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A Journey of Faith

The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD
are trustworthy, making wise the simple.
Psalms 19:7



LENT

JOURNEY WITH GOD

*We wait in hope for the Lord;
he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
May your unfailing love be with us,
Lord, even as we put our hope in you.
Psalm 33:20-22*

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Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

Renewal Begins at Home

As we enter the Lenten season, Christians across India have just witnessed a troubling yet instructive episode in Chhattisgarh. An upstart Hindutva leader, previously unknown beyond his immediate circle became internationally recognised almost overnight after issuing alarming threats against Christian communities in three villages. The planned march of thousands, with its ominous implications, has thankfully been cancelled following widespread outcry.

Yet what should have been a moment of unified Christian response instead exposed the fractures within our own

community. While external voices of advocacy ultimately helped avert potential violence, the incident revealed a disturbing pattern of one-upmanship among the Christian community. Different leaders and groups scrambled to position themselves as the primary defenders of the faith, competing for visibility and credit rather than working together for a unified response.

This episode shows our broader challenge: we eagerly engage in politics within church structures while remaining virtually voiceless in the nation's actual political discourse. Our internal divisions have made us ineffective precisely when unity is

most needed. How can we speak truth to power in society when we struggle to speak truth to one another?

The stark reality is that the Christian community has become a political liability for nearly all political parties today, except in a few pockets like Kerala or certain states in Northeast India. No major political formation sees value in championing our concerns - we lack the numbers to be electorally significant in most regions, while any party seen as supporting Christians risks alienating other vote banks. This political marginalization reflects both changing demographics and our failure to build meaningful alliances across religious and social boundaries.

The irony is painful. In elevating incidents like the Chhattisgarh threats for international attention, we unintentionally transformed an obscure figure into a recognised name, potentially encouraging others who might seek similar notice. Our divisions have weakened our effectiveness at the very moment when rising

persecution demands our most united response.

Yet it is into this reality that the Lenten call to renewal speaks most powerfully. The prophet Ezekiel's vision of dry bones scattered across a valley has never felt more relevant: "Son of man, can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37:3). Our fragmentation as a community, mirrors those disconnected bones, awaiting God's breath to unite them into a living, whole body.

The statistics tell their own sobering story - 505 incidents against Christians reported in 2021, rising to 840 (reported incidents) in 2024. The geographical spread extends from Uttar Pradesh to Kerala, from Gujarat to West Bengal. This pattern cannot be dismissed as isolated events. Meanwhile, our internal challenges of nominal faith, rampant biblical illiteracy, inadequate focus on discipleship and leadership development, compound our vulnerability.

Renewal, in this context, means more than spiritual refreshment. It demands honest examination

of how our divisions harm our witness and weaken our resilience. Jesus' prayer for his followers remains a haunting reminder of unfulfilled potential: "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). Our disunity directly undermines our credibility.

The Apostle Paul's guidance feels particularly relevant: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2). This renewal of mind involves developing a faith outlook that sees our present difficulties not as an occasion for competing responses but as a call to stand together.

A renewed Church must recapture three essential dimensions that have weakened in recent years:

Firstly, a renewed commitment to scripture that moves beyond

surface knowledge to deep understanding. When Bible knowledge declines, the Church loses its direction. As the Psalmist affirms, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). The Church in India needs believers who can apply biblical wisdom to navigate today's complex challenges with consistency and integrity.

Secondly, intentional discipleship that forms believers capable of faithful witness in hostile environments. Jesus' model of investing deeply in a small group who would transform the world offers a blueprint more relevant than ever. His promise remains our assurance: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). This discipleship must include teaching believers how to engage political realities wisely rather than merely competing for church influence.

Thirdly, unity that crosses denominational, regional, and language divides. The fragmentation of the Indian Church weakens our collective

voice and witness. Paul's words sound like they were written for our present situation: "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Consider how different our response to threats might be if Christians coordinated their advocacy rather than competing for prominence. Imagine the impact if Catholic, Orthodox, mainline Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and non-denominational leaders spoke with one voice, combining their different strengths rather than duplicating efforts or undermining one another.

The recent Chhattisgarh incident offers both warning and opportunity. While the immediate threat may have passed, the underlying conditions remain unchanged. The political naïveté of the Christian community, the growing influence of Hindutva ideology, and the increasing normalisation of anti-Christian

speech and violence continue to shape our context.

We must be clear-eyed about what history teaches regarding persecution. The common notion that the Church always thrives under pressure is only partially true. History has shown that persecution can just as easily devastate Christian communities. The Church in North Africa, once vibrant with figures like Augustine and Tertullian, was largely wiped out by persecution. In China under Mao, the faithful faced near-decimation, with meaningful recovery occurring only after Mao's death when Deng Xiaoping implemented reforms that unintentionally created space for Christianity to reemerge, primarily through rural house church networks.

The critical factor is not the persecution itself, but how believers respond to it. Only when Christians meet hostility with biblical faithfulness, unity, and wise engagement - rather than compromise, fragmentation, or retaliation - does the Church emerge stronger from such seasons.

This Lenten season invites us to embrace the practices that foster such renewal - prayer, fasting, scripture reading, and giving to those facing persecution. But it must also include the harder work of reaching across our divides to build genuine unity. Such unity is not merely a nice ideal - it is essential for the Church's future in India.

The prophet Isaiah offers words that could have been written for the Indian Church in 2025: "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). This promise of renewed strength offers hope when our own resources seem depleted.


True renewal is ultimately God's work, not ours. Our task is to create the conditions where renewal can flourish - through turning away from our competitive spirit, recommitting to working together, and realigning with Christ's vision for His Church.

As we journey through Lent towards Easter, let us embrace renewal not merely as a theme for reflection but as an urgent necessity for our times. The challenges before the Indian Church are serious, but even more damaging is our self-inflicted weakness through unnecessary division. In this season of reflection, may we find the courage to acknowledge our failings, the humility to seek reconciliation with our brothers and sisters, and the wisdom to present a united witness to a watching world.

For as Paul reminds us: "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together" (1 Corinthians 12:26). In this spirit, we look towards Easter with hope, knowing that the same power that raised Christ from the dead can breathe new life into our fragmented community, transforming our collective weakness into unexpected strength.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal

Editor in Chief – AIM Magazine



Renewal in the New Testament: A Spiritual, Community, and Transformative Journey

Rev. Dr. Richard Howell

The theme of renewal is a central and recurring motif in the New Testament, signifying spiritual transformation, restoration, and the establishment of a new covenant between God and humanity. Renewal, in the biblical sense, is not merely an external change but an inward transformation of the heart, mind, and soul. It is a divine process initiated by God through Jesus Christ, sustained by the Holy Spirit, and nurtured within the community of faith.

Renewal Through Christ: The Fulfillment of the New Covenant

The foundation of renewal in the New Testament is rooted in Jesus Christ's redemptive work. His life, death, and resurrection serve as

the ultimate act of renewal, ushering in the new covenant foretold in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Jesus' ministry was centered on calling individuals to repentance and transformation, emphasizing that renewal is both a divine act and a human responsibility.

One of the most explicit examples of renewal is found in John 3:3-5, where Jesus tells Nicodemus:

"Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

This passage highlights the necessity of spiritual rebirth, a radical renewal that comes through the Holy Spirit. Jesus distinguishes between physical birth and spiritual rebirth, making

it clear that true renewal is not merely a modification of external behavior, but a complete inward transformation initiated by faith. This renewal through Christ is both personal and communal, as believers are called into a new identity that reshapes their relationships and engagement with the world.

Renewal of the Mind: Transformation Through the Holy Spirit

The Apostle Paul frequently discusses renewal in relation to the mind and character of a believer. In Romans 12:2, he exhorts:

"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."

Here, renewal is contrasted with conformity to worldly patterns. Paul urges believers to engage in continuous mental and spiritual renewal, aligning their thoughts with God's will. This renewal is not a solitary endeavor but is empowered by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) and strengthened within the community of faith.

Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul proclaims:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

This passage reinforces the idea that renewal involves a fundamental transformation of identity. Through faith in Christ, individuals are not merely improved versions of themselves but entirely new creations. This transformation calls believers to let go of past sins and embrace a life of righteousness, supported by the encouragement and accountability of the Christian community.

Renewal in Christian Living: Ethical and Moral Transformation

Renewal is deeply connected to moral and ethical transformation in the believer's life. Paul emphasizes this in Ephesians 4:22-24:

"Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

This passage employs the metaphor of taking off the old self and putting on the new, indicating that renewal is a deliberate process requiring effort and commitment. The contrast between the “old self” and “new self” illustrates the difference between a life ruled by sin and one transformed by God's grace.

Similarly, Colossians 3:9-10 reinforces this idea:

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

This renewal is not only about external actions but about internal transformation leading to ethical living. It implies an ongoing process of growth, where believers, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the encouragement of the faith community, are continually shaped into the image of Christ.

Renewal and Eschatological Hope: The Ultimate Restoration
Beyond personal renewal, the New Testament speaks of cosmic renewal—the renewal of all creation. This eschatological

theme is evident in Revelation 21:5, where God declares:

"Behold, I am making all things new!"

This promise points to the final renewal of the world, where sin, suffering, and death will be eradicated. The new heaven and new earth signify the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan for renewal, bringing complete restoration to humanity and creation.

Paul also speaks of this future renewal in Romans 8:19-21, describing how creation itself longs for liberation from decay. This indicates that renewal is not only individual but also cosmic, extending beyond humanity to the entire created order. It is a vision of hope that sustains believers, inspiring them to live with faith and anticipation of God's ultimate restoration.

The Role of the Community of Faith in Renewal

Renewal is not an isolated experience but one nurtured in the context of the Church—the body of Christ. The early Christian communities exemplified this collective renewal through their devotion to

prayer, teaching, fellowship, and breaking of bread (Acts 2:42). The Church serves as a vessel for renewal by encouraging believers, providing spiritual nourishment, and fostering accountability.

Hebrews 10:24-25 reminds believers of the communal nature of renewal:

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Renewal is sustained through community worship, discipleship, and service. As believers support and challenge one another in faith, the Church becomes an instrument of God's transformative work in the world.

Conclusion

The theme of renewal in the New Testament is multifaceted, encompassing spiritual rebirth, transformation of the mind, ethical living, and eschatological hope. It is central to Christian faith, emphasizing that true renewal comes through Jesus Christ and is sustained by the Holy Spirit within the community

of believers. Renewal is both an event and a process—an immediate transformation at salvation and a lifelong journey of becoming more like Christ.

Through passages such as John 3:3-5, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:22-24, and Revelation 21:5, the New Testament presents renewal as an essential component of God's redemptive work. It challenges believers to continually seek spiritual transformation, live in righteousness, and anticipate the final renewal of all things. Ultimately, renewal is a testament to God's grace and the hope of eternal restoration in His presence, shared and strengthened through the fellowship of the Church.



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Renew-all

Rev. Sanjiv Ailawadi

In all generations, God has looked *to give His people as a light to all, to open blind eyes, to bring liberation, to break chains of systemic and personal bondages* (Is 42.6,7). To do so, God's people themselves need to be renewed to be righteous, free, and liberated.

