealed book that no one in heaven or on earth was worthy to open except the Lamb of God, who was slain for the salvation of the whole world (Rev. 5:1-14). John then saw the Lamb doing just that, opening the seals one by one.

When the first four seals were opened, four riders came out riding four different types of horses, heralding disasters that were to come. They parallel what Jesus had said in His Olivet discourse on the sequence of end-time happenings (Lk. 21:8-36). There will be impostors trying to supplant Christ, then wars, earthquakes, famines, and plagues. These things have all occurred just as Christ Jesus prophesied they would.

When the fifth seal was broken, John saw the souls of those who had been martyred for their faith: "I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been killed because they had proclaimed God's word and had been faithful in their witnessing. They shouted in a loud voice, 'Almighty Lord, holy and true! How long will it be until you judge the people on earth and punish them for killing us?' Each of them

was given a white robe, and they were told to rest a little while longer, until the complete number of other servants and believers were killed, as they had been" (Rev.6:9-11, GNB).

The New Testament records only the martyrdoms of three believers: Stephen (Acts 7:59-60), James (12:2), and Antipas (Rev. 2:13). Since that time, there has been such an ever-widening stream of martyrs that we could well believe that the fifth seal has been broken. "...this is a critical time. It is already the hour for you to awaken from your sleep [of spiritual complacency]; for our salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed [in Christ]" (Rom.13:11, AMP).

Peter wrote that the end would come with a conflagration: "But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly" (2 Pet. 3:5-7). People laugh it off. While modern, educated humans will consider the prognostications of scientists and technologists



(such as taking the Doomsday Clock seriously), they are scornful of biblical prophecies about the end. The prophecies of the Bible are regarded as totally bizarre and preposterous. Those who preach or teach what the Bible prophecies about the end are thought to be religious freaks or nut cases who get a thrill by frightening people with scary stuff.

When an aunt asked me about preachers saying Jesus is coming soon and that He hasn't, I told her that even her question was prophesied about. The Word of God did indeed predict that scoffers would ask, "So what happened to the promised *second* coming of Jesus? For everything keeps going just the way it has since our ancestors fell asleep *in death*; since the beginning of creation, nothing's changed" (2 Pet. 3:4, Voice). Yes, even the scornful dismissal of prophecy was foretold.

### **Divine Gift**

How goes the enemy? Time isn't our enemy because it is a gift from God. "This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24).

"Time is money" is a saying that emphasises that time should not be wasted because you could be

using it to earn money. Many aim at making money and amassing wealth. But Jesus told the parable of a man who made that his purpose in life, but God called him a fool because he was going to die and would not be able to hang on to his hoarded wealth (Lk. 12:16-21). Jesus also told the story of a rich man who had enough and more to share with the beggar at his gate. Though he knew the man by name, he was uncaring toward the beggar Lazarus. For that callousness and lack of generosity, he landed in hell and then he thought Lazarus should come to give him relief (16:19-31).

We have just a little time:

Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be.

Remind me that my days are numbered—

how fleeting my life is. You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand.

My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath (39:4-5, NLT).

In view of our lives being terminal, we need to echo the Psalmist's prayer,

Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom (Ps. 90:12, NLT).

As the writer of Ecclesiastes said, "For everything, there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die..." (Eccl. 3:1-2).

"Killing time" is an expression about the usage of time. It's about wasting time by idling. Most mornings I don't jump out of bed as soon as I wake up. I laze in bed for a bit, gathering my thoughts about the day ahead. But lazing in bed indefinitely and killing time cannot be a way of life for followers of Jesus. Instead, we are to redeem the time: "See then that you walk [live] carefully, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand [and do] what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:15-17).

Jesus is our example in the matter of time management. He said, "We must work the works of Him who sent me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4, NASB). In that context, He said that while He was in the world, He was the Light of the world (v.5). He surely implied that His followers would take over as the light of the world after Him.

That was not just implied. He specifically told His disciples, "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). He added that a city built on a hill cannot be hidden.

As a hill, Calvary was not very tall. But in terms of significance, there is no hill taller than Calvary. The city that is built on the hill of Calvary cannot be hidden from view. All over the world, people expect the people of Christ to have a higher standard of conduct, and all too often, people have said that they don't want to have anything to do with the Christian faith because of the misconduct of Christians.

How, then, shall we live in the new year? By valuing the gift we have been given and by living redemptively.



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



# The Love of God

Dr. Chacko Thomas

One of the several distinctions of the Christian faith is that it is rooted in a God who loves all mankind. The Lord Jesus Christ is its embodiment. Many Christians have, in big and small ways, sought to embody it over the millennia.

## **Perfect love drives out fear:**

The Bible says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love." [1 John 4:18]

A W Tozer expounded on this verse as follows. "Fear is a painful emotion that arises at the thought that we may be harmed or made to suffer. This fear persists while we are subject to the will of

someone who does not desire our well-being. The moment we come under the protection of one of good will, fear is cast out.

"To know that love of God and to enter into the secret place of leaning upon the arm of the Beloved – this and only this can cast out fear. Let a man become convinced that nothing can harm him and instantly for him all fear goes out of the universe. ...

"God is love and God is sovereign. His love disposes Him to desire our everlasting welfare and His sovereignty enables Him to secure it." [A W Tozer in "Knowledge of the Holy"]

## **God is love:**

When we read that "God is love,"

we are reading a description, not a definition. We read, God is light, God is Holy, God is Just, God is kind. So, God is Love. We do not worship love, but we worship the God who is love.

Tozer continues, "The words, 'God is love' means that love is an essential attribute of God. Love is something true of God, but it is not God. ... From God's other known attributes, we may learn much about His love. We can know, for instance, because God is self-existent, His love had no beginning; because he is eternal, His love can have no end; because He is infinite, it has no limit.

"Because He is holy, His love is the quintessence of all spotless purity. Because He is immense, His love is an incomprehensibly vast, bottomless, shoreless sea before which we kneel in joyful silence, from which the loftiest eloquence retreats confused and abashed."

### **God is Friendly:**

"God's love tells us that He is friendly, and His Word assures us that He is our friend and wants us to be His friend. ... Abraham would never have said, 'I am

God's friend,' but God Himself said that Abraham was His friend. The disciples might well have hesitated to claim friendship with Christ, but Christ said to them, 'You are my friends'. Modesty may demur at so rash a thought, but audacious faith dares to believe the Word and claim friendship with God". [The Knowledge of the Holy.]

### **The Love of God:**

Below are some Bible verses that describe God's love; wonderful verses to meditate upon and to give thanks to God and worship Him.

God's Love is Eternal: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore, I have drawn you with loving kindness." [Jeremiah 31:3]

God's Love is Immeasurable: "I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love. Yes, may you come to know his love—although it can never be fully known—and so be

completely filled with the very nature of God." [Ephesians 3:17-19 GNB]

God's Love is Causeless and Unprovoked: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." [1 John 4:10 NASB] 'The great God could see nothing lovable or meritorious in us to draw out His affections, yet He loved us just the same. That's the way He is.' [taken from "Alone in Majesty" by William MacDonald.]

