

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF EFI PUBLICATION TRUST

# aim

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A Journey of Faith



# KULPAHAR CHRISTIAN SCHOOL [MAHOBRA]

## Kulpahar Christian School

Kulpahar, Mahoba Distt. U.P. 210426.  
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*Editorial*



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

## Called to be super spreaders of Hope

The Evangelical Fellowship of India has been serving the Church and the Nation in these tragic months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Globally, life has been thrown off balance because of this pandemic. As of now, close to 3 million cases of COVID-19 infection have been confirmed globally and over 200,000 people have died because of this deadly disease. India has lost around 900 people to this infection so far and close to 29,000 have been infected.

India's extended lockdown is a challenge especially to the poor, the homeless, the landless, the Tribals, the Dalits, the internal migrants and refugees, and some sections of religious minorities for whom life, even in normal times, was difficult.

We appreciate the important steps

taken by the Central and State governments to combat the pandemic, and to provide support to citizens, both those infected by the virus and others whose daily life has come to a standstill in the quarantine, the unemployment and the lack of essential supplies. Civil society once harried by severe controls on their funding, has stepped in with laudable relief efforts. However, the need is immense. Experts have said that more needs to be done to revive the country's economy and to meet the need of its peoples.

EFI had issued a call to its members and the Church at large to be engaged through prayer, and to assist in the relief efforts to restore hope in society. We are glad to report that the Church and the community have responded to the needs of the communities around them, and often beyond their range and capacity.

Many small and large relief initiatives have been carried out by Christian organizations and individuals, often at great personal risk.

EFI has also engaged in the relief operations across 10 states of India. We are grateful to our members and volunteers as well as donors and partners who have helped us in this endeavour. So far, we have been able to reach over 1300 families which roughly translates to around 6500 beneficiaries through distribution of dry ration kits as well as direct cash transfers. We hope to provide relief to over 2000 families by the mid of May 2020.

We deeply appreciate our healthcare community and how they have risen to the occasion despite facing social stigma and physical attacks. EFI released a statement on 21st April 2020 in solidarity with medical professionals and appealed to the Church to observe an extended time of prayer during the Sunday worship services on 26th April 2020. We are glad to report that many Churches did this throughout the nation.

EFI has compiled resources on awareness on COVID-19 including advisories from the Government of India as well as WHO and they can be found on the COVID-19 Center on our website [www.efionline.org](http://www.efionline.org).

The site also contains information about what EFI's various commissions, departments and our members are doing to reach out and help the nation at this difficult time. It also includes a section on spiritual help and videos that can serve to bolster your spiritual life as you pass through this pandemic.

Since we are unable to publish AIM in a printed format during the lockdown, the magazine is being published and distributed digitally to all subscribers as a PDF file. The same can also be downloaded from our website.

The Christian community has the responsibility to lead the nation in hope and spiritual strength in facing the environment in the wake of COVID-19. We come together to join forces with the authorities and the people in this common fight.

COVID-19 will change our world in ways that we have not imagined. Fear and uncertainty prevail because the world does not comprehensively understand this disease. At this time, we need to remember that God and His promise do not change. He alone brings hope, respite and assurance to a world reeling on fear. We are called to be carriers and super spreaders of God's Hope.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal

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# Making Sense of God's Presence at times like these?

Rev. Dr. Vinay Samuel

*(presentation to India Church leaders April 14, 2020 By Zoom)*

Introduction: It is a time of great fear and suffering but one that nature inflict. This is not suffering generated by humans – in war, in massacres, holocausts. It is impersonal and from nature.

Our question is not about why does God allow suffering of this magnitude or any suffering in the world? That is a related question but different. The Bible does deal with that question significantly and throughout. For Paul suffering in natural to Christian life, it is a test in the letter of James and a fiery trial. It is a judgement on human sin and wickedness, it is a part of this present age, it can be a punishment from God, In Hebrews, it is for our education particularly the suffering of the Christian, It can be God's will and also the work of Satan. With Corinthians Paul deals with it a lot as he helps them to see the meaning and purpose of suffering in Christian life.

Jesus refuses to judge about the cause of suffering that is not obviously due to some one's wrong doing or sin. In John's Gospel when asked to judge who was the cause of Bartimaeus being born blind ,he, his parents or God Jesus refuses point his finger at anyone. Similarly I Luke's gospel Jesus is asked about who is to be identified as the cause for tower falling and killing many innocent people. Again Jesus refuses to identify God or the sin of the people as the cause.

Our question is where is God when there is a huge natural calamity like our present pandemic.

We will turn to that question and look at how we as Christians see the pandemic.

1. Doctrine of Creation: - I begin with the way the Bible describes God's relationship to his

creation. Creation is from Christ and for Christ. It suggests that inbuilt into this creation that God created as good and humans in his own image is the potential for bringing death and catastrophe to his creation. Jesus is described as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world in the Bible. It suggests that the creator Christ makes provision for such catastrophe in his own creation, even before he brings creation into being and will pay the price with his life to deal with it and restore creation to its original purpose – free from such deviance and death. Paul confirms to us in Roman 8:28-30. That the Creation knows it is afflicted and groans and longs and waits for it to be freed/liberated/redeemed.