Paul says: *“Be not conformed to the patterns of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Rom 12.2). From Romans 12.3 to Romans 15.7, Paul explains what worship and transformation are about, but he starts with biblical community and weaves this pattern of being community throughout these chapters. In fact, biblical community is a critical theme of

Scripture, the Church of the ages being prepared as the bride of Christ.

The community of God lives contrary to how people otherwise live. Living in biblical community means that we no longer are independent, doing as we please, but are called to live interdependently in accountable relationships. As Paul says, *mature enough to admonish one another* (Rom 15.14). In Colossians 3:16, he says: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.*

Alternate communities are rich, not in social or economic wealth, but in God's word: we hold one

another accountable to God's word. Biblical community in essence is the antithesis of the outcome of the fall, which was to live independently of God, His word, and of one another. Renewal and the creation of strong biblical communities go hand in hand.

In the absence of biblical community, people are isolated. Isolation is a universal characteristic of the human race after the fall; every individual is born to naturally isolate. Isolation from God, isolation from all of God's creation. Isolation must not be confused with loneliness: while isolation is an intentional *act* to separate ourselves; loneliness is to *feel* alone and disconnected.

Proverbs 18:1 says "*A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire, He rages against all wise judgment.*" Isolation leads to self-seeking individuals, who rage against sound judgement, or as the Message puts it: *they spit on the common good*. An isolated individual lives with a single core life-choice, to seek good but only for himself. Isolated individuals

are well described by Paul: 2 Tim 3:2-5 "*lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.*"

Paul was not speaking of others; he was writing to Timothy of what would happen in the church. The claim of a church to be the community of God is not found in great numbers, its sermons, its worship or even in miracles, signs and wonders. It is found in a people living righteously, connected with God, with one another, with all creation. A connection that is loving and submitted.

Isolation causes us to live by standards set by ourselves. A characteristic of those living isolated lives in the church may not be to deny that we need to be washed by the blood of Jesus, but in the absence of any relationships that mirrors back to us who we are, deny that we have

anything that needs to be washed. Self-righteousness is a natural outcome of isolation. Isolation leads to self-deception, no longer committed to truth. At the root of all we hear in the news is not brutality, or polarisation, or power-crazy despotic maniacs looking to annex entire territories, but the complete absence of a commitment to truth. If the first quarter of the 18th century was described as the *age of reason*, then this quartercentury at the turn of the millennium could well be defined as the *age of unreason*.

In the times of the Judges, *the word of God was rare, there was no widespread revelation* (1 Sam 3.1), as *everyone did right in their own eyes* (Judges 21.25). Today, in this age of unreason, we face a similar predicament: truth is rare because all do what is right in their own eyes. Truth and isolation are negatively co-related; the increase of one naturally leads to the decrease of the other. Paul in calling himself *the foremost of all sinners* (1 Tim 1.15) was sceptical about himself, though was convinced of the truth of God.

Today, it seems we are convinced about ourselves but sceptical of what truth really is.

Renewal is to return to the commitment to truth, no matter the cost. The church today needs restoration, to be *the pillar and the ground of the truth* (1 Tim 3.15); to be in a vibrant covenant relationship with God, as priests of the living God. The church needs to be an organism *that lives in opposition to isolation, not one that amplifies it* (Myles Werntz). In opposition to un-truth, not one that amplifies it.

If we go shopping, we may share the same goal with hundreds of others at the marketplace, but *accidentally*. The church needs to not just create *accidental* congregations, who just happen to worship together. The church is meant to be a biblical community of people on a covenant journey together, who seek and discover God in their generation.

Isolation is not merely an individual matter; it is also a collective. Collective isolation takes place when we lock ourselves away from the rest of

humanity on Sunday. Not to plan engagement as the original intent of ecclesia was, but to actively disengage from the world. Jesus said He would build a church that would so actively engage and be so on the move that even *the gates of hell would not stand against it* (Mt 16.18). Collectively dissociating from the world on a Sunday only to dissociate from God the following day is a habit which we need to be liberated from.

Living out as a biblical community, says Paul, is to associate with those who are lowly. Jesus stated in Luke 4:18 that He was *sent to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed*. The lowly are defined here to be those who are economically, politically, physically and emotionally bound, oppressed and traumatised. When in intentional association with the 'lowly', we associate with Jesus Himself: *what we do unto the least of these, we do unto Him* (Mt 25.40).

Association with the lowly is not just a nice thing to do, it is the very character of biblical community. Association with the poor is to anticipate a kingdom, where there is no poverty; it is to anticipate a kingdom where hope thrives; it is to resist that which creates domination, oppression and exploitation; it is to build towards a new world that John speaks of in Revelations: *a new heaven and a new earth* (Rev 21.1)

Independence, in the sense of liberation from oppression by others, is a requirement of justice. But independence, in the sense of isolation from the human community, is neither possible nor just. We - human persons - need each other within communities. We - human communities - need each other within the community of humanity. We - humanity - need nature within the community of creation. We - the creation - need God, our Creator and re-Creator. Humanity faces the urgent task of devising social mechanisms and political structures that encourage genuine interdependence, and which will

replace mechanisms and structures that maintain domination and subservience." (Jurgen Moltmann). And replace isolation, with connection.

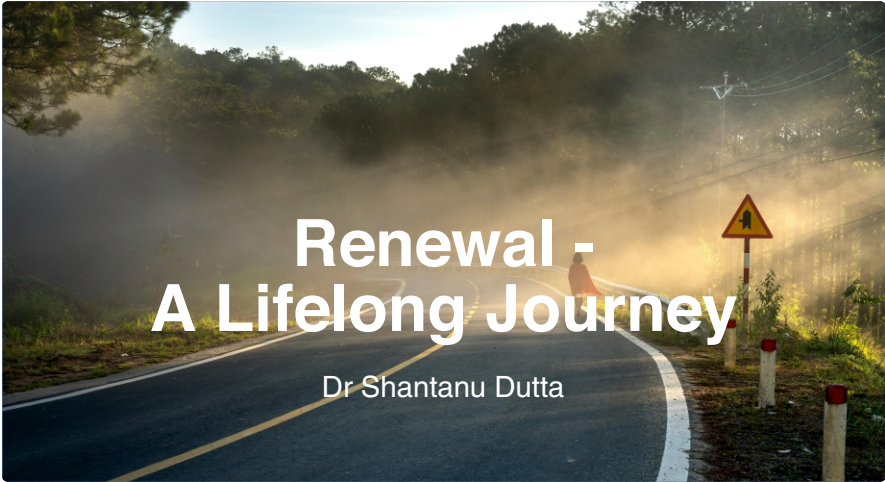
Renewal is a pressing matter, and whilerenewal is energised by the Holy Spirit, a reading of Romans 12 to 15 indicates that the energising power of the Holy Spirit is to assist us in making choices that are an imperative for renewal, i.e. to create biblical community. Anticipating the rule and reign of God is a creative matter, we create on earth in a small way that which we anticipate is to come. Domination, which is the watchword of the devil and the world, is that which brings isolation in humanity: isolation from God, isolation from each

other, in order to dominate over the other. Renewal begins with resisting domination with *weapons that are not carnal, but spiritual, mighty in God to demolish strongholds* (2 Cor 10.4). We work towards renewal for we have hope in Christ, the *hope that does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us* (Rom 5:5).



Rev. Sanjiv Ailawadi
Sr. Pastor, New Generation Church

*"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"*
Romans 12:2



I can vividly recall the day, month, and year when I experienced a profound spiritual renewal in Jesus Christ. Growing up in a Hindu family, the journey and shift were quite different. Over time, I learned to condense and explain my testimony whenever asked, as I used to do in my youth.

The “born again” experience, a core belief in Christianity, signifies a deep spiritual transformation and a renewal of the inner self. It's not just a superficial change but a complete reorientation of one's life. It shifts away from a life dominated by sin and self-interest towards a life centered on Christ. Jesus himself emphasized this necessity to

Nicodemus, saying, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (John 3:3).

This is the moment when the first spiritual awakening occurs, a time that I, like many others, remember vividly. In this awakening, the individual realizes their separation from God due to sin and recognizes their need for redemption. This recognition leads to repentance, a turning away from sin and a turning towards God. It involves a deep sense of remorse for past actions and a genuine desire to live a life that pleases God.

The born-again experience and the initial renewal are deeply

connected to faith. Through faith in Jesus Christ, one receives forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. This faith is not just intellectual agreement but a heartfelt trust in Christ as Lord and Savior. It involves a commitment to follow Him, learn from Him, and live under His teachings.

Renewal is like a never-ending journey of spiritual growth and transformation. It's not a one-time thing, but a constant process of changing and becoming more like Christ. This is where I often struggle. The Holy Spirit, who starts the rebirth process, also gives believers the power to live out their new identity in Christ. This means giving up to God's will every day, relying on His grace, and trying to be like Christ. But approaching the Lord regularly and experiencing this renewal takes a lot of spiritual discipline, and that's where the challenge is.

Renewal is a tough process of getting rid of the "old self" with its sinful desires and habits and embracing the "new self" that looks like Christ. Through prayer,

Bible study, and spending time with other believers, Christians get stronger and better equipped to go on this journey. The goal of renewal isn't to be perfect but to keep getting better and better. It's a lifelong process of slowly changing into the likeness of Christ. This means becoming more like Him in our thoughts, words, and actions, showing His love, grace, and compassion to the world.

Even though we become "new creations" through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), this transformative experience is a big change in who we are. It's like we're breaking free from the control of sin and death. But the truth is that even as new people in Christ, the "old nature," with its old patterns of sin and temptation, still has a hold on us. This tension between the "already" and the "not yet" is a big part of being a Christian.

Christ's sacrifice breaks through the power of sin, but the urge to sin, often called the "flesh" or the "old self," still lingers. This doesn't mean we shouldn't be born again,

but it shows that we're still fighting temptation. The Apostle Paul himself struggled with this, saying, "I don't do the good I want to do, but the bad I don't want to do—this is what I keep doing" (Romans 7:19).

This struggle comes from a few reasons. First, sin has deeply rooted itself in our nature, forming habits and thoughts that are tough to break. Second, the world around us constantly tempts us to go back to the old ways. Third, Satan, our enemy, tries to stop us from growing spiritually, using our weaknesses and spreading lies that hurt our faith.

Renewal isn't just for us as individuals; it's also for the Church as a whole. Just like we need to keep getting spiritually refreshed, so does the Church. If we don't renew ourselves, we'll lose our energy, relevance, and faithfulness to our mission. The Church is made up of people, and their well-being is connected to our spiritual health. So, a church that doesn't take care of itself risks becoming boring, ineffective, and irrelevant.

Churches, like people, can be influenced by the world, get complacent, and lose their way. They can get stuck in old traditions that don't make sense anymore, focus on programs instead of people, or put on a good show instead of changing inside. Just like we struggle with sin, churches can also fall into sins like pride, division, and a lack of love.

Renewing a church isn't just about adding new programs or fixing up the building. While those things can be helpful, true renewal goes much deeper. It's about going back to the basics of Christianity: a renewed focus on the Bible, a deeper commitment to prayer, and a rediscovery of the centrality of the Gospel. It's about rediscovering the passion for God's kingdom and getting back to the mission that Jesus gave to his followers.