God's Love is Personal (He loves each one of us): "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." [Galatians 2:20] 'Yes, with Him there are no nobodies. No one is insignificant. His affection flows out to every individual on the planet.' [ Alone in Majesty]

God's Love is Incomparable: "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk

before you with all their heart;" [1 Kings 8:23.] '... no one has ever experienced anything that can compare with the divine love. As a hymn reminds us, "No one ever cared for me like Jesus". [Alone in Majesty]

God's Love is Unchanging: "Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!" [Psalm 66:20] 'Our love moves in cycles. It is an emotional roller coaster. Not so with our Lord. His love never tires or varies.' [WM]

God's Love is Pure: MacDonald writes, "it is pure love, utterly free from selfishness, unrighteous compromise, or unworthy motive. It is untainted and without a breath of defilement."

God's Love is Free: "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline

your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live;" and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David." [Isaiah 55:1-3]

"Like His grace, God's love is free. For this, we can be everlastingly thankful because we are paupers, beggars, and bankrupt sinners. And even if we owned all the wealth in the world, we still could never put a down payment on a love so priceless."

God's Love is Impartial: "But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." [Matthew 5 44-45]

God's Love is Sacrificial: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." [John 3:16] "[God's love] led the holy Son of God to Calvary to give its greatest demonstration. At the cross, we see a love that is stronger than death. That not even the billows of God's wrath could drown." [Alone in Majesty]

God's love takes pleasure in its object. (God enjoys His creation):

"The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. [Zephaniah 3:17].

The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works. [Psalm 104: 31 KJV] "Psalm 104 is a divinely inspired nature poem almost rhapsodic in its happiness, and the delight of God is felt throughout it." [A W Tozer]

God's Love surpasses Knowledge: "and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." [Ephesians 3:19]

An old Hymn, that George Beverly Shea of the Billy Graham team used to sing is called The Love of God. Its third stanza was taken from an Aramaic Poem, going back many centuries.

The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;  
It goes beyond the highest star,  
And reaches to the lowest hell;  
The guilty pair, bowed down with



care, God gave His Son to win;  
His erring child He reconciled,  
And pardoned from his sin.

*Refrain:*

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure—  
The saints' and angels' song.  
When hoary time shall pass away,  
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,  
When men who here refuse to pray,  
On rocks and hills and mountains call,  
God's love so sure, shall still endure,  
All measureless and strong;  
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—  
The saints' and angels' song.  
Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade;  
To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.

We have attempted to describe the indescribable. A W Tozer says that he "can do no more justice to that awesome and wonder-filled theme than a child can grasp a

star. Still, by reaching toward the star the child may call attention to it and even indicate the direction one may look to see it."

I hope that I have been that "child" in writing this article. I pray that we can point all India in the direction of the Love of God. No one better to do it than you and me who have experienced the Love of God, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Make the New Year 2025, be a Year of spreading the love of God far and wide in our land.



**Dr. Chacko Thomas**

*is Author of "Beyond the Natural". (OM 1966-2022: served mostly in OM India, on three OM Ships and OM International and OM Special Projects. Privileged to serve the Lord Jesus in 107 countries.) He can be contacted on [chacko.thomas@om.org](mailto:chacko.thomas@om.org)*

# Theological perspective on Marriage

Ps. Grish Lal Tamta

## Introduction

There is a saying that "Marriages are made in Heaven", which is true in many senses. Because the marriage is an event and the wedding is a day. The wedding day is not the day to think about the purpose of the marriage but a day to fulfil the purpose. Theologically, it is better to know the marriage and its purpose before wedding from God's point of view. Since most of the Christian marriages take place during this advent season. So, it inspired me to write about the marriage which is the first institution of the world, in which the society and civilisation of the world rests.

## Theological perspective of Marriage

The marriage is instituted in the beginning of the world (Gen 1:27) about which John Stott says God said, "let us make the mankind in our image (divine resolution) and then God created mankind in his image and likeness (divine creation) and God then blessed them and said be fruitful (divine blessings) and brought man and woman together to fulfil his purpose (Gen 1:26-28). When the creation of male and female was done, God blessed them to be fruitful, which required the consummation of the company of male and female which is called marriage. God had commanded the man to leave his parents and cleave to his wife (Gen 2:24). Jesus, when was asked about the marriage and divorce, in the book

of Mathew 19, He said, "in the beginning, the creator made male and female and for this reason, man would leave his parents and cleave to his wife to become one flesh so that they would be one not two? Therefore, God has joined them, so that no man can separate them." (Math 19:4-6). The man which is not gender word but a generic and called mankind or humanity which is made in the image of God (Gen 5:1-2). Stott says there are three aspects of humanity which God made.

- God made them in His own image and likeness.
- He made them male and female giving them the joyful task of reproduction.
- He gave them the power of dominion over the creations with equal benefits.

Since both sexes are equally created by God in his likeness, with a differentiation of male and female, to fulfil the mandate and be fruitful and multiply (gen 1:28). Karl Barth says that these differences are anatomical and temperamental like sexual differentiation which involves the relationship in which the *Imago Dei* was seen fully. The duality of man and woman is one as the

copy and imitation of God. So, they are one. G C Mei Leander says, the harmony of man and woman and its oneness realise the divine image which forms one body that shall be the bride of Christ. They were created out of dust and filled with spirit that oriented them towards God and causes them to transcend earthly life. Both were finite and free and located in natural place and time. So, the fundamental difference is biological like the chromosome, dominant hormones, ovaries, testes, and external genital. Which has extended to gender identity, but both are equal and one.

### **The Biblical understanding of a Christian Marriage**

The story of Gen 2:15-25 where Adam was put in the garden to work and take care of it, then he was not able to find the compatible company then God intervened and created woman out of his rib and presented to him as father presents his daughter to a groom or as church is preparing bride to present to Christ on his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. The response, in ecstasy of Adam was "this is my bone of bone and flesh of my flesh, and she shall be called

woman" because she was taken out of man. This was ended by Gen 2:24 in which Adam found relief, joy, and equality with her since, she was presented by God equal covenantal relationship. In Hebrew, woman is called *Ish shah* (soft) and man is called *Ish* (strong) as ishshah was taken out from Ish. Mathew Henry says, she is not taken out from head nor foot but from the rib which is the evidence of his equality and complementary and closest to his heart to be loved and cared.

But this equality and complementary relationship was broken in the garden where the woman became "Eve", the mother of all livings after fall (Gen 3:20). After fall, she was taken as sex object, functional aid, and producing offspring. During the time of Jesus, the condition of woman was a second-class citizen, lower in their role in the society by the Rabbinic class. But Jesus lifted them up and restored their original position of equality and complementary as Paul also points out in Galatians 3:27-28.

The two-stage creation is the indication of following reasons in this close knitted relationship.

They were created as humans to have the need of fellowship which can be fulfilled through close relationship. Creation of woman out of man, stresses the close relationship and unity between sexes in conformity with their common origin. So, there is, not only equality but interdependence between the two sexes. Apart from it, woman was created as a companion and co-worker similarly as God has used his relationship with humans. Finally, the wife to man is irreplaceable by anyone (Gen 2:24) which is important. Therefore, biblically, man and woman are Equal in terms of Gen 1:27 and Gal 3:27-28, Interdependent as Paul argued in I Cor 11:11-12 and complementary to each other as mentioned in Gen 2:18 as a suitable helper for man, matching his eminence.