Such an understanding of Creation has the following implications for us in the present situation. First, it affirms our Common Humanity. All of us as humans are made in God's image and are connected integrally with each other bearing that image and share a common humanity. Christian faith has a profound teaching on common humanity that I certainly have found in no other religion. There may be hints and even assumptions and ideas we may use to construct such a view drawing on ideas and texts outside of the Bible but nothing compares to the teaching that the Bible presents. This is something we as Christians can witness to in times like these and share with confidence. Secondly. Christian teaching on creation

informs our view of community and communities. Human identities are integrally linked to the communities they belong to. Our human belonging and identity are very community based. But we are also part of the larger human community and national community and called to contribute to the building of human community, national communities and other communities. We cannot see them immediately as enemies, villains and threats. We cannot ignore them as irrelevant. In our country and cultures our communities have rigid and impenetrable boundaries. We belong to them and get our identity from them. It is at times like these we begin to explore a different view of community and Christians must witness to an understanding of community that unites, heals and builds our nation. Thirdly, a biblical view of creation recognises the dark side of creation. Creation has within it viruses that may be benign for thousands of years but can become dangerous and destroying without any obvious cause. Viruses and bacteria have been in nature from the beginning some are beneficial to human and other life, some are benign and some become dangerous. We need a balance to the romantic view of nature and creation that is pushed by secular left environmentalists who rarely acknowledge nature's dark side. Christ knows his creation. He made it and provision's for its dark side.



He promises a new Heaven and a new earth without such flaws.

2. Doctrine of God. I would like to look at the way God shows himself in the world. Does he reveal himself as sheer power and perfect knowledge? If we stress that essentially God is himself all powerful and all knowing it makes it very difficult to figure out where such a God is at times like these.

Since Christ is the final and full revelations of God to humankind, And it is the Incarnate Christ in whom we see God revealed to us we see a different aspect of who God is.

In Christ God reveals himself in Suffering and Triumph in Folly, Foolishness (that is what the world's scholars thought of him) and Christ our wisdom. He was humble, humbled, humiliated and glorified. He was Almighty God but also a Crucified God.

Martin Luther highlighted this in his commentaries – He talked about God's hiddenness, there is God's hiddenness, God's silence – Jesus was silent before his accusers– Before Pilate Jesus refused to explain contradictions of how he was King but allowed himself to be crucified. Jesus was God incarnate but his incarnation was not publicly declared. It was hidden.

We must therefore recognise that we

cannot fully comprehend the God Jesus reveals. He is knowable but not completely comprehensible. Our understanding is always partial and we must acknowledge that humbly especially at times like this. We cannot speak as if we are privy to God's inmost purposes and actions.

3. Finally we must turn to the Psalms – the wisdom literature and to the Apocalyptic literature of the Bible particularly Revelation to find some answers.

A group of psalms are described as psalms of Lament. These lamentation psalms deal with the situation the psalmist faced as they could not see, hear or reach God when they faced extreme danger.

a. Psalm 80, 83 – O God be not silent, be not still 102, 120, 137 – By the rivers of Babylon as where are you, why are you silent, why didn't we see you.

It is here we turn to Jesus – always with us – his people – people who suffer, serve, where are you Jesus is what we ask. We cry and we seek.

We do not assume, take his presence for granted, we seek his face.

So one part of our response to this situation of such great fear and uncertainty is to turn to God in silence, in cries of lament and sit with people who are in grief and pain and lament with them. In lament we

still turn our thoughts and voices to God.

b. Revelation 15 & 16 – The Church was facing a much persecution. It was a cataclysmic situation for the whole people of God. John is given visions of the Future to enable the church to deal with that situation of terror. For us also we need to recover the vision of the Future God gave to the Church in Revelation. The plagues are released – The temple in heaven is revealed. As the plagues past out – people who do not know him, who have rejected him – curse him 16:2. The earlier chapters of Revelation show the horrors that will be unleashed. It is in Chapter 15 the Temple in Heaven is revealed for the first time.

Jesus is still the lamb – slain and slaughtered lamb, but enthroned and glorified – and we are invited to worship him – we fall down – that is the vision John sees and gives to the people of God facing a cataclysm. The slaughtered Lamb upon throne.

So in worship we find him. We are called to seek his face in worship at times like these in a way unlike ever before. We are called to be with those who hunger and thirst for his presence, and those who are fearful about not hearing his voice feeling his presence. He is our incarnate and crucified God. He is with us and we encounter him in worship and he assures us that the future is in his hands and we are safe in him.