This renewal process often starts with the church realizing it needs it. It takes humility, a willingness to admit mistakes, and a sincere desire to ask God for guidance. Just like people have to confess their sins, churches have to

confess their failures and ask God for forgiveness. This corporate confession might mean admitting a lack of love and unity among the congregation, failing to reach out to the lost and marginalized, or being too caught up in worldly things.

Once the church knows it needs renewal, it must actively seek God's presence through prayer and studying His Word. This means spending time in prayer, both individually and together, asking God to show the church where it's gone wrong. It also means diving deep into the Bible, trying to understand God's plan for the Church and rediscovering the timeless truths of the Gospel.

Renewal isn't just sitting back and waiting for things to happen. It takes action. It means letting go of old traditions and practices that are holding the church back and embracing new ways of serving the community. This might mean changing worship styles to connect with younger people, starting new outreach programs to help the people around the church, or creating small groups where people can get closer to

each other and be held accountable. Church renewal isn't just about the church itself. It also means focusing on the church's mission outside the church. Church renewal is about actively engaging with the community, serving the poor and marginalized, and sharing the Gospel with those who haven't heard it. A renewed church is one that actively transforms its community, bringing hope and healing to a broken world.

Ultimately, church renewal is a work of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Spirit empowers individual believers, He also empowers the Church as a whole. It's through the Spirit's guidance and power that the Church can experience true renewal, becoming a vibrant and effective instrument in God's hands. This renewal isn't a one-time event but an ongoing process, a continuous journey of seeking God's face, conforming to His will, and fulfilling the mission He has entrusted to His Church.

The journey to spiritual renewal, a transformative process of

drawing closer to God and becoming more like Christ, often starts with the intentional practice of spiritual disciplines. These aren't just rituals or legalistic obligations but rather intentional acts that create space for God to work in our lives, shaping our hearts and minds to align with His will. They're the tools we use to cultivate spiritual growth and experience genuine renewal. Of course, spiritual disciplines aren't ends in themselves but rather means to an end. Their purpose isn't to earn God's favour, which is already freely given through Christ, but to open ourselves up to His grace and allow Him to transform us from the inside out. They're the pathways that lead us to deeper intimacy with God, enabling us to experience His love, joy, peace, and power in greater measure.

The journey to spiritual renewal often begins with a sense of wanting more than what the world offers. This can come from feeling empty, struggling with sin, or wanting a deeper sense of meaning and purpose. Once you recognize this need, you naturally want to learn more

about God and how to connect with Him.

One of the most important spiritual practices that aids renewal is prayer. It's not just about saying words; it's about having a real conversation with God. You can share your joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears with Him. Through regular prayer, you can learn to listen to God's voice, get His guidance, and feel His comfort. Prayer is like the breath of your soul, helping you on your journey of renewal.

Another important practice is studying the Bible. The Bible is God's living Word, full of truth, wisdom, and inspiration. By reading the Bible, you can learn about God's character, His love for you, and His plan for your life. Regular Bible study fills your soul, strengthens your faith, and helps you live a life that pleases God. It's like food for your spiritual growth.

Fasting is another powerful practice, even though it can be misunderstood. It's not about going hungry for the sake of hunger; it's about intentionally

giving up physical comforts to focus on spiritual matters. Fasting can help you break free from unhealthy attachments, develop self-control, and show your dependence on God rather than on worldly things. It's a way of humbling yourself before God and seeking His will with greater intensity.

Spending time with other believers is super important for our spiritual growth. We're not meant to do this journey alone. Surrounding ourselves with other Christians who are also on the same path can give us a boost, keep us honest, and offer support. Sharing our ups and downs makes our faith stronger and reminds us that we're part of a big family of believers. It's in the community that we feel God's love.

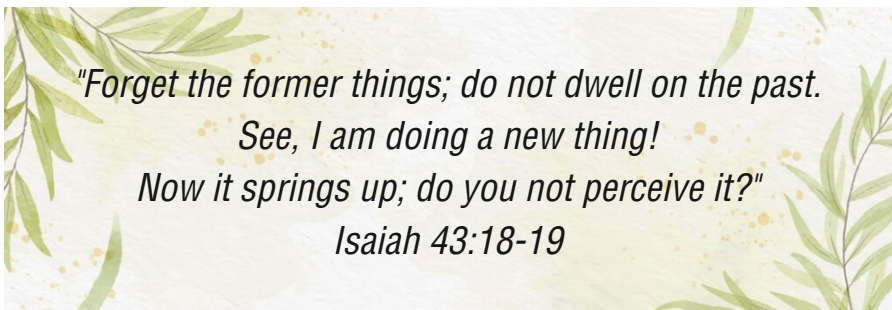
The journey of spiritual renewal is

a lifelong adventure, a never-ending cycle of growth and change. It's not always easy; there will be times when we feel stuck or tempted. But by sticking to these spiritual practices, we make room for God to work in our lives, transforming us into the people He created us to be. It's a journey of grace, guided by the Holy Spirit, leading us to a deeper and more meaningful life in Christ.



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God and 'Soul Care'

Rev. Dr. Vivek Gundimi

We perceive a generation today which is facing a turmoil of instability on many platforms. There is hardly any time for the majority out there in the world to take care of their inner being – the 'soul'.

The 'soul' *de facto* is considered to be more crucial for one's holistic living. The Scriptures time and again re-emphasise the fact that the Triune God is extremely concerned about 'Soul Care'.

The term 'Soul Care' would suggest that God takes responsibility to nurture the spiritual well-being of those who acknowledge His Name and His Will. And this we know is evident throughout Biblical history!

God is not merely interested in the believer's physical activities but also expects them to connect with Him on a deeper level and live a nourished lifestyle nurtured by His values.

Indeed, God is concerned for our physical bodies but all the more so, for our inner souls. In 3 John 1:2, Apostle John stresses on this as he greets his friend Gaius, *"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well."*

The Bible often uses the word 'soul' to refer to the whole person including his/her emotions, will, intellect, identity, consciousness, desires, thoughts and moral character.

The above being the case, 'Soul care' is significant, because there's a lot that goes on within oneself which effects the outward behaviour, attitude, decisions and the overall lifestyle in respect to living as a believer of Jesus – particularly in a world caught in chaos, competition, fear and challenges too many!

Hence, wouldn't it be more substantial to say that the One who will care for the human soul would not only be interested but also involved?

The Scriptures invite believers without reservation to simply place oneself in a situation for God to care on a deeper level, i.e. allow Him to attend to our souls and let his plans replace and surpass ours for our own benefit but even more for His highest glory!

So, if we realize how significant the matter is in connection to allowing God to care for our souls, then it is true beyond a shadow of a doubt that we must make time (perhaps daily) for God to work this process in our individual lives so that we would be renewed and hence, be

available to serve Him adequately and joyfully.

In a world torn apart by animosity, temptation, confusion, and unpredictability, the human 'soul' goes through a lot of trauma. But when God is invited and involved in 'Soul Care', it initiates a deep internal change in the believer's life by bringing him/her closer to God, delivering from every fear and hence, being available to Him to be used effectively.

Primarily, the Scripture stresses on 'Soul care' for *spiritual renewal* – which includes the change in one's heart and mind by the power of God, leading to a life that has turned away from sin while being made new in Christ. (Rom.12:2; Eph.4:23-24)

And still further, the Bible also focuses on 'Soul care' for the *renewal of strength* for those who trust in God; because He gives them the ability to persevere through difficult times. (Isa. 40:31)

The Biblical concept of 'renewal' is often associated with spiritual rebirth of the soul, restoration of the soul, and hence the

transformation of life itself.

Therefore, 'renewal' of a believer's life in its totality works in correlation to his/her 'Soul Care'. And this is not just a one-time event but an ongoing process of spiritual growth and deepening faith – making believers mature while also directing them to live in a way that honours God.

It can be hard today in the busyness of life to submit to God's initiative to care for our souls. But, we certainly can pray that God would grant us the patience to stay still for a while each day during our private prayer-time, and allow Him through His Word and Spirit to speak to and nurture our 'soul' viz. the 'inner-being' - inclusive of our emotions, will, intellect, identity, consciousness, desires, thoughts, and moral character.

We could begin by asking God to care for our souls by learning to keep silent for a few minutes after prayer and train ourselves to hear His voice.

We could also ask God to care for our souls by silently reading the

Bible and allowing the Scripture to soak into our hearts and minds – hence, initiating a deep change within our soul while progressively effecting our outward behaviour, attitude, decisions, and the overall lifestyle regardless of the prevailing situation around us.

May we give God the time every day to care for our soul to bring us even more closer to Him and be used of Him effectually.



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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.



Continuous Revival

*“Fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar;
it is not to go out.” (Leviticus 6:13)*

Dr. Chacko Thomas

A great inspirational book that came into my hand in the early 1970s was entitled “Monsoon Daybreak”. It told the story of Brother Bakht Singh's early ministry as an Evangelist and the revival that came to Chennai.

On one of his visits to Chennai, hundreds of nominal Christians had been spiritually awakened. At the end of this long ministry, many came to the Railway Station to bid him farewell. They managed to get him through the crowd and in the door of the train just as it began to pull away from the Station.

Just then one of those zealous Christians asked in a loud voice, “Brother, do you have a parting message for us?” Brother Bakht

Singh responded, “Leviticus 6:13”.

As quoted above it reads, “Fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it is not to go out.” He had seen much enthusiasm all around India in his ministry. But on his revisits, he saw that the fire that burned bright, had gone dim if not gone out fully.

Our natural tendency is not evolution but devolution. It is like one of the seeds in our Lord's parable, that fell on the rocky ground, it sprang up very enthusiastically, but it died out just as fast. [Mark 4:13-20.] Yes, “keep the fire burning”.

The devil wants lukewarm Christians.

Our situation is warfare. “And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

“... And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even [when faced with death]. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.” Rev. 12:9-12

In “Renewed Day by Day”, applying these verses to the ministry, A W Tozer writes, “The clergyman is considered one of the best actuarial risks any insurance company can risk – from the standpoint of physical hazard. Yet, the ministry is one of the most perilous of professions.

“The devil hates the Spirit-filled minister with an intensity second only to that which he feels for Christ Himself. The source of this hatred is not difficult to discover. An effective, Christlike minister is a constant embarrassment to the devil, a threat to his dominion, a rebuttal of his best arguments

and a dogged reminder of his coming overthrow. No wonder that he hates him!

“Satan knows that the downfall of a prophet of God is strategic victory for him, so he rests not day or night devising hidden snares and deadfalls for the ministry. Perhaps a better figure would be the poison dart that only paralyses its victim, for I think that Satan has little interest in killing the preacher outright.

“An ineffective, half-alive minister is a better advertisement for hell than a good man dead. So, the preacher's dangers are likely to be spiritual rather than physical, though sometimes the enemy works through bodily weaknesses to get to the preacher's soul!”

What God requires of you?

I have heard it said that people do what is inspected, not what is expected of them. Many Christians suffer in congregations with low expectations. Most of us have low expectations of ourselves anyway. But God has very high expectations of each believer and each congregation and para-church organisations.

He told the church in Ephesus to get in shape, or else he was going to remove them from their place. [Rev. 2:4-5] It is a tall order to “come follow” the Lord Jesus or to “follow [the Apostle Paul] as he followed the Lord”. [Micah 6:8; Matt.4:19-20; 16:24; 1 Co. 11:1-2; 2Thess.3:7.]