### **Biblical definition of a Christian marriage**

Bible says man leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife (Gen 2:24) to become one flesh and respect and honour his parents (Exo 20:12). This is the aim of the Christian marriage, leaving and cleaving to one

another. One flesh talks of unity, equality, and oneness in every way like physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Man has to put his wife first in the relationship to be one flesh, then parents and other so that the conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in law, can be avoided by leaving and cleaving. This needs to be practiced by applying Eph 5:21-33, to have mutual submission to one another in love as Christ loved us and his church. This submission is identified with the servitude attitude which is the main characteristic of Christianity. This love of man to his wife and submission of wife to her husband is called as *Agape love* which is in verse Eph 5:25 and the love of Christ in John 3:16 and John 17:24. This kind of sacrificial love is required from a man to his wife even to give his life as Christ gave his life for us. However, let us see the purpose of the marriage.

### **The purpose of Christian marriage**

- Companionship
- Sexual satisfaction
- Providing for children
- Foundation for human society

This order of purpose is to be spelled out at the start of the wedding. The companionship is the first as it is said by God that it was not good for man to live alone (Gen 2:18) and the woman was made as helper, was the purpose.

### **The principles of Christian marriage**

- *Marriage is intended by God to be and remain monogamous* as Adam was given only one wife "Eve" which was emphasised monogamous by Lord Jesus in Math 19:4-6 and Gen 2:24 joined together as one flesh.
- *Faithfulness* is the demand of the Christian marriage by husband and wife under the instruction of Malachi 2:14 which is the marriage covenant and vow.
- *Permanency* of marriage is for life because divorce is not an option. One cannot do it against the teachings and will of Jesus in Math 19:6 and Malachi 2:16.

### **The definition of successful marriage**

Marriage is based on equality of man and woman (Gen 1:27) with this premise, let us look at the

definition of marriage through Gen 2:18-24.

- It was divinely instituted.
- Marriage is necessary for human fulfilment of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.
- Christian marriage is permanent.

Stephen Ford says God initiated Adam's marriage in three stages.

- Love's preparation – God made the woman and brought her to Adam (Gen 2:22)
- Love's relation- Adam awoke and saw her and recognised her as part of him (Gen 2:23)
- Love's consummation- Adam married to the woman (Gen 2:24-25)

### **The covenant of Marriage**

GOD

HUSBAND - WIFE

Marriage is a covenant between husband and wife. It states that God is the witness of that covenant, and it cannot be broken because God hates divorce and broken covenant which affects the relationship of God and man. This triangle is related to each other. God says,

He will not hear the prayer of a man, if he does not treat his wife considerably (1 pet 3:7) because she is the joint heir of gifts of life. The marriage covenant is like three rope strands (Eccl 4:12) which are cemented permanently and unbreakable. One is the covenant between couple and the second is between couple and God and third is between two families who are linked to the marriage. This covenant of marriage first was accounted in Gen 2:18-24 in which Adam accepts her with joy, equality, delight, and relief which no other creature could be to him. William John says, "*Marriage is an exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman ordained and sealed by God preceded by leaving parents, consumed in sexual union and supporting partnership, crowned with the gifts of the children*". However, the word of God says without the gift of children, the marriage is still complete in the eyes of God.

### **The Biblical understanding in Indian context**

The traditional marriage contract in India takes place in two forms. One is the religious contract and



the other is the secular contract. The first one is the part of the church service which includes not only the vow of a man and a woman but the statement of the objects of marriage. This, pastor has to outline, at the start of the service. This contract is legal in Indian law and the pastor is required to have government license to conduct marriage and submit a copy of the marriage certificate to the local government office of the registrar of marriage.

The second contract is between the two families verbally in respect of financial and other aspects of marriage. So, this is important from future relationship point of view. But this contract has two aspects. One is the economic aspects both in terms of finance and jewellery that the bride will own and the second is any other property arrangement that has to be finalised. This also includes the marriage expenses and guests list. The economic aspects are similar to Jewish ways in Old Testament. The payment of *Mohar* by the groom to the bride as a compensation to her father. The gifts of father to his daughter as her value in the

family. Then it is followed by leaving and cleaving to be one flesh in new home and finally, the marriage is consumed in private as a new life with different privileges and obligations.

### **Marriage vow**

The marriage vow clearly sets out God's purpose for marriage as a covenant to discharge the responsibilities and obligations of each other through the vows.

*"I (name) take you (name) as my wife/husband to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer and poor, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish and protect/obey till death us do apart, according to God's holy law and to this I give my pledge".*

Since every covenant begins with a preamble, let us see its constituents one by one.

**Preamble: I take you as my wife/husband.**

Marriage is not only an emotional bond but something deeper and more enduring. The covenant or the contract is signed by both in front of witnesses. This is a

definite commitment to one another and a solemn promise to each other in the church, in the presence of God, the minister and the people. Since it is defined in Gen 2:24, which implies that it is an exclusive of a man and a woman, publicly acknowledging, leaving and cleaving and consuming by sexual intercourse to become one flesh.

### **Basic four terms of covenant vow**

**Term 1: "To have and to hold from this day forward, till death us do part".**

It defines the permanency of the marriage when Jesus says "what, therefore, God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mark 10:6-9). Again, Jesus says in Math 19:9, "who so ever divorce his wife, except adultery, marries another woman commits adultery". So, it has spiritual and physical overtones which cannot be changed by break, because they are one flesh. The companionship, comfort and mutual help which they experience, is for whole life till death separate them.

**Term 2: "for better, and for worse, for richer and poorer, in**

**sickness and in health".**

Marriage should succeed adversity and prosperity. But all seems to be right in prosperity but get separated when there is adversity. We note that the word in the terms is "and" not "or" which means there is no option. So, it becomes a test of marriage and allegiance to covenant when the challenging time comes.

**Term 3: "to love, cherish and protect (husband's part)/obey (wife's part)".**

Vows not only calls to love but to cherish each other in the heart or cling to each other or to protect. It talks about the responsibility and obligation to each other. The responsibility is to love one another and cherish. The obligation of husband is to protect his wife and comfort always as she is weaker vessel (1 pet 3:7) which means she is delicate and soft. Protection not only physically but mental and spiritual areas as well. Husband is the spiritual head of the family (1 Cor 11:3) and he should love, cherish and protect her. The obligation of wife is to obey her husband by doing so, she glorifies God (1 pet 3:1-3). The Obedience is not servitude to

husband but loving voluntarily and submission is the commandment of God (Eph 5:22) as part of her Christian servanthood. This is the mark of true Christianity.

**Term 4: "According to God's holy law".**

All Christians are supposed to carry out the first three terms according to God's holy law as seen in the scriptures. It is therefore necessary for couple to read Bible daily and pray together. There is a saying "a family that prays together, stay together", is really true. It is sometimes observed that some couple renew their vows on their marriage anniversary or some special conferences which is good idea to rejuvenate and recharge the energy to the marriage powerhouse.

**Conclusion**

It is true that "Marriages are made in Heaven", which means the union of one male and one

female becomes one flesh to enforce the divine Trinitarian order in the world to be fruitful and become an instrument of love, life, and companionship, in his image and likeness. Since marriage is an event which is performed through a covenant on a day called wedding to fulfil the purpose which God has made. Theologically, it is better to know the marriage and its purpose and principles before making a covenant to fulfil it from God's point of view so that God receives the glory. Amen.



**Ps. Grish Lal Tamta**

*Satyam Sundaram A. G. Ministry,  
A-13 Godavari Homes, Suchitra  
circle, Hyderabad-TS 500067*

*But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD,  
I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.  
Micah 7:7*

# Embracing the New Year with Christ and the Holy Spirit

Rev. Dr. Richard Howell

**Scriptural Foundation:**  
*"Behold, I make all things new."*  
(Revelation 21:5)

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, we come with hearts full of hope, prayers, and aspirations. The turn of the calendar is not merely a mark of time but an invitation to experience renewal and transformation through Christ and the Holy Spirit. In the Indian context, a land blessed with diversity, faith, and rich traditions, the new year calls us to integrate the Gospel message into our lives as individuals, families, and communities.

## **1. Christ as the Source of Renewal**

The Apostle Paul reminds us in *2 Corinthians 5:17*: *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* This message is deeply relevant as we enter a new year. Just as India witnesses renewal through its seasons—the monsoons replenishing the earth and festivals symbolizing new beginnings—our lives, too, are called to a spiritual renewal in Christ.

In Christ, we find the strength to let go of the burdens of the past

year—our failures, regrets, and struggles—and embrace His promises for the future. Christ is our light in times of darkness, our peace in times of turmoil, and our hope when the road ahead seems uncertain.

Let us, therefore, allow Christ to transform us, to make us a "new creation," leaving behind the chains of sin and despair, and stepping into the new year with courage, forgiveness, and love.

## **2. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Our Journey**

The Holy Spirit, the Advocate and Comforter, is ever-present in our lives. In *John 16:13*, Jesus promises: *"When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth."* As we face the complexities of modern life in India—be it poverty, inequality, religious tensions, or the search for justice—we are called to rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

The Spirit empowers us to live courageously in faith, inspiring us to act as witnesses to Christ's love. Just as the Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, igniting their hearts and

equipping them for mission, we, too, must open ourselves to the Spirit's transformative power.

This year, let us seek the Holy Spirit in our daily lives—in prayer, in our relationships, and in our service to the least among us. May the Spirit inspire us to be agents of peace and reconciliation in a society in need of unity and healing.

## **3. Living Out Our Faith in the Indian Context**

In India, the spirit of faith and spirituality flows deeply, whether in the temples, mosques, churches, or the sacred rivers and mountains. As Christians, we are called to be the salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16), blending our faith with the values of compassion, hospitality, and justice that resonate so strongly with our Indian cultural heritage.

- **Hospitality:** The Indian tradition teaches us to see the divine in every guest (*Atithi Devo Bhava*). Let us embody Christ's love by welcoming others into our homes and hearts.
- **Unity in Diversity:** Our nation's diversity reflects God's

creation. In a world of divisions, let us be peacemakers, as Jesus teaches us in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:9).

- Service to the Poor: The Holy Spirit moves us to action. Let us care for the poor, the marginalized, and the neglected, echoing Jesus' call to serve "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40).

#### **4. Practical Resolutions for the New Year**

As we step into this new year, let us resolve to:

- Deepen our prayer life and scripture reading, inviting the Holy Spirit to guide us daily.
- Forgive those who have wronged us, just as Christ has forgiven us.
- Serve our neighbors and communities through acts of kindness, charity, and justice.
- Strengthen our families by making Christ the center of our homes.
- Be witnesses of faith, courage, and hope in the face of challenges.

**Conclusion** As we embrace the new year, let us walk forward with Christ as our companion and the Holy Spirit as our guide. May we

live as faithful disciples, bringing light and hope to the world around us. Let us be inspired by the words of *Lamentations 3:22-23*: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

May the Lord bless you and your families abundantly in this new year, and may we together build a future rooted in faith, love, and service.

#### **Benediction**

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forevermore. Amen.



**Rev. Dr. Richard Howell** is the former General Secretary of Evangelical Fellowship of India and Asia Evangelical Alliance and is presently the President of Caleb Institute, Gurugram, Haryana.





# Walking with God in the New Year

Rev. Dr. Samuel Richmond

The New Year 2025 is set to begin with a vibrant mix of celebrations across major cities, featuring over thousands of events, from concerts and cultural extravaganzas to glamorous parties in hotels and clubs. Businesses, eager to share in the festive spirit, are rolling out enticing offers, with majority of the companies providing discounts and special deals. And, of course, it's the season of resolutions—where 45% of people make heartfelt promises to change their habits, and hardly a small percentage of people manage to stick to their commitments because breaking old habits is tougher than we think.

Yet, amidst the glitter and resolutions, the New Year is also a sacred moment for many—a time to pause, give thanks to God for His faithfulness, and seek His guidance for the journey ahead. It invites believers to embrace this fresh start as an opportunity to renew their identity in Christ, experience His continual work of spiritual growth, and align their desires with His will. As we celebrate, let this year also be a journey of deeper faith, renewed purpose, and a commitment to reflecting God's love and truth in all that we do. In blending joy and worship, the New Year becomes more than a celebration—it transforms into a meaningful walk with Him.



## ***New Identity***

The connection between Christmas and the New Year carries profound significance. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, the Savior, while the New Year, in the Christian tradition, marks His naming (Luke 2:21). The name "Jesus," meaning "The Lord Saves" (Matthew 1:21), encapsulates His divine mission—to bring salvation and hope to humanity. This connection invites us to reflect on the transformative power of Christ's arrival. Just as His birth heralded a new covenant of grace and redemption, the New Year symbolizes renewal and the opportunity for spiritual transformation. It calls us to embrace the hope and purpose that Jesus offers, marking a fresh start not just in time but also in our walk with God.

Jesus' coming into the world underscores His mission to transcend barriers of nationality, culture, and ethnicity. The Bible affirms this universal message: God's love is for the whole world (John 3:16), and as believers we are commissioned to share this message to all nations (Matthew

28:19). In Jesus, every individual finds value and dignity, as His life and teachings call all people into a relationship with God. Furthermore, through Him, we understand our identity as the image-bearers of God. Just as Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15), we are created in God's image, reflecting His character and purpose in our lives. Through Jesus, God reveals His immense love and His desire to be intimately involved in our lives. Jesus fulfills God's redemptive plan, offering reconciliation, salvation, and the hope of eternal life (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). He also models a new way of living, teaching us to love God and one another, to walk in humility, and to serve selflessly.

This New Year, let us carry the name of Jesus not only in our hearts but in our actions, committing ourselves to reflect His love and grace. As bearers of God's image, we are called to embody His peace and joy, recognizing that our lives are meant to mirror His presence in the world. May we step forward with renewed purpose, striving to be faithful reflections of His love

and instruments of His grace in a world longing for hope and restoration.

### ***New Experience***

The New Year invites us to embrace new dimensions of spiritual growth and transformation. While we have encountered a variety of experiences throughout life, the New Year brings the prospect of facing fresh and unique experiences. It is a time to reflect on the peace and satisfaction that can only come from a deep relationship with God. Sadhu Sundar Singh once shared how he responded to a psychologist in Germany who questioned the reality of spiritual peace. He explained that just as physical hunger and thirst point to the reality of food and water, our spiritual hunger and thirst point to the existence of God, who alone can satisfy the deepest longings of our soul. He noted that no one can permanently satisfy hunger or thirst through imagination or self-suggestion alone. Similarly, the peace and satisfaction that surpass understanding can only be found in union with the living Christ. Sundar Singh testified

that when he experienced this union, his entire being confirmed that he had finally found the ultimate reality he had longed for.