Some fifty years ago dear Brother George Verwer produced a leaflet called “7 Emphasis of OM”. Although it was meant for internal circulation it was widely circulated. Below is my condensed version of it. My hope is that people who do not have any specific goals as a Christian can make it their own or create something like it for themselves.

“Seven Major Emphases

Here are seven of OM's deepest and strongest convictions. We desire, above all else, to put these into practise in our own lives and sharing them with others as God gives the opportunity.

1. Worship and Prayer

Our worship is more important than our work and any act of sacrifice. Worship is adoring and praising God for who He is. Worship and evangelism should be the spontaneous outflow of a

life of communion with God. Worship is the foundation, basic to spiritual life and to accomplishing God's purposes.

2. Love and Forgiveness

It is impossible to overemphasize love and forgiveness when based on truth. Love and truth together produce the kind of spiritual balance we desperately need. Our motivation is not based on legalistic regulations or attempting to prove ourselves. It is based on the love of God and the forgiveness we have in Jesus Christ.

We should memorize 1 Corinthians 13, always remembering that love is flexible, adaptable, and must be central. God's word tells us in 1 John that if we cannot love those whom we have seen, we cannot love Him, our Great God, whom we have not seen. Jesus adds to this teaching by saying that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments.

3. Victorious Living and the Holy Spirit's Fullness

We believe that there is a victorious lifestyle, a lifestyle of Spirit-filled and Spirit-controlled living, this includes what to do when we sin (1 John 2:1). This is not super-spirituality: it is total reality.

We don't want to argue over the different expressions and vocabulary in regard to this great life in Christ, for we understand that God works in different ways in different people. We realize that this reality comes sometimes by crisis, but the crisis must be followed by a process. The Spirit-filled life is not the end, but the beginning. It means that we constantly walk with Jesus with a learning spirit, always growing and always pressing on in the things of the Spirit.

4. Christ's Lordship and All-Sufficiency

This is one of the most liberating and powerful aspects of the message that God has put on our hearts. We have seen thousands of people changed when they really come to appropriate what belongs to them in Christ Jesus, and then, on a day-by-day basis make Him Lord of their lives.

Jesus Christ must be King, and this means self must be put out of power. Many of God's people are discouraged and defeated. What we need is not another series of legalisms, 'do this or do that,' but we need the revolutionary life of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need Jesus Himself, not just policies or even principles. We must communicate to others, by our

lives, the transforming power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we believe this will encourage others to come into this way of life, which of course, begins at conversion.

5. Honesty and True Openness

Honesty and openness are desperately needed among God's people today. We must take off our masks and face reality about ourselves. Billy Graham said that the greatest obstacle to sanctification is our unwillingness to see ourselves as we really are.

At the same time, we do not dwell either on ourselves or our past sins – the ones for which we have repented and brought under the forgiving power in the blood of Jesus. We press forward with our eyes on the Saviour, not ourselves. We must avoid, like the plague, any form of double living. Walking in the light of God's truth means all-out warfare against sin, Satan, and self. As sin is acknowledged and confessed, and relationships are restored, homes and churches will be revived and healed.

6. Discipline and Brokenness

Andrew Murray said that brokenness was humility's response to the touch of God. We must always be willing to take correction, from the Lord and also from others. Then be willing to

follow through learning the reality of self-discipline in every area of our lives. We are aware this is a long, hard road. If Paul had to say, 'I buffet my body and bring it into subjection lest after preaching to others I become a reprobate,' how much more do we need to know this kind of discipline!

Truly effective discipline is always linked with a full realization of God's Sovereignty. We are weak, make mistakes, and fall into sin, but God has ultimate control over every situation. We must always keep this in mind as we press forward in the spiritual warfare, holding high the shield of faith.

7. World Evangelization

We believe emphatically, uncompromisingly, and without apology in world evangelization. This is in obedience to the clear teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels, and in Acts 1:8 just before He ascended into heaven. World evangelization must be an international operation of all believers – especially moving forward to reach the unevangelized areas.

In some areas of the world we will work in depth, remaining there for many decades. In other areas we will have a catalyst ministry. We believe this will light fires which will burn in the hearts of

individuals and then churches to accomplish the great task of world evangelization. Let us never forget that great promise in Galatians: Let us not be weary in well doing, we shall reap, if we faint not (6:9)."

Well, I hope that from all that is written above, you can glean some secrets for experiencing a "Continual Revival". It is possible, although many have concluded that a defeated Christian life is the normal Christian life. By the grace of God, by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we can say goodbye to a lukewarmness and sign up to be an "On-fire-for-Christ-Christian". India needs it.



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Contentment is a Great Gain

Prof. Dr. Henry Shepherd

“Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and dishonor you, saying, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

This prayer reflects the wisdom of seeking balance in life. Contentment lies in finding satisfaction with what we have, rather than chasing excess or falling into lack. It reminds us that both extremes—poverty and riches—can lead us away from God. True contentment is found in trusting God to provide our daily needs.

God's Plan and the Nature of Contentment

Contentment is a notion of satisfaction and bliss. Oscar Wilde said, “True contentment is

not having everything, but being satisfied with everything you have.” So, contentment makes poor man feel rich; discontentment makes rich man poor. God's plan is to prosper us with health, hope and happiness. Man has no say or choice in deciding his birth time and place, sex, family, colour of skin and period to live on earth, because He wants to give every one of us the best in His plan. Yet, discontentment may be observed in human nature, easily. However, the level of discontentment is different for different matters depending upon circumstances and state of mind. So, we are not carbon copies but different from each other. We are neither better nor inferior or equal to others. Therefore, comparison is forbidden (2 Corinthians 10: 12). Each one of us is a unique

creation, having unique features and follows unique pattern in life. But discontentment makes carnal minded feel – the grass on the other side of the fence is greener hence, desirable. But a contented person feels happy in what God has given him. Therefore, Paul said, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” (1 Tim. 6: 6 – 8) and James has warned the rich of end time (Jas 5: 1 - 3).

The Scripture teaches God's children not to compare themselves with others. Just look at your own work to see if you have done anything to be proud of or shameful. Believers are expected to take the responsibilities and duties assigned to them as an individual. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. A man reaps what he sows (Gal 6: 4 - 8). So, be careful while sowing reasons for discontentment may be numerous, which makes the issue complicated. Though we know that man brings nothing in world and can take nothing out of it. Yet, we keep ignoring the truth until godly wisdom opens out mind. Comparison is a foolish act love of money is deeply related with discontentment.

The Love of Money and Its

Consequences

Usually, love of money plays a crucial role in the lives of discontented people. It grows with time and eventually takes the first place in heart. Some people even worship money as their god. Solomon had God-given wisdom to rule justly. Yet he, with time, fell in love with money and beautiful women. His yearly income was 666 talents of gold. He married the princess of Egypt, then started business. Discontented king Solomon took one thousand wives and concubines for himself. He had so much gold that he got five hundred small and large shields made of hammered gold. Neighboring rulers used to come to witness the grandeur of his palace, throne and systems. But in the book of Ecclesiastes, he testified his chase for achieving worldly possessions was like chasing after the wind and meaningless. He concluded, “Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income, so he departs. This too is meaningless... the abundance of rich man permits him no sleep..... and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind? (Ecc 5: 10 – 16). On the other hand, Job was also a greatest man of east and very rich who lacked nothing. But since he loved God not money he could say when he lost everything- “The

Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, may the name of the LORD be praised (Job 1: 21). Abraham was rich but a contented person for he loved God above all. Joseph suffered for long years as a slave and then prisoner but remained contented in testing circumstances. Later he became Prime Minister of Egypt but lived a simple life and feared God. These examples and many other such examples in history articulates the value of gift of contentment for believers.

The Illusion of Wealth

Though rich and poor are vague terms, for a person may be rich compared to some, yet he may be poor compared to others. It is also true that no one can achieve all he desires, but some remains discontented all their life. We all need money and without money life appears difficult, yet money is not supreme. We cannot buy one peaceful day or relief from certain agonies using money. Wisdom says, "Money is a good servant but bad master". It is not money but the love of money is the root cause of all evil. Jesus has revealed the attitude of people who loved money, in several parables; then concluded, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mk 10: 23 – 24). The widow who

offered two silver coins was poor but contented (Lk 21: 1 – 3).

If believers of Christ are also discontented, then there will be no difference between God's children and children of the Devil. Paul said, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it means to have plenty, I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation..." (Phil 4: 12). So, the Scripture admonishes - be contented in what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you never will I forsake you" (Hebrew 13: 5). Discontentment often appears as: anxiety, greed, dishonesty, complain, sensuality, loss of peace, selfishness, envy and enmity, etc. Nevertheless, love for God and faith in his words are antidote for discontentment. Appreciate what you have and find good in it. If was contentment in David that he declared – The LORD is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing.

The Danger of Worry

Worry brings along discontentment. The Lord has exhorted several times not to worry for tomorrow for by worrying we cannot help ourselves. He said: What shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? Why be like heathen? For they run after all

these things and are deeply anxious about them. But your heavenly Father already knows perfectly well that you need now, and He will give them to you; if you give Him first place in your life and live a life as he wants you to.” (Mt 6: 31 – 33). Also, in the parable of the Shrewd Manager, he gave a message that solution for future and security is not in dishonesty or accumulation of wealth.

A study of dying persons showed: how majority of them regret for wasting their life time in earning worldly treasures. It is delusion to believe that money can buy all things, so for this people offer bribe to their gods to attain desires. The selfish rich man was contented for the bumper produce but because of greed his life was taken the same night (Lk 12: 19 – 21). Jesus said store your wealth in heaven. The wise man has admonished, “Treasure gained by wickedness does not profit, but righteousness delivers from death”. The wealth of sinner is eventually laid up for the just. Saving some money is not sin but love of money is. Whatever extra we receive has a share of needy and poor in it; give this cheerfully (Lk 6: 38). A man can share with others if he is contented. The Lord Says – If you are not faithful with earthly wealth (Unrighteous

wealth) how can you be given the true richness. It was a precious parable yet Pharisees who were lover of money scoffed at Him (Lk 16: 14).

The Impact of Discontentment on Spiritual Life

Soulish Christians may consider discontentment a natural instinct but spiritual Christians know that failure in temptation is due to lack of contentment. Therefore, carnal minded Christian became an easy prey when tempted. Contentment helps in resisting temptations is no secret. Also, without context thinking on contentment is vague and idealistic. Most of Americans are not poor yet they work 40+ hours a week and seldom miss overtime work. They spent more than they earn at the strength of credit cards, loan or advances; they usually desire more and fulfill their desires without any guilt. But they who believe in God, love and obey Him, live disciplined life within their means. In India role of Church properties has become a common evil for leaders. One can see how corruption has taken roots in Christian organizations. Our schools, colleges, hospitals and land are being sold at throw away prices by dishonest leaders. One richest Indian businessman is known for not shelling out a

penny for charitable works. Discontentment makes dent on faith, holiness, prayer life, good temper, peace of mind, married life and integrity. Discontentment is a universal issue which is increasing with technological advances.