This profound insight reminds us of Isaiah's words: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:18-19). God is constantly at work, renewing and transforming us. Though our physical strength may diminish with age—our eyesight dimming and hearing fading—our spiritual lives can flourish, growing richer and deeper. The kindness, patience, and love cultivated over years of walking with Christ become visible expressions of His presence in us. As we enter this New Year, we are called to seek this deeper relationship with Him, allowing His presence to fill and satisfy our spiritual hunger. Paul's declaration that "our inner self is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16) assures us that even as our outer selves grow weaker with age, our spiritual lives can grow richer, drawing us closer to God.

For those who wrestle with the challenges of aging, Charles L.

Allen provides an insightful perspective. He imagines life lived in reverse—starting old and growing younger—humorously highlighting how this would lead to diminishing wisdom, a shrinking family, and eventually, a return to helpless infancy. His reflection emphasizes the richness of life's natural progression. Aging is not a loss but a gift, a journey of spiritual growth and faith. It is a reservoir of memories where we see God's faithfulness again and again. Who would trade a lifetime of such experiences for anything less? Aging, while it may test us physically, deepens our spiritual maturity, allowing us to walk closer with God. As Isaiah reminds us:

*"They who wait for the Lord  
shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings  
like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint"  
(Isaiah 40:31).*

Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1), challenges us to live in

ways that reflect God's character. As we grow in age and faith, our lives become testimonies of His grace. Through enduring hardships with hope or celebrating blessings with humility, we leave behind footprints of faith that others may follow.

Let this year be a time of consciously seeking God's presence and experiencing the peace that comes from Him alone. When we find this peace, it transforms us into radiant examples of His love and grace. Our lives become a testimony, reflecting the joy and satisfaction that only He can provide. May we step into the New Year with the assurance of God's faithfulness and the hope of His promises, leaving behind a legacy that points others to Him.

### ***New Desires***

The New Year presents a fresh opportunity to cultivate deeper spiritual desires, especially the longing to grow in God's Word, to help others deepen their understanding of God as revealed through Jesus Christ and to please Him. Someone has

said, "A desire to please Christ is not something extra for the Christian. It is basic to Christian sanctity. It is not a dessert, but the main course-not a sideshow, but the main tent." As we mature in our faith, our priorities shift from worldly pursuits to spiritual aspirations that align with God's will. This transformation reflects a heart renewed by the Spirit, eager to seek God more earnestly and to share His truth with others.

Growing in God's Word is not merely about acquiring knowledge but about nurturing a vibrant relationship with Him. The God's Word is alive and active, guiding us in wisdom, convicting us of truth, and revealing the character of God. As the psalmist declares, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). Immersing ourselves in the Word allows us to be transformed by it, equipping us to live lives that reflect Christ's love, grace, and truth.

This desire cannot remain inward-focused. It naturally extends outward as we help others discover the beauty and

power of God's revelation through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Freely you have received; freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Whether it is encouraging fellow believers to grow in their faith or introducing the hope of Christ to those who do not yet know Him, our spiritual growth must inspire action. Jesus commissioned His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19), a call that challenges us to be intentional in sharing God's Word and His transformative love.

As we enter the New Year, let our desires include the pursuit of wisdom in understanding God's Word and the passion to be instruments of His teaching. Paul encourages us, "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16). This might involve leading Bible studies, mentoring others in their faith journey, or simply being available to answer questions and share insights. Each act, no matter how small, contributes to the greater purpose of drawing others closer to God.

Moreover, our desire should be rooted in love—a love for God that compels us to know Him more and a love for others that motivates us to share His truth. This aligns with the greatest commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and the second like it, "Love your neighbor as yourself"(Matthew 22:37-39). Our growing desire to deepen our understanding of God naturally fuels our ability to help others grow in theirs.

The New Year is not just a marker of time but a reminder of the eternal significance of our lives in Christ. Paul reminds us, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2). Let us use this opportunity to cultivate new

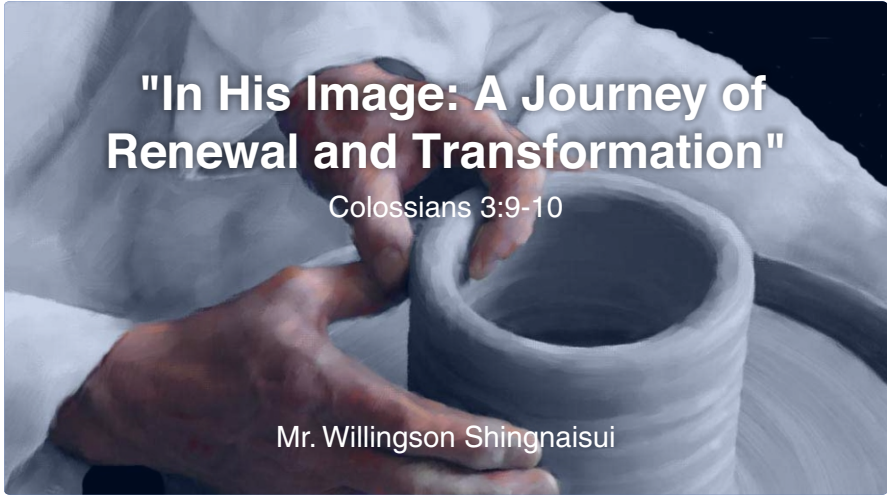
desires that reflect God's heart: to hunger for His Word, to grow in wisdom, and to serve others by leading them to the truth revealed through Jesus.

May this year be one of profound spiritual growth for ourselves and those we influence, as we align our hearts with His eternal purpose. Let us echo the prayer of the psalmist: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).



**Rev. Dr. Samuel Richmond**  
*is serving as Executive Director Caleb Institute, Gurgaon Haryana. He is also the Hon. Secretary, EFI Theological Commission.*





# "In His Image: A Journey of Renewal and Transformation"

Colossians 3:9-10

Mr. Willingson Shingnaisui

*"Do not lie to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."*

## **Introduction**

As we approach the New Year 2025, we may find ourselves carrying the weight of unresolved struggles, unfulfilled goals, and the anticipation of new challenges. This season offers an opportunity for reflection and recommitment, reminding us that the journey of growing in Christlikeness is not a sprint but a lifelong process.

The apostle Paul's words in Colossians 3:9-10 serve as a guiding compass during this time of renewal. Being "renewed in

knowledge according to the image of our Creator" is an ongoing process that calls for the daily transformation of our character, habits, and values, shaping us to become more Christlike in every area of life.

Yet, this renewal often comes with challenges. Each individual's growth is influenced by unique factors such as family background, culture, language, and life experiences. These elements shape who we are and how we respond to life's situations. At times, instead of reflecting Christ's image, we fall back on ingrained habits or character traits that fail to represent Him.

How, then, can we live with purpose and align our lives with

God's agenda in 2025 and beyond? This question invites us to explore the path of daily renewal and intentional transformation toward the image of our Creator.

This sermon explores the meaning of renewal, obstacles in the process, and practical steps for embodying the image of our Creator as we step into a new year.

## 1. Exegetical Insights into Colossians 3:9-10

### a. The Old Self vs. the New Self

Paul contrasts two realities: the "old self" and the "new self."

**The old person:** Represents our pre-Christ life, dominated by sinful habits, thoughts, and behaviours (cf. Col. 3:5-8). It includes lying, anger, malice, and other tendencies rooted in a life alienated from God. Paul is arguing that, while the "death" they have experienced "in

Christ" is not biological, it is very real. It means something. It has effects. It demands transformation.

**The new person:** Refers to the new identity believers receive in Christ. It is a transformation that begins at salvation but continues

to develop throughout our lives. To clothe ourselves with the new person (that is, Christ) means that we must be closely identified with Christ, to become like Him, to conform to His image. The emphasis for Paul is on "new vs. old." Things have changed; they are different now. The believer who has put to rest the ways of old "Adam" is made new and "is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator."

### b. "Being Renewed in Knowledge"

The phrase "being renewed" is in the present participle in Greek, signifying an on-going process. So renewal is a process, not a one-time event. Renewal involves:

**Knowledge:** Not just intellectual understanding but a deep, experiential relationship with God. This knowledge shapes us according to God's image. This knowledge is knowledge of God, an understanding of who He is in terms of Christ and what that understanding means for living rightly. It is this knowledge that human beings lost in the Fall into sin (Gen. 2:17; 3:5, 7; see Rom. 1:28) and that incorporation into Christ makes possible once again.



### **The Image of the Creator:**

Refers to God's original purpose for humanity—being created in God's image (Gen. 1:27). In Christ, God restores and perfects this image that was defaced at the Fall in the Garden of Eden. However, we will see that Paul has already claimed that it is Christ himself who is supremely the "image of God" (Col 1:15). It is Christ who supplies the pattern for the renewal of the "new self," as Romans 8:29 makes clear. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family." As we grow in knowledge of Him, we are transformed into His likeness (2 Cor. 3:18).

## **2. Challenges in the Renewal Process**

Each individual believer's growth is influenced by their unique cultural, familial, and personal experiences. These factors shape:

- **Our worldview:**

Worldview refers to the lens through which we see and understand the world around us. It is shaped by our upbringing, culture, personal experiences, and faith. Our worldview

significantly influences how we respond to life situations and how we perceive others. For Christians, aligning our worldview with the teachings of Christ is a crucial part of the renewal process described in Colossians 3:9-10.

### **E.g.: Dealing with Difficult People**

#### **Without a Christlike**

**Worldview:** You may view someone who is rude or unkind as an enemy or someone to avoid. When you have already decided in your heart to treat a person in this manner, you don't keep the space in your heart to love them. Your reaction may be to retaliate, ignore, or gossip about the individual.

#### **With a Christlike Worldview:**

You may see even difficult people as individuals God loves and desires to transform. Instead of responding with frustration, you pray for the person and seek to demonstrate patience and kindness (Rom 12:17-21). You view the situation as an opportunity to grow in love and forgiveness.

- **Our habits:**

Habits are behaviours or patterns ingrained over time through

repetition. They often operate subconsciously, shaping how we react to people, situations, and challenges. While habits can be positive and reflect Christ's character, some may fail to align with the teachings of Jesus.

My wife and I lived in Kottayam, Kerala, for six years during our studies. One thing we noticed was that the way fish is cut there differs from the method in my hometown. Back home, we usually slice the fish into round pieces, following the length of its body. However, in Kottayam, they typically avoid round cuts, and the fish's mouth is always chopped off. Since we weren't accustomed to this practice, we would specifically instruct the fishmonger not to chop off the mouth. Yet, inevitably, the moment we glanced away, the fish's mouth would be chopped off! Despite our clear instructions, the habit was so ingrained that it seemed to happen subconsciously and automatically.

This experience made me reflect on how certain habits, deeply embedded in our lives, can sometimes hinder our growth in Christlikeness. As Christians, the renewal process described in

Colossians 3:9-10 involves identifying and reshaping our habits to reflect the image of our Creator.

### **E.g.: Lying**

Lying is often seen as a quick solution to avoid immediate consequences or discomfort. However, when repeated, it becomes a habitual response. Lying directly opposes the biblical principle of truthfulness and integrity. In Colossians 3:9, Paul exhorts believers, *"Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices."* As followers of Christ, we are called to reflect God's character, who is the embodiment of truth (John 14:6). Even small lies can erode our trustworthiness and hinder our witness for Christ. These lies may seem harmless but have spiritual, relational, and ethical consequences.

#### **• Our values in life:**

Our values are the guiding principles that determine what we consider most important. They influence our decisions, goals, and the way we allocate time, energy, and resources. However, our values can be shaped by worldly standards, cultural expectations, or personal ambitions that may conflict with

God's priorities. As believers, being renewed in the image of our Creator (Col. 3:10) means aligning our values with Christ's teachings.

The Kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33) is the ultimate principle that should guide all our values in life. Jesus calls us to *"seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,"* reminding us that God's reign, priorities, and purposes must take precedence over everything else. When the Kingdom of God becomes our central focus, every decision, goal, and use of resources reflects our commitment to His rule and glory.

### **3. Practical Steps for Renewal in 2025**

Renewal requires intentionality and daily effort. Here are some practical steps:

- **Recognize the Old Self**

Pray for God to reveal areas where your life does not reflect Christ. Use Psalm 139:23-24 as a prayer for self-examination.

Renewal begins with identifying areas in our life where we contradict Christ's teachings. For example, fornication, impurity, wrong passion, evil desire, and greed (Col 3:5); anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive

language (Col 3:8); lying (Col 3:9); quarrelling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder (2 Cor 12:20).

#### **b. Practice Putting on the New Self**

Paul's metaphor of "putting on" reminds us that renewal requires intentional effort. Reflect on how God's truths apply to your unique struggles. For example, how does "loving your enemies" (Matt. 5:44) challenge your reactions to difficult people? Ask yourself: *What would Christ do in this situation?* Then act accordingly, even if it feels unnatural at first.

#### **c. Develop Godly Habits**

One of the most practical ways to grow in Christlikeness is by replacing negative patterns in our lives with godly responses. Negative habits like gossip, impatience, or harsh words can hinder our witness and relationships. In Colossians 3:12-13, Paul calls believers to a higher standard: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a

grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." This passage emphasizes the intentional development of habits that reflect Christ's character.

- **Seek Community Support**

Surrounding yourself with fellow believers is essential for spiritual growth and accountability. The Bible emphasizes the importance of fellowship, as seen in Hebrews 10:24-25, which calls believers to encourage one another and spur each other on toward love and good deeds. Community provides strength, wisdom, and prayer support, helping you navigate challenges and stay focused on your walk with Christ. Trusted friends or mentors can offer guidance, hold you accountable, and remind you of God's promises during difficult times.

To seek community support, actively engage in a local church, join small groups, or find a mentor who can walk alongside you. Participate in shared worship, Bible study, and acts of service, as these foster deep relationships rooted in Christ. Authenticity and vulnerability are key to building meaningful connections, while prayer and humility help overcome barriers

like fear or past hurts. By surrounding yourself with encouraging believers, you not only grow in faith but also strengthen others, reflecting the unity and love of the body of Christ.

### **Conclusion**

As we embrace 2025, let us commit to the journey of renewal, trusting that God is faithful to transform us into His image. Every challenge we face is an opportunity to grow in Christlikeness and reflect His glory more fully.