Paul used to earn because he wanted not to be a financial burden on Church. Commonly humans resolve to become rich quickly and give themselves up as captive to devil. They may remain careful not to fall in love with money but gradually blindness covers them (John Calvin). Money enhances affordability giving chances to fulfil old but unfulfilled desires of flesh. Also, such a person ignores the inner voice. However, if the source of wealth is not from treasury of the devil and the recipient is a godly contented person, money can be handled using spiritual wisdom. Many such rich people donate their wealth for charitable works. John Wesley has suggested: make as much as you can and give as much as you can. A well-known businessman achieved success in business and committed initially 10% of his profit for charity but gradually he increased it with time and now keeps 10% for himself and donates rest for charitable work.

A rich man of America spends all his profit for charitable work and lives a very simple life like commoners. He travels in bus, lives in a small flat and uses no luxury items. Such people have set an example by defying the temptation and love of money. Contentment to the art of finding joy in simplicity.

The Gift of Contentment

Contentment is a gift that brings peace, joy, and spiritual growth. It allows us to resist temptation, live within our means, and focus on what truly matters. As believers, we are called to trust in God's provision, avoid comparison, and find satisfaction in His plan for our lives. By doing so, we can live lives of faith, love, and trust, declaring with David, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."



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MINISTERS OF NEW COVENANT

Ms. Melody Suzan

"He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." - 2 Corinthians 3:6

When we explore the various synonyms of the word "competent," we come across terms such as sufficient, capable, and the ability to perform or embody something. In certain translations, "competent" is often associated with being "qualified." A person is deemed qualified for a specific task or job only when they possess the essential skills, knowledge, experience, or criteria necessary for that role. However, in a remarkable display of grace, our God has deemed us

qualified as ministers of the new covenant, independent of our personal abilities, skills, knowledge, or experience. He has chosen us to be His ministers, entrusted with the message of the new covenant, reflecting His mercy and purpose beyond our own limitations.

He has liberated us from the constraints of the old covenant which was inscribed on stone and bestowed upon us a new covenant, one that is intricately engraved upon our hearts through the Spirit of Life. As detailed in the book of *Hebrews 8:8-13*, this new covenant signifies a profound transformation—God declares, "I

will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

God has graciously embraced us as His own, irrespective of who we are or where we come from. He does not measure us by our abilities, our circumstances, or our strengths. By His grace, He grants us the esteemed position of ministers of this new covenant. He promises us that "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Indeed, God offers us forgiveness that is truly liberating. While as humans, we may forgive others yet find it hard to forget their wrongdoings, God assures us that He actively chooses to not remember our past mistakes. He will not hold our sins against us. He invites us into a relationship as His cherished children and His people, declaring that we are no longer defined by our past or the deeds that once led us to condemnation and death under the old covenant—the laws etched in stone that brought guilt and despair. In this new

covenant, we are made anew, free from the burdens of our former lives, and embraced in a transformative relationship marked by love and grace, enabling us to obey His Law which is engraved on our hearts by the Spirit which gives us Life.

As we clutch our roles as ministers of the New Covenant, it becomes essential for us to concentrate on the deep and enriching transformative work of the Holy Spirit. In the book of 2 Corinthians 3:17, we find a powerful declaration: "*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*" This verse serves as a cornerstone of our faith, reminding us that we are now part of a spiritual realm that brings forth life, renewal, and true freedom. This freedom liberates us not only from the grip of sin and condemnation but also from the chains of our past, enabling us to break free from old patterns and constraints that once held us captive, to a new life in Jesus.

The veil that once covered the glory of God has been removed

through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. As a result, we live in a new era of revelation where we can behold God's glory without hindrance. This direct communion with the divine, initiates a profound process of transformation within us. The more intently we gaze upon Christ—understanding His character, and reflecting on His teachings—the more we begin to change into his likeness. We find ourselves progressively aligning with His image, growing in holiness, and embodying Christ-like character in our daily lives.

This transformative journey is not merely a matter of will power or discipline; it requires the intentional surrender to and active participation with the Holy Spirit. As we allow the Spirit to take the lead, He guides us through every facet of our daily life — our thoughts, actions, and relationships. Through this divine guidance, we become vessels of His grace, enabling us to navigate life's challenges with wisdom and courage. Ultimately, this transformation shapes us into reflections of Christ,

illuminating the world with His love and truth.



Ms. Melody Suzan

Mrs. Melody Suzan is a woman of God deeply passionate about sharing God's love with all who are in need. Driven by a sincere burden to serve the Lord, she has dedicated her life to bringing souls to the Kingdom of God. She has a genuine desire to fulfill God's calling in her life by reaching out to those who are lost, broken, and searching for hope. Through her words and actions, she inspires others to embrace God's love, and to live with a heart of service, compassion, and dedication to His will. She holds Master's degree in Electronics and Communication and is currently pursuing MA in Biblical studies.

<https://open.spotify.com/show/5eJ4Dq6NG0R9VZtLwKVva7P>

PRICE, SIGN, AND MEASURE OF OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Mr. Joseph Suhas



A lot of Christians have a mindset of doing good things, living life on the edge of commandments, and walking your life to Joy. That's the life we live. We don't go one extra mile above this.

Apostle Paul says, we're only babies when we come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. *Our actual growth begins in the spirit.* Our spirit must not only be quickened but needs to grow stronger day by day. The Lord is Spirit. The spirit of God abides in the spirit of man, and that's where the spirit of man begins to grow.

1. Price of Spiritual growth:

Make no mistake; your spirit doesn't grow simply because you've one time accepted the

Lord Jesus; you go to church and give your tithe. Never!

When you accept the Lord, you'll need to die to self-first.

Peter writes:

"So get rid of all evil behaviour. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech".
– Eph 4:31

One must get rid of all this evil behaviour, and unholiness. Strive to be Holy and righteous through the help of the Holy spirit desired by you. You need to have the desire to get rid of these things and carry Holiness. It is almost impossible for God to do anything with you and in you, if you're not

clean and Holy. This criterion cannot be compromised. If you're struggling with being Holy, then you're far from the Fullness of God's gift of His life for you.

Those who are born of God does not continue to sin! If you're struggling with it, then you still need to do away with sin yet.

Die to self-every day, train your body to obey your spirit, as Paul does. And walk in Holiness. That's the price of Spiritual growth.

2. Sign of Spiritual Growth:

"Like new born babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment".-1 Peter 2:2

When you're done with paying the price of Spiritual growth (walking in the spirit), there's a sense of hunger that you develop automatically. It's like you're out of fever, and back to normal. The appetite you lost, is regained.

There is a craving for the Lord. An unusual hunger and thirst for the

Lord. This is the next phase of Spiritual growth. The hunger facilitates a believer to feed more on the word of God, seek Him more through prayers with an undying desire for the Lord.

These are sure indications of Spiritual growth. They will create an appetite that allows you to feast on God until your spirit is full. It's the hunger of your spirit.

Remember, any unholy thing that you feed on during this phase will take you back to nullifying the appetite of your spirit for God.

3. Measure of our spiritual growth:

Spiritual growth is often measured by the fullness of His Spirit in us.

When Jesus went into wilderness to be tested,

1. He overcame the first stage of dying to Self.
2. He had the hunger for father, an appetite that kept Him away from all evil plots and temptations.

3. After this, He came out of the wilderness '**Full of the Holy spirit**'.

Stephen was testified as the Man full of the Holy spirit, for he had reached that fullness and could pray that prayer of forgiveness even in the jaws of death.

One of the other illustrations could be Ezekiel 34, the level of water rising from the toe, feet, ankles, heels, stomach, neck and finally submerged totally.

The current of water has the strength to take you anywhere the current flows. In the fullness of the Holy Spirit, it is often the Lord who takes over. It is a very deep level of intimacy and complete dependence on God.

This is exactly what God wants each of us to have:- "The Fullness of the Holy Spirit."

God gave Himself to us in full measure. He didn't withhold anything but gave up everything for us. It is with us as to how much we take hold of Him, and how much we let Him take hold of us!



Mr. Joseph Suhas

is a passionate young man whom God is using in various places across India. He shares his heart and passion through his life, for the Lord. Enabled with gifting, he is a writer, worshipper, preacher and stand as a symbol of encouragement. His dynamic zeal to seek God's heart has set him apart to lead many from around the IT hub to the Lord. He carries a special burden to intercede for people in prayer. His heart is for the North India raising leaders, supporting missionaries, and planting churches. His love for God is not just theoretical but approved and attested by God through the working out of signs, wonders and miracles in his ministry. He is the co-founder of the 'Heaven's Voice of Restoration Ministry' and moves echoing the bridal call for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

<https://josephsuhas.home.blog/purpose/>



Small Attempt Greater Blessing

Ms. K. Keziah Glory

“Expect Great things from God and Attempt Great things for God,” this is one of the quotes of the Serampore Trio, William Carey. In this world, we only expect great things from God. In the start of the year, we expect so much from God that is we expect God to give us good health, keep us safe and bring blessings upon blessings and so on. I won't say expectation is good or bad, it is fine. But as William Carey said, we also have to attempt great things for God. Forget about great things, what are the small attempts we take for Christ?

So, the question is what are we attempting or what efforts are we putting to know Jesus a little more than last year or a little more than yesterday?

In Luke 19:1-10, Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, after He foretells about his death the third time and he is passing by the Jericho city. Zacchaeus was now the chief tax collector, who was probably sitting at the outskirts of the Jericho where his office was present. Zacchaeus attempts to seek Jesus and that leads him to receive greater blessings.

1. Zacchaeus Attempt to Seek God

What motivated Zacchaeus to know more about Jesus? Firstly, he could have heard lot of stories about Jesus, maybe for nearly 2 years. Secondly, just before Jesus entering Jericho, he healed a blind beggar, so Zacchaeus might have heard or could have been behind the crowds, just hearing the voice of

Jesus but without seeing Jesus face to face.

But it was not easy for Zacchaeus to see Jesus, since Zacchaeus was short in stature and because of this, he might have not seen Jesus in the outskirts of the city of Jericho, when Jesus healed the blind beggar and moreover there were lot of crowds, so he was not able to push himself in front and even though if he had tried, the people might have teased him by saying, you are a sinner and why do you want to see Jesus and even if you see him, he will not even consider you as you are small and you are a great sinner (Luke 19:3).

With these hindrances, Zacchaeus still put efforts to see Jesus. Firstly, Zacchaeus was trying to see Jesus. He was not sitting idle, he ran ahead of Jesus, he ran ahead of the crowd and then climbed the sycamore tree (Luke 19:3-4). He was keeping on trying to overcome the hurdles or the hindrances that were set in front of him.

We too like Zacchaeus face many hurdles in our Christian life, sometimes we try to overcome them, sometimes we underestimate ourselves and

fear to cross it, sometimes we keep trying and get tried and give up. But Zacchaeus did not give up; he overcame them one by one. Among our troubles and persecution, do we still seek God or do we step back from God?

2. Zacchaeus efforts being appreciated by Jesus

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it, the word "passing" here shows that Jesus had no intention to stay in Jericho (Luke 19:1) and moreover, he was on an important mission (Luke 19:31). But something made Jesus to stop at Jericho, what was it?

It was not that Zacchaeus was a chief Tax collector and Jesus had to visit him, nor did Jesus come in search of him to settle some matters? No, it was clearly the efforts and eagerness of Zacchaeus to see Jesus, that made Jesus to stop under the sycamore tree (Luke 19:5).