May this New Year be marked by intentional transformation, daily surrender, and the joy of living in the image of our Creator.



**Mr. Willingson Shingnaisui**  
*is from Dimapur, Nagaland, and is serving as the Academic Dean and faculty member in the Department of New Testament at Caleb Institute, Gurgaon, Haryana.*



# A New Beginning for Yourself Finding an Epiphany within you

Rev. Dr. Vivek Gundimi

I believe you've experienced a providential Christmas and are bracing yourself to celebrate God's goodness going forward in 2025.

As much as we might be excited to begin this New Year there is yet another Christian festivity in the month of January which we call as the Epiphany Sunday; and that happens to be on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January this year.

Epiphany commemorates the Three Wise Men's (The Magi) visit to Jesus in Nazareth. The name comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, which means "manifestation" or an experience of a sudden realization.

Generally, the term 'Epiphany' is

used to describe a scientific breakthrough or a religious/psychological discovery; however, the term 'Epiphany' can apply in any situation in which an enlightening realization allows a problem or a situation to be understood from a new and deeper perspective.

Therefore, the contention of this article is to help us as Christians to understand the relevance of responding to an Epiphany as being essential for a new beginning with ourselves.

In Christianity, the Epiphany refers to a realization that Christ is the Son of God. We celebrate the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi in Matthew 2:1-12.

And the visit of the Magi tells us where epiphany lies. It lies amidst our aspirations and fears – enabling us to realize how a problem or a situation can be understood from a new and a deeper perspective.

In Matthew 2 we have at one end the Wise Men from the East following the Star. They've left their own country (their familiar and their usual terrain) – in aspiration of desiring something new and may be even the unknown. Now there you find an epiphany where the Wise Men use the situation of the Bethlehem Star to have a new and deeper perspective of that unique occurrence in the celestial.

They don't know where this journey will take them, only that they have to take this journey. There is a call on their lives that cannot be left unanswered.

The wise men follow their aspiration and their longing, while Herod stumbles in his fear, and both had to do about Jesus!

Epiphanies are not so much those moments when we say, "Aha, I've got it!" they are rather

moments when we say, "Ah, it's got me!"

Sometimes that happens in 'our longings' and other times it happens in 'our fears'. Both situations are offering us something, and both are seeking a response from us. That is what Epiphany is about!

Epiphany gives us a glimpse of ourselves, our life, and our world and then it calls for a response. That response is what distinguishes the Wise Men from Herod.

The Wise Men observed and followed the Star, found the Saviour of the world, opened their treasure chest and went home "by another route" having been warned in a dream. By that Matthew could have implied that when we find Jesus, our life will take another course of direction that is responsive to God's Word.

Wherever there is a longing or fear there is an Epiphany awaiting our response – a situation to be responded from a new and deeper perspective.

Is it possible that some situations, longings, fears, aspirations and

desires could have got hold of us at the start of this year? It is probable that there is an ache deep within you.

- What is being asked of you by God?
- What matters so much to you that when you ignore it, it becomes the matter with you?
- What keeps you paralyzed making you unable to leave the place of bondage and move on?
- What is it about your relationship that you least want to deal with?
- What do you most fear losing and who is creating a wave of panic for you?

Our responses to those questions, describes an Epiphany – enlightening us to allow a problem to be understood and hence respond to it from a new and deeper perspective. Christ the Son of God is the One who has engineered greater purposes for our lives through that journey of fear, passage of troubles and road of challenges.

The questions mentioned above are actually like the Bethlehem Star in the sky waiting to be followed and observed and hence leading to Jesus where we

eventually find Him taking us to a new direction of safety, freedom and higher purpose for our lives.

What will you do with the Epiphany before you this year? How will you respond? How would you want to have a New beginning for yourself?

If there are going to be days in this year which would seem that you would never get through, or if there are going to be moments this year where an overwhelming situation would make you imagine that you would never make it to another day, yet if you did go through those days because you hoped against hope and you continued to show up stronger... then, it was because you were giving existence to God's favor by trusting in Him, and that is when Epiphany happens! at the intersection of God's favor and our response to challenges this year.

How about if there would be times when something begins to stir in you, may be a concern for others, an expression of compassion, speaking for justice, feeding the hungry... you don't know where it will take you and you're not exactly sure what you will do. But



you do respond in action because you would want to use your gifts and talents; that's an Epiphany in which you are giving existence to God's favor while responding to our calling this year.

There is a rising Star waiting to be observed and followed this year, and there is a treasure chest of your life to be opened this year. We live between the two poles of 'longings' and 'fears'; but remember that the Epiphany is always before us... calling and waiting for our response to the fact that every situation could be understood from a new and a deeper perspective because every condition this year will lead us more to Jesus Christ where we eventually find Him taking us to a new direction of safety, freedom and purpose.

It is my prayer and hope that we all as children of God would have

a New Beginning for ourselves with the help of God's Holy Spirit under the leadership of the risen Christ for the glory of God the Father.



**Rev. Dr. Vivek Gundimi**

*is presently serving as the Associate Pastor at Richmond Town Methodist Church, Bengaluru. He specializes in counselling the Suicidal, and also Pre-Marital Counselling. He has also authored numerous books and frequently addresses at Youth gatherings, Churches, Educational Institutions, and Corporate Meetings.*

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:  
The old has gone, the new is here!  
2 Corinthians 5:17*



# Grasping The Four Dimensional Infinite Love of God!

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

Apostle Paul prayed this prayer for the believers of the Ephesian church: '***And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ***' (Eph. 3:17-18). Apostle Paul refers to the four dimensional infinite love of Christ for us, here! We ought "grasp" this four-dimensional love, he writes!

First, we must grasp that no love is LONGER! Why so? Let us consider the long time line of God's love. We will figure out that it is infinite rather quickly. This love began in the mind of God in

eternity past. He loved us "first" (1 Jn. 4:19). And runs all through to eternity future in the new heaven and new earth. Paul writes about this earlier in the same epistle: 'For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will' (Eph. 1:3-4, NIV). He loves with "an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3). This eternal love is not a cushion for us to remain in sin, eternally! Far from it! Rather it motivates us to repent from sin: '***But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were***

**dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved'** (Eph. 2:4-5). This long love is not automatic. When we deny and finally reject the love-expressing and love-demonstrating Savior, we bring upon ourselves destruction, a life in hell, a everlasting place for those who reject his love (1 Peter 2:1; Rev. 20:10).

Next, God's love for us is so HIGH – and we need to grasp it. We live in a world full of low-grade, base, barnyard kind of love. Sample these shocking newspaper headlines: "Blind minor raped, killed in Puri"; "Minor girl drugged, raped and dumped on street in Maharashtra's Jalna"; "67-year-old gets 25-year jail for raping minor in Hamirpur". In the midst of all this low-grade, cheap, love, God's love is of entirely another level – it is an infinitely high love – a pure love for the most undeserving. Paul wrote about that love here: **'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us'** (Rom 5:8). It was that love which was demonstrated by Jesus

when he looked at the rich young ruler: Jesus looked at him and loved him – him who would eventually lovingly warn of the sin of greed (Mark 10:21ff). This highest love is a life-transforming love!