As Zacchaeus was coming down from the tree, he was happy to welcome Jesus, but the people who were present there, began to grumble that Jesus had gone to be the guest of one who was sinner (Luke 19:6-7).

Zacchaeus knew from his heart

that he had to resolve the things then and there. Knowing that Jesus took notice of him and appreciated the efforts by calling him down, he didn't want Jesus be ashamed of his sinful nature but rather before Jesus could say anything, he said to Jesus, "Look half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much" (Luke 19:8).

Zacchaeus did not answer to the crowds who were grumbling, but he replied to Jesus. Moreover, Jesus did not tell him to repent, his repentance started when Jesus took notice of him.

Jesus knew the struggles Zacchaeus crossed to see him face to face and Jesus appreciated his boldness, courage and moreover, his self determination to see Jesus. Jesus is raising Zacchaeus to the heights by calling him as the son of Abraham (Luke 19:9), what a privilege, right? He just wanted to see Jesus and now a sinner is called as the son of Abraham. Isaiah 55:6 says, "Seek the Lord, while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." Zacchaeus did the same thing; he sought when Jesus was near him.

If he would have said that "I will see the next time when Jesus passes this way, now I am too busy with other jobs." I doubt that he could have not got another chance to see Jesus because that was the last time Jesus was crossing through Jericho city.

Most of the times, when we attempt to seek Jesus, people criticize us of our wrongdoing that we had done but that does not matter for Jesus. It is after all the small steps or efforts that we put in our lives to see and know more about Jesus matters the most.

Conclusion

In this month, we are entering the Lent season where we called to reflect and grow closer to Jesus. What small attempts are we going to do, to know him better in this lent season? In all the steps that we take in our lives are we attempting to know him more and more?

David just thought in his heart that he wanted to build a house for God, he did not even start or finish building it, but God made a covenant with him saying that God will establish his house forever and there will be always a successor in his throne. A small thought but it led David to receive great blessings.

Zacchaeus just wanted to see Jesus, it was indeed a small attempt, but he received the greater blessing of being called as, 'Son of Abraham.'

people who tease us and criticize us of our past life.

Yes!! Small attempts too matter for Jesus the most.

God sees the little things that we do for him and little things that we do to seek him more. As I said in the start, we expect great things but what are we attempting to know more about Jesus? When we attempt small or great things for Jesus, he takes notice of us and lifts us high in the society, he will lift us high in front of the



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Vacancy Announcement

1. Academic Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications: Master of Theology (MTh) or higher • Experience: Minimum 2 years in academic administration • Responsibilities: Provide strategic leadership for academic programs and faculty
2. Dean of Students Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications: Master of Divinity (MDiv) or higher • Experience: Minimum 5 years in teaching and administration • Responsibilities: Oversee student life, counseling, and extra Curricular Activities
3. Assistant Pastor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications: Bachelor of Theology (BTh) or higher • Skills: Fluency in English and Hindi • Responsibilities: Assist in pastoral duties, preaching, and community outreach
<p>If you are a motivated and passionate individual with a heart for ministry, please submit your application, including your resume, cover letter, and contact information for three professional references.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">We look forward to hearing from you:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Administrative Office: AGAPE BIBLE INSTITUTE Agape Centre, Behind Hotel Two Star, Chandu Studio Compound Kalina, Santacruz East, Mumbai 400098 📞 Office: 9892104164, 9022580550 ✉️: pastorjomon@gmail.com</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Our Branches Nasik, Pune, Kolhapur, AP & Orissa</p>	



The Role of Servanthood in Fulfilling God's Purpose

(Matthew 25:14-30 – The Parable of the Bags of Gold)

Ms. Seyienguü Kiewhuo

The Gospel of Matthew was written by the apostle Matthew, a former tax collector from Capernaum, around 90 A.D., likely in or near Antioch in Syria. It has been referred to as "*the Teacher's Gospel*" because of its structured presentation, making it particularly effective for instruction. This characteristic contributed to its widespread use in the early church.

Matthew compiled Jesus' teachings and parables, emphasizing themes relevant to the life of the church, structuring them in a way that allowed preachers and teachers to easily draw from them. His gospel demonstrates a distinct break from the Jewish community, marked by strong critiques of

Pharisaic leadership and an emphasis on Jesus as the fulfilment of the Torah. This suggests that Matthew wrote his gospel after the establishment of rabbinic institutions at Jamnia, addressing a Christian audience seeking an alternative to traditional Jewish instruction.

One of the defining features of Matthew's Gospel is the inclusion of five major discourses, carefully structured for memorization and teaching. This organization underscores the importance of Jesus' words and makes the message more accessible to his audience.

The Parable of the Bags of Gold (also known as the Parable of the Talents) is part of Matthew's eschatological discourse

(chapters 24-25). Prior to this parable, Jesus speaks about judgment, the end times, and His return. He then shares three parables to illustrate how believers should live in anticipation of His second coming. This parable is the third in that sequence, emphasizing not passive waiting but active faithfulness. It teaches that true readiness for Christ's return is demonstrated through diligent stewardship of the resources and opportunities entrusted to us.

This parable serves as a powerful lesson on servanthood and stewardship. It challenges believers to use their God-given gifts effectively, fulfilling His purpose through faithful service. As we explore this passage, we will examine the principles of stewardship, accountability, and the role of servanthood in advancing God's kingdom.

1. The Lord Gives Us Gifts (Matthew 25:14-18)

In this passage, Jesus teaches us about stewardship—how we ought to manage what has been entrusted to us. The parable portrays a man who goes on a long journey, representing God, while the servants symbolize those on earth called to serve

Him. Just as the master entrusted his possessions to his servants, God entrusts His gifts to us during this period before Christ's return and the full establishment of His kingdom.

Verse 14 states that the master "called his own servants and entrusted his possessions to them." Notably, each servant received a different amount—one received five talents, another two, and another just one. Verse 15 clarifies that these amounts were given "each according to his ability." Before exploring the deeper meaning of this, it's important to understand the term *talent*. In biblical times, a *talent* was a unit of weight used for money, likely silver, amounting to 27-40 kilograms. Even one talent was a significant amount of wealth, making five talents an immense sum. Over time, the word *talent* has taken on a metaphorical meaning, referring to God-given gifts and abilities that we are responsible for using wisely.

From these verses, we learn two key principles:

- **God is the source of all gifts**
 - Everything belongs to Him,

and He is the one who grants us abilities, resources, and opportunities. James 1:17 affirms this truth: *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."* Just as the master in the parable distributed his wealth out of his own possession, God generously bestows His gifts upon us.

- **God gives according to His wisdom** – The master distributed talents based on each servant's capacity, illustrating that God gives us what we are capable of managing. His wisdom is perfect, and we must trust Him, being grateful for the gifts we receive rather than comparing them to others.

Each servant in the parable had a choice: to use their talents wisely or to squander them. Likewise, we must ask ourselves: *What are we doing with what God has entrusted to us? Are we faithful stewards of His gifts?*

2. The Lord Will Hold Us Accountable (Matthew 25:19-27)

Verse 19 states, *"After a long time*

the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them." The master, having entrusted his possessions to his servants, finally returned and required an account of how they had managed what was given to them. Jesus is not merely telling an interesting story; He is teaching a profound truth—each of us will one day be held accountable before God for how we have managed the gifts and responsibilities He has entrusted to us. These gifts include not only spiritual talents but also our finances, relationships, ministry opportunities, service, evangelism, and even material blessings such as our homes, vehicles, and resources. Everything we have is ultimately God's, and when Christ returns, He will settle every account with us.

In the parable, we see a sharp contrast between the first two servants and the third servant:

- **The first two servants** worked diligently, investing and multiplying what was given to them. Their master commended them, saying, *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you*

in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness" (vv. 21, 23). Their faithfulness led to greater responsibility and the joy of their master's approval.

- The **third servant**, however, failed. Instead of investing his talent, he buried it out of fear and misunderstanding of his master. When confronted, he tried to justify his inaction (vv. 24-25), but the master rebuked him, saying, "*You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned, I would have received it back with interest"* (vv. 26-27). Because he allowed fear, laziness, and a distorted view of his master to govern his actions, he was deemed unfaithful and unproductive.

This parable urges us to reflect on our own lives. What might hinder us from being faithful stewards?

- Are we **paralyzed by fear**,

hesitant to use what God has given us?

- Do we **harbor misunderstandings** about God that keep us from serving Him wholeheartedly?
- Are we **driven** by selfish motives or distracted by the things of this world?
- Have we **become lazy**, neglecting the opportunities God has placed before us?

God will hold us accountable for how we manage His possessions. May we be faithful, wise, and diligent servants, using every gift and opportunity for His glory!

- **The Lord Will Judge Us (Matthew 25:28-30)**

After the master held the lazy servant accountable, he pronounced judgment upon him. As we read in Matthew 25:28-30: "*So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

This passage presents a great

irony. The third servant claimed he feared his master because he was harsh. However, we see that the master was actually generous, as evidenced by the way he rewarded the first two servants. The third servant was not a victim of the master's severity but of his own foolishness and unfaithfulness. Had he been diligent and faithful, he too would have received a great reward. In the same manner, when we turn to God and walk in His ways, there is a reward beyond our expectations. However, if we reject God and His calling, unfaithfulness leads to judgment. Verse 30 warns of "the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This is a serious consequence for those who fail to steward what God has entrusted to them.

Therefore, let us be faithful with what God has given us. When He returns, He will hold us accountable and judge us accordingly. We must always remember that we are servants and stewards of God through Christ Jesus. When our Master returns, we will either receive a reward or face the consequences

of our actions. However, the Bible also reassures us that Jesus has taken our punishment upon Himself. As Paul declares in Romans 8:1 *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* If we faithfully follow Christ, He bears our penalty, and we receive the reward of His grace. But if we reject Him and His ways, harsh judgment awaits us. The Lord has given us gifts and talents for His purpose, and He has the right to hold us accountable.

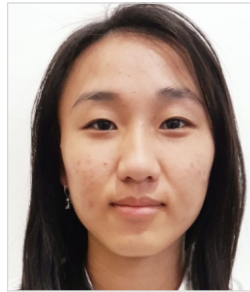
A pastor once wanted to teach his congregation about using their God-given gifts. He borrowed a sum of money and distributed it among the members, challenging them to use it creatively to earn more for a mission project. Over several weeks, the congregation came up with innovative ideas—renting bicycles, making and selling baby blankets, and even creating origami art to sell. By the end of the project, they had raised a significant amount of money for missions, far exceeding the initial loan. This exercise wasn't just about money; it was about recognizing and using the gifts God has given us. It demonstrated that when we

invest our talents in God's kingdom, the results can be extraordinary.

Conclusion:

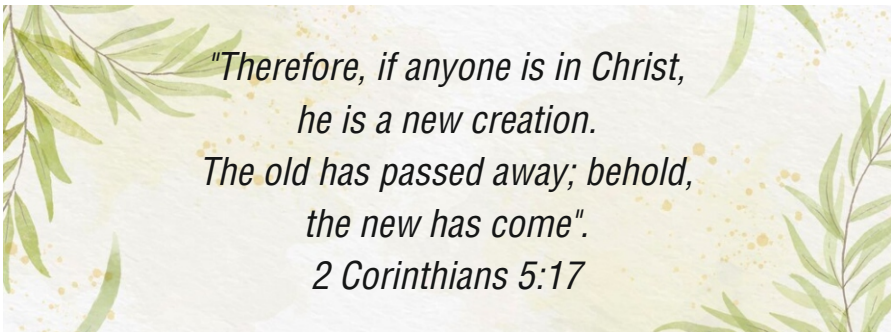
Too often, the Bible remains just words on a page. It is one thing to intellectually understand the principles of a biblical story, but true transformation happens when we apply them in our lives. The power of God's Word is revealed when we practice its teachings, making a positive impact for His Kingdom. Let us thank God for His grace in entrusting us with His gifts. We must ask ourselves: Are we good stewards of God's possessions? Are we investing them in His Kingdom or using them only for personal gain? Ultimately, we must take action. As God's faithful servants, we must start investing in His work now. When our Master returns, may we hear Him say: *"Well done, good and*

faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness."



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Transformation and Renewal

Rev. Dr. David Mende

Introduction

I read this interesting devotional in *Our Daily Bread* which emphasizes the need for transformation and renewal in our lives:

Farmers in Zentsuji, Japan, are preparing full-grown watermelons for shipment—only these are no ordinary melons, they're square! They were placed in tempered-glass cubes while they were still growing. Why would anyone want a square watermelon? They're much easier to store in a refrigerator!

It's amusing to think of how a naturally round watermelon can become square because of the shape of the container in which

it's grown. This reminds me of the forces in the world that exert their influence on us and attempt to shape us. That's why in Romans 12:2 we are told not to be "conformed to this world," but to be "transformed by the renewing of [our] mind." The idea is rather simple: We are to allow the transforming Word of God to work within us and produce outward results, instead of permitting external pressures to shape us.

The world seeks to continually mold us to be like it. But we are called to be transformed and to be like Christ. Romans 12:2 gives us this challenge. I have entitled this article as '**Transformation and Renewal.**'

Romans 12:1-2 summarizes a believer's response to God's mercies granted through Jesus Christ. In Greek too, the word "mercies" is in the plural, which is a Hebraism (a Hebrew idiom) for the different manifestations of God's mercy. We deserve God's judgment, but he had mercy on us. Paul gives exhortations to the Romans on the basis of God's mercies. These verses also serve as the introduction for the practical exhortations in 12:1-15:13. These verses mention how a Christian must live in a way that pleases the Lord.

The word "therefore" in Romans 12:1 points to God's saving grace mentioned in 3:21-11:36. The first part of Paul's appeal mentions the presentation of our bodies to God and the second part specifies our transformation according to his will. In Romans 12:2, we see that since we received God's mercies, we must not conform to the pattern of this world, but must be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we will be able to test and discern what God's will is.

We find two *commands* in Romans 12:2.

1. Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world (Rom. 12:2).

In Romans 12:2, apostle Paul writes, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." In this verse, the apostle Paul gives a negative and a positive command. The Greek word translated as "world" can also be translated as "age." It refers to the worldly system which seeks to exclude God from our lives. The present evil world poses a threat to Christians. We are called to renunciate/reject this evil world.

Several passages present the world or evil age as detrimental to our lives.

In Galatians 1:4, apostle Paul writes, "who [Christ] gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, the apostle says, "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel

of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

In 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul tells young Timothy, "For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia."

Writing to congregations across Asia Minor, apostle John says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world" (1 Jn 2:15-16).

So, we must resist the temptations of this evil world.

Imagine a courtier getting too intimate with his king's enemies. If we shake hands with the evil worldly system, we end up becoming God's enemies. Even the Law mentions that God's people must not conform to the world. Leviticus 18:3 says, "You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and

you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes." We must not be like a chameleon which changes its color according to its surroundings.

The word "do not be conformed" is in the present passive imperative. The passive voice suggests that sometimes subconsciously we allow ourselves to become like the world. Also, it may suggest that although we may be aware that we are getting conformed to the world, we are passive and not doing anything about it. The Greek grammar of this verse implies that we are commanded to continually reject being like the world. We must keep refusing to be like the world.

When we make chocolates at home, we use a mold. The chocolates come in the shape and size of the mold. That's what the world is seeking to do to us—it seeks to mold us according to its evil system. J. B. Phillip's paraphrase of this verse says, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remould your minds

from within." Humans like to imitate. But we must imitate the right person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is our ultimate example in rejecting Satan's temptations. We are called to be light in the midst of this dark world. We must avoid greed, self-centered living, envy, hatred, revenge, impurity, lust, foul language, ungodly entertainment, immodest clothing, immorality, drunkenness, and other sins.

It is natural for a boat to be on water, but if water is in the boat, it's dangerous. We are in the world, but the world should not be in us. Worldliness is disastrous for our spiritual lives. It's disheartening to see so many Christians living worldly lives. Don't flirt with the world. Your life will be destroyed. Don't follow the evil philosophy of this world. Don't post foolish and worldly teachings and quotes on your WhatsApp status. We must be very careful about what we read and watch.

Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world.

2. Be transformed by the

renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:2).

In Romans 1:28, we read that the mind of the world is debased (NIV: depraved). Paul writes, "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done" (Rom. 1:28). That's why, along with renunciation of the world, there must be a renewal of our minds. Our lives are transformed as our minds are renewed. The renewal of our minds includes thinking as citizens of the coming age. The word "transformed" is in the present passive imperative. The passive voice suggests that we cannot bring about this transformation. But the imperative mood suggests that we must obey God so that we can be transformed. We must obey God and follow certain spiritual disciplines in order to see transformation in our lives.

In 1 Timothy 4:7, apostle Paul writes, "Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness." Here, the apostle Paul says that we have to train ourselves in godliness. God wants to take away the rough edges in our lives.

The word "transformed" is in the present tense. So, transformation is not just a one-time event. It is a **c o n t i n u a l p r o c e s s** . Transformation takes a lifetime. The Greek word for transformation is *metamorphoo* . Just as a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly through the process of metamorphosis, we must be transformed in our character. The verb "transformed" is also used by Matthew and Mark to refer to the transfiguration of Jesus. This word is also used in 2 Corinthians 3:18. There, apostle Paul writes, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

Transformation refers to a change of character and conduct. We must keep refusing to follow the pattern of the world and be continually transformed into the image of Christ. Renewing our minds refers to renewing our thoughts and will. But Paul does not tell us how we can renew our minds. However, from his other writings, we understand that we

can renew our minds through the Spirit (Rom. 8:5; Tit. 3:5) and the word of God (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2), which contains God's thoughts. Let's meditate on God's word every day. D. L. Moody once said, "The Scriptures were not given for our information, but for our transformation." Jesus is the ultimate role model for our character.

In Romans 12:2b, Paul writes, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." As our minds are transformed, we will be able to test and discern God's will. The Greek word translated as "by testing you may discern" is *dokimazo* . This word means finding out the value of something by testing it (cf. Lk. 14:19; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 8:22; 1 Tim. 3:10). By changing our thinking, we can test and discern God's will, which is good, acceptable, and perfect. The unregenerated mind thinks that God's will is not good. But a transformed mind realizes that God's will is good. It is also acceptable to God.

Further, God's will is perfect. The Greek word for "perfect" is *teleios*, which means complete or perfect. No one can improve on God's will. It is absolutely perfect! The best way to live is to live according to God's will. As we discern God's will and do it, we are transformed even more. Jesus is our role model in doing God's will. In John 6:38, our Lord says, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." We need to do the will of God – nothing more, nothing less, nothing else, nothing better. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Conclusion

The central message of this article is: **Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**

Stop conforming yourself to the pattern of this world and be transformed by giving your life to Jesus. If you are still not saved, repent, and give your life to Jesus right today!

Jesus is our ultimate role model. He did the Father's will till the last breath of his life. Today, let us ask the Holy Spirit to transform us into



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



A RIGHT TO DO WRONG

Kuruvilla Chandy

Quite recently, a person who was found guilty was given an unconditional discharge – no prison time, no community service volunteer time and no fines for his conviction. The judge said, "This court has determined that the only lawful sentence that permits entry of a judgment of conviction without encroaching on the highest office in the land, is an unconditional discharge." The highly unusual sentence was imposed because of legal protections to the office.

The notion that some officials have rights and protections because of their positions is one that India has held sacred for a long time.

Some years ago in Uttar Pradesh, a politician freed an alleged criminal from incarceration and was jailed for that act. It is doubtful that anyone agitated that the freed criminal should also be rearrested and jailed again. If they did, that concern was, however, lost in the din of the main contention. The members of the politician's party were agitated that when the Chief Minister's brother had similarly liberated a jailed criminal earlier, the Chief Minister's brother had not been arrested. If the Chief Minister's brother could go scot-free, so too must their man. That was the contention of the politicians. Journalists also made similar observations. If there was

a concern to right wrong, it was submerged by the concern to maintain the equality of all in having a right to do wrong.

Such a conception of rights was brought home to me starkly for the first time when I was an involuntary witness to a class IV workers' union meeting. The speaker said, "If the Executive Engineer comes to work only at 11.00 a.m., we have a right to turn up only at 11.00 a.m." I could not believe what I was hearing. But there was more of that kind of talk. Speaker after speaker was claiming that workers had the same rights as officers, only they were talking about their having a right to do wrong.

Protectionism

That has been the climate in our country for a long time. Protectionism has been taken to ridiculous extents. Is there any other country where there is job security even for those who fail to do their jobs? It was reported that at a certain university, lecturers do not take a single lecture all year, but because they have the patronage of either politicians or students' union leaders, they are

protected from all disciplinary action and so free to run a small-scale factory or business of their own and yet collect their salaries every month. Clerks in government offices and nationalised banks can while away office hours and demand "overtime" to finish their work. One could go on and on enumerating examples *ad nauseam*.

Of course, there must be job security that cannot be annulled by the mere whims and fancies of bosses. But haven't we carried that need for security too far, when jobs need not be done to have job security, and job security exists on its own? We demand fairness of treatment by bosses, but it is in the practice of unfairness that we want fair treatment.

The blame for this situation must be laid squarely at the doors of our law courts. In these sanctums, justice has been reduced to a matter of winning by points. It is a question of who has the better lawyer, and the court's verdict is only an assessment of the lawyers' performance.

Wrongdoing has become defensible!

Rules of Procedure

It is a curiosity of modern jurisprudence that even a red-handed criminal can go scot-free simply because due processes of the law were not followed while arresting him. Sure, even a criminal must get justice. But what kind of justice is it that the modern world practises when the rights of the criminal are preserved while victims of crimes are terrorised, mauled, and brutalised inside and outside courts of law? How is it that the criminal's innocence is presumed while that of the victim is so often questioned?

Have you ever been able to make sense of a system of justice that cannot even hasten the trial of an assassin who was caught in the act of pulling the trigger? The necessity of a prolonged investigation to discover the extent of conspiracy is, of course, understandable. But once the matter comes to court, I cannot understand how cases of this nature and gravity can be prolonged merely by legal twists and turns in the face of the one

simple fact that the persons on trial were indeed the persons who had pulled the triggers.