What's next? God's love towards us is the DEEPEST ever. Human love is often very shallow and it quickly evaporates. It just fizzles out. Check this out: **'If an enemy were insulting I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend'** (Psa. 55:12-13). We read of both celebrities and normal folk divorcing quickly as marital love which once fizzled. However, God's love for us overcomes the hurdles that come between him and the object of his love! That is why we read thus in the Gospels: **'As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem'** (Jn. 9:51). God's love for us is so deep that it blows to smithereens any blocker in its path. It is a love that is strong and

deep. That is why Jesus powdered to pulp all the blockers enroute Calvary.

God's love is the WIDEST. It includes Jew and Greek (see Acts 18:4; Gal. 3:28). It includes Jews and the Non-Jews. It includes both children and adults without leaving out the middle-aged. It includes everyone. It includes those in India and those in Indiana. Have we read that "God so loved the WORLD, that he gave his one and only son that WHOEVER believes in him, should not perish but have everlasting life"?

Grasping the infinite four-dimensional love of God should be our priority!

Let's love him back with an

'undying love' in response (Eph. 6:24).



**Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj**

*is the founder of Grabbing the Google Generation from Gehenna Mission. He is the author of four book, including a treatise against modern day false teaching called, Hyper Biblical. His latest Gospel tract wraps the Goodnews around India's comeback victory in the T20 World Cup 2024. The pdf can be sent to those who ask for it. Duke lives in Chennai with his family and can be reached via 918886040605.*





## **BETHEL BIBLE COLLEGE**

**A Ministry of Gospel Mission of India**  
(Affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College [University])

**Admissions Open**

### **Regular Courses**

(Medium: English)

**Bachelor of Divinity - 5 years**

Eligibility: Intermediate Pass

**Bachelor of Divinity - 4 years**

Eligibility: Any Recognized Degree

**Bachelor of Divinity - 2 years**

Eligibility: B.Th./B.Miss./B.C.S.

**Last Date**

**30<sup>th</sup>  
Apr**

For Details:



[www.bethelbiblecollege.edu.in](http://www.bethelbiblecollege.edu.in)



[bethelbiblecollegeguntur@gmail.com](mailto:bethelbiblecollegeguntur@gmail.com)



<https://www.facebook.com/bbcgunturap/>



[https://www.youtube.com/  
@BethelBibleCollegeGuntur](https://www.youtube.com/@BethelBibleCollegeGuntur)

### **Distance Courses**

(Mediums: English & Telugu)

**Master of Christian Studies - 2 years**

Eligibility: B.D. or B.C.S. with 1 year  
of Ministerial Experience

**Bachelor of Christian Studies - 4 years**

Eligibility: Any Recognized Degree

**Bachelor of Christian Studies - 2 years**

Eligibility: Dip.C.S. Pass

**Diploma in Christian Studies - 2 years**

Eligibility: Intermediate / 10<sup>th</sup> Pass with  
3 years of Ministerial Experience

**Diploma in Contextual Theologies - 1 year**

Eligibility: Intermediate Pass

**Diploma in Christian Education - 1 year**

Eligibility: Intermediate Pass

**Last Date**

**31<sup>st</sup>  
Oct**

4th Lane, Seethamma Colony, Pattabhipuram Post, Guntur - 522006, Andhra Pradesh  
Contact: 0863 226 2832

Intercessory  
*Prayer*  
Points



January 2024

**1 WEDNESDAY** Thank God for the New Year. Thank Him for the gift of life. Pray that you will be blessed and be a blessing to many this year.

**2 THURSDAY** 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.

**3 FRIDAY** 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.

**4 SATURDAY** 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 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.

**6 MONDAY** Pray for Evangelical Fellowship of India that God would provide its needs and continue to use it effectively for the extension of His kingdom.

**7 TUESDAY** Pray that God would eradicate Biblical illiteracy among His people. Pray that every church would teach and obey the Word of God as of first importance.

**8 WEDNESDAY** Pray for all the missionaries who are working relentlessly. Pray that God may protect them, comfort and rejuvenate them and bless the works of their hands.

**9 THURSDAY** 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.



**10 FRIDAY** 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.

**11 SATURDAY** National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Pray that God would break down the network of those involved in human trafficking. Pray for safety and protection for the vulnerable ones. Pray also that more awareness programs be made available at grass root level.

**12 SUNDAY** 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 MONDAY** 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 TUESDAY** 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.

**15 WEDNESDAY** 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.

**16 THURSDAY** 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.

**17 FRIDAY** Pray that the Gospel preached would bear many fruits and Christ's body would grow.

**18 SATURDAY** Pray for your neighbourhood today that it would be a safe place for all the residents as well as visitors. Pray also that you may have the opportunity to share the Gospel with them.

**19 SUNDAY** Pray for the persecuted church. Pray that the church would relentlessly spread the love of Christ despite oppositions.

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

**21 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.

**22 WEDNESDAY** Pray for the Junior Church or the Junior Sunday School program in your church. Pray for the teachers to be well-trained and spirit anointed. Pray for the children to diligently learn all the basic teachings of the Bible so that they may build their life upon it.

**23 THURSDAY** Pray for the victims of physical abuse. Pray for justice. Pray for healing both emotionally and physically. Pray that the Lord would give them the strength to forgive and move forward.

**24 FRIDAY** National Girl Child Day. Pray for all the girls in our country that they would enjoy equal rights. Pray for parents to prioritize providing equal opportunities and make them feel valued and empowered in all aspects of life.

**25 SATURDAY** 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.

**26 SUNDAY** Praise God as we celebrate the 76th Republic Day today. Continue to pray for our nation and the political leaders in

your respective states as well as in the center for good governance and excellent leadership.

**27 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.

**28 TUESDAY** Pray for Fusion Church (Jan Milaap Samiti), New Delhi. Pray that the Lord would continue to use them as an agent to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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

**30 THURSDAY** 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.

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



# GRACE HOUSE

Managed by CEPL

A residential conference center with comfortable and basic amenities.

## SPECIAL FEATURES

- ✓ 4 AC Double Bedrooms
- ✓ 1 AC Dormitory - 50 bedded
- ✓ 1 AC Dormitory - 10 bedded
- ✓ 3 Conference Halls
- ✓ Open Kitchen



## TARIFF

ACCOMMODATION (AC)	Capacity / No. of people	CHARGES PER DAY		
Double Room	4 rooms / 8 beds	1500/- per room		
Dormitory - 3rd Flr (Left)	50 beds	500/- per bed		
Dormitory - Ground Flr	10 beds	500/- per bed		

CONFERENCE HALLS	Capacity / No. of people	8 Hours / 9am - 5pm	4 Hours	2 hours
1st Floor (AC)	100	10,000	6,000	3,000
3rd Floor (AC)	40	6,000	4,000	2,000
Ground Floor (Non AC)	40	7,000	5,000	2,000

## For bookings, contact

Caleb Joel

74281 91694

reachcepl@gmail.com

RZ-122, Street No.3, Vaishali,  
Palam Dabri, New Delhi,



Extra facilities will be charged additionally



Meals can be customised and will be charged additionally.

Published date on 25 December 2024  
Posting date 26/27 December 2024

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



Evangelical  
Fellowship of India

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,  
he is a new creation.  
The old has passed away;  
behold, the new has come.  
2 Corinthians 5:17*

Evangelical Fellowship of India  
Wishes you

**HAPPY**  
*New Year*  
**2025**

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