Seven years ago, a popular actor was accused of paying someone to rape an actress in a moving car because of a personal tiff with her. The survivor has alleged political interference in the case and has said she suspects that the popular actor has used his friends in the ruling front to ensure that the investigation in the case is not completed, and the trial is prematurely finished.

So many young men commit rape and then are quick to claim juvenility, and the Juvenile Justice Board is quick to rise to their defence instead of recognising that they were very well aware of what they were perpetrating. It almost seems as though, having thought about matters and issues, they decided that since they can get away with things, they will do just that.

Jurists are adept at giving us pithy sayings. One of them is, "Justice delayed is justice denied." If that is so, procedural law cannot have anything to do with justice. All the delays in justice are possible only

by the fine points of the rules of due process. Procedure has become such a fetish for us that justice itself can be set aside.

There surely is a need to protect people from the presumption of guilt before they are proven to be guilty. But have we not gone too far in that protection when we overlook the evidence of guilt to free the person of all punishment merely because a fine point of law was not observed by the arresting officer? The defence lawyer serves his client, but does he serve the cause of justice?

Lawyers will, of course, continue to defend wrong, because that is the way they make their living. It is unrealistic to expect them to stop making a living. But laws can be amended to weigh them in favour of justice. Mere procedural law should not be allowed to get in the way of justice.

For the rest, one can only appeal to politicians and labour unions not to destroy the country by protectionism. Fighting for the rights of those whom they represent, they must be concerned with equality of rights, though not the equality of having

a right to do wrong. Instead of justifying the subordinate's wrongdoing by reference to the wrongdoing by the boss, insist rather that bosses shall do right. They shall be punctual. They shall not slack off and be negligent in their work. They shall not misappropriate funds or abuse privileges. They shall not practise favouritism but be even-handed in administration.

What we in our country need to really learn is that protectionism is not true loyalty, because we destroy the sense of values that sets humankind apart from mere brutes. We brutalise the very persons we protect. We deprive them of character and self-respect.

Sowing and Reaping

The final reason for not extending protectionism to evil is that of preserving society for the next generation. That seems impersonal until we realise that it will be our children that we benefit thus. It will be our children who are the next generation to continue inhabiting the world we create. We will live long enough to see them reap the fruit of what we sow. And some will see their

grandchildren. We sow the wind, but it will be they who reap the whirlwind. We will regret what the world has come to, but we will not then be able to turn the clock back. We will agonise about the wrong they will suffer because people will believe in their right to do our children wrong, but we will not be able to relieve them or offer them any hope.

Do you believe in retribution? I do. In God's world, there is a law of sowing and reaping. The consequences may not be immediate, but they come, and how! Those who betray others have helplessly watched their children or their grandchildren become the victims of greater betrayal. Their kin will experience injustice, which they once handed out.

We need to learn that there is no right to do wrong. We may believe in such a right and behave in a way that preserves our right to do wrong, but it is a horrible world we are creating thus.

If our country is to prosper, we must have a concern not so much for rules as justice. Legalism and licentiousness are just two faces

of the same thing. Legalism always ends up concerned with seeing how far one can go in stretching and bending the law or seeking loopholes.

Today, our law courts are clogged because our laws have mammoth and cumbersome proportions that allow multiple twists and turns to delay justice. We need to jettison the bulk of such laws. We need to amend laws that protect injustice, fraud, negligence of duty, and the like. We need ready justice.

Definitely, let us believe in rights. But let us not go on confusing right with wrong. Rights are good. There just cannot be a right to do wrong.

The Life of Christ

Earlier I had said that law courts and jurists are to blame for the situation in our country having come to such a pretty pass. That would be entirely true if there were no Christians and no church in India. Jesus said that His disciples would be the light of the world. Our light should have shined so brightly that our good works would gain high visibility and prompt men and women to

glorify the God who fathered the goodness they see in us. But the darkness persists because the light of Christ has been dimmed and even put out in the lives of some who identify themselves as Christians.

Jesus said to His disciples that they are the salt of the earth. Salt arrests decay. Salt serves as a preservative. The decay in India has not been arrested. How much of the blame for this must be laid at the door of the Church? Much, I fear.

The Church in India does have very high visibility because of its educational and medical work. Long after missionaries departed or handed over schools, colleges and hospitals founded by them, these institutions continue to be identified as "mission institutions". They were once known for their services to the poor and the deprived. Today, that is not necessarily what they are known for. They still enjoy a reputation for high professional standards, though quite often it is only a name that they enjoy while, like the church at Sardis the institutions are dying, if not already dead (Rev. 3:1-2).

Christian institutions gave up their mission of serving the underprivileged and became elitist because management committees were concerned that our institutions should run at profit. And the money brought corruption. "People who want to be rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

There is a lot of money to be made in running educational and medical institutions, and Christians are at the forefront. The money being made benefits the principals, directors and managers excessively. The vast disparities in wages, perks, and privileges enjoyed by them, although sanctioned by their boards, are viewed as being unjust by those below them. Not only that; when there is money in excess, skimming and siphoning off occurs almost automatically because whatever is paid legitimately is never enough compared to the vast amount of

money available. Like the taste of blood for the carnivore, the taste of money brings a ravenous appetite that cannot be satisfied with anything else. To change the metaphor, once the money bug has bitten, the virus of dissatisfaction gets hold of us so that we never have enough. And when the bosses make money, by hook and by crook, subordinates strike back. The lowly staff worker says, "If the institutional head can make money, why can't I? If bishops can do wrong and be protected, why can't I do wrong?"

How can the Church in India be the salt that arrests decay, when the rot is in the Church? The ethic of the Indian Church is no different from those of the rest of India: it is the new ethic of there being a right to do wrong. Everyone claims a right and a turn to embezzle funds or perpetrate other crimes. If we are to arrest the rot and stop the country from self-destruction, the Church must model holiness. We have enough of good laws. What we do not have are enough people modelling a different life and demonstrating that holiness is practicable.

A right to do wrong exists only when we consider the wrong others do and get away with. But their wrongdoing is not the standard for Christian behaviour. God is our standard. He said, "Be holy, as I am holy" and God-incarnate continued to do right when He was wronged in human courts. In His book, there has only been a right to do right—even when wronged. So, let Christians in India affirm that though bishops themselves do wrong, there is still no such thing as a right to do wrong. Let Christians affirm that, though it is a relative or a friend who does wrong, he or she has no right to do wrong, and that he or she must not be protected. Let it be affirmed that we have a right only to do right.



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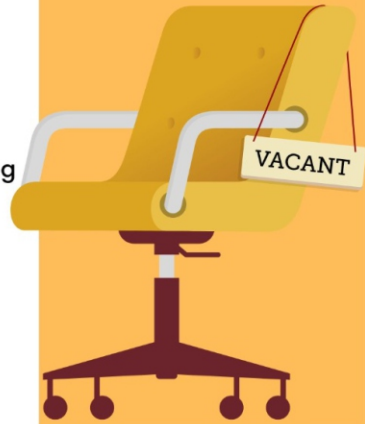
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March 2025

1 SATURDAY Thank God for the new month. Pray that you would accomplish many works for the extension of God's kingdom.

2 SUNDAY Pray for your Church that church members would renew their faith and commitment to follow Christ faithfully.

3 MONDAY Continue to pray for children who are writing the board exams. Pray God would lead them and protect them and enable them to do their best.

4 TUESDAY Pray that all the Group members, Life members and Individual members of Evangelical Fellowship of India would glorify God through their words and deeds.

5 WEDNESDAY Pray that believers would spend more time in self-evaluation and reflection. Pray that there would be repentance and change of hearts during this Lent season.

6 THURSDAY Pray for the leaders of our nation. Pray that they would understand the needs of the people and sacrificially serve them. Pray also that they would uphold justice in all their dealings.

7 FRIDAY Pray for EFI Children at Risk (EFIC@R). Pray that children who are at risk would be helped and restored both physically and spiritually.

8 SATURDAY International Women's Day. Pray for women's safety in our country. Pray that they are treated with dignity and honor. Pray for confidence, equality, and inner strength for the women around you.

9 SUNDAY Pray for personal holiness and close relationship with the Lord. Pray that your life would be a good example of personal holiness.

10 MONDAY Pray that the Lord

would give renewed strength and commitment to all the EFI staff and bless the programs they are conducting in different parts of the country.

11 TUESDAY Continue to pray for 2025 D6 Asia Evangelical Alliance Family Conference which is scheduled from May 16-17, (Fri-Sat) 2025. Pray for good participation from all over the nation.

12 WEDNESDAY Pray for the elderly people in your neighbourhood today. Pray that each one of them would be provided and cared for. Pray that the people who provide and care for them will have a compassionate heart towards the elders.

13 THURSDAY Pray for your city today that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would shine bright, and people may enjoy His abundant blessings. Pray that the presence of God would be felt by many.

14 FRIDAY Pray for EFI AIM magazine. Pray that more writers will be encouraged to write articles that would impact and transform people.

15 SATURDAY Pray for Pastors and leaders who are wrongfully charged for forceful conversion. Pray that God would hear their cry and work on their behalf.

16 SUNDAY Pray that God would enable you to be confident to share the Gospel with others. Pray that God would open many opportunities to do so.

17 MONDAY Pray for religious liberty in our country. Pray that every individual would have the freedom to worship without fear. Pray for strength and God's comfort for those persecuted because of their faith.

18 TUESDAY Pray for Christian lawyers in our country who are actively involved in the wellbeing of believers and their fundamental rights. Pray for courage as they give counsel or represent them in the courtrooms.

19 WEDNESDAY Pray that believers would trust God in the difficult seasons of life and hold fast to Him. Pray for comfort for those who are struggling in life.

20 THURSDAY Pray for the emotional and physical strength

of the children. Pray for safety and protection. Pray for diligence and hard work in studies. Pray that they would start the new session with joy and zeal.

21 FRIDAY Continue to pray that God would heal our land and make it fruitful so that we will be a blessing to people around us. Pray also that everyone including the foreigners are safe in our land.

22 SATURDAY Pray for all the Sunday School Teachers in your church that they may love the Word of God and pass it on to the children.

23 SUNDAY Pray for your pastor and his family that the Lord would provide for them and bless them to be a blessing to others.

24 MONDAY Pray for EFI Writer's Webinar scheduled on the 27th of this month. Pray for the resource persons and the participants that information presented will be impactful and beneficial. Pray that God may raise more writers for the extension of His kingdom.

25 TUESDAY Let us pray for all the orphans in our country. May God hear their cries and envelop them with His unconditional love.

May we know God's heart and support the cause of the orphans.

26 WEDNESDAY Pray for safety and protection of our country. Pray for peaceful relationships with our neighbouring countries.

27 THURSDAY Pray for EFI Writer's Webinar scheduled today. Pray for focused attention and clear understanding so that the webinar may be a success.

28 FRIDAY Pray for people who are struggling with their faith. Pray that the good Lord would reveal Himself to them at their level of understanding.

29 SATURDAY Pray for God's protection over you and your family. Pray that like Joshua you also can say "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." May the Lord use you effectively and powerfully.

30 SUNDAY Pray that the body of Christ would be protected and strengthened. Pray that the name of Jesus Christ will be preached and honored.

31 MONDAY Thank God for His protection and provision. Pray that He may make you be more fruitful in the coming months.



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