Conclusion: Paul continually reminded Christians of his time that they lived in the present age with its uncertainties and temporalities. It is the age of suffering, of cataclysms and death. But the Christian not only looks forward to the Coming Age with eternity at its centre and all its assurances and permanence the Christian also experiences in the present age something of the life of the coming age. He has eternal life now.

It shows that the achievements and assets that are a part of this age along with the suffering and shame we endure are not our real story. Mighty nations are humbled by a tiny virus, we can stop breathing suddenly. What will last is that which is part of the coming age in our lives now. The current situation resets our values and our mission.



**Rev. Dr. Vinay Samuel**

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# Where are the Christians amid Coronavirus

(Covid19)? Biblical Reflections from Psalm 91

Rev. Dr. Samuel Richmond Saxena



As we know, the situation in the whole world has become grim because of the Novel Coronavirus COVID19 crisis, which has been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). People are being gripped by fear everywhere, many cities around the world are now lockdown, cases are increasing every day, etc. Another major concern that has been reported recently in India are those cases who were tested positive but carry no symptoms. This has resulted in complex forms of crisis that have never happened globally before i.e. many are being quarantined, worship places are closed; travel restrictions; routine services are being stopped; education systems have become online and social gatherings are now shut down completely; emphasis on social distancing, wearing of masks and

use of sanitizers are given priority. It has become clear that we are dealing with an invisible killer, and the situation is beyond human control. Governments of different nations are giving various guidelines to its countrymen to take precautions, WHO is providing instructions to tackle the situation. Scientists are busy in finding out a new vaccine. NGOs and many Churches have come forward to help the poor class community in providing them sufficient amount of food and ration for their survival, Health care professionals are engaged in treating the affected people day and night by risking their own lives, while the religious heads are praying for divine intervention.

Where are the Christians doing in the midst of suffering? What is our response at the time of crises? At this

point, I'm being reminded of the article 'What Gandhi Taught Me about Jesus: A Pastor's Memoir' written by Rev. A.C. Oommen. In 1947, during the partition, India witnessed violence on a scale it had never seen before, especially in Bengal in the east and Punjab in the west; Calcutta was the worst affected city on the eastern front. Thousands of families were uprooted. As law and order broke down completely, it was impossible to control the crowds; dead bodies piled up on the roadside. The police and army acknowledged their inability to control the violence. After seeing terrible violence all around, Mahatma Gandhi was in deep pain. Through his newspaper, The Harijan, he sent out an appeal for volunteers to staff the growing refugee camps. One line struck Rev. A.C. Oommen was: "Where are the Christians that live according to the Bible?" Gandhi felt that the Christians, as a minority in India, could bring the Christian message of reconciliation amid suffering. Church since its inception has a great responsibility to share the love of God and exhibit the compassion of Jesus Christ to all people irrespective of caste, race, and religion. It is not the time for believers to live in fear or to pass unnecessary judgments, but to move forward with courage and enthusiasm to help others as the

image-bearers of God. For God, every nation, community, and individual is important. Even for Him, flora and fauna are also precious. It is very encouraging to know that the Catholic Health Association of India, Christian Medical Association of India and Emmanuel Hospital Association together wrote a common letter to the Prime Minister of India updating about their involvement through various means to help for the well being of the people of this nation through their hospital and medical facilities to fight this pandemic. They also extended their full support to the Prime Minister and his team at the time of crises. On March 27, 2020, another open letter signed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, the National Council of Churches in India, and the Evangelical Fellowship of India was sent to Prime Minister saying that the Christian community would do its part to combat the deadly effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Christian leaders also pledged to pray for the "success of initiatives so that the nation can overcome this testing time in the spirit of fraternity and equality."

The Church has a hope to give to the world and Jesus is the solution to every problem. We are called to provide care, encouragement, hope, support, hospitality to those who are

in need. By trusting God, we can know in what ways God wants us to be used during this crisis. It is important to re-read the scriptural passages which strengthen our faith in God and to seek His will. In 1 Chronicle chapter 21, when seventy thousand people were killed in Jerusalem because of the plague, King David turned to God and asked for divine intervention. Immediately, the Lord heard his cry and the plague came to an end. We have a God who is the same yesterday, today and forever. His heart throbs for His creation. In the hour of penitence and prayer, God listens to our heart's cry. The Word of God assures us to fight against this deadly pestilence. Why should we fear? The God of the Bible is not silent in our distress but expecting us to put our trust in Him and Psalm 91 is the best example that comfort and gives hope for the prosperous future. It is a powerful weapon against supernatural assaults. Psalmist tackles a similar situation that we are facing today and helping us to deal with the dangers of life. These dangers can be in the form of hidden traps, deadly plagues, pestilence (Coronavirus), terrors at night, arrows by day, and even facing ferocious animals like lions and snakes. Together Psalm 46 and Psalm 91 points out that God is our refuge and our strength. There are three things that we need to

acknowledge in Psalm 91 as we trust God.

### **1.Trusting His Presence (Vs. 1-2)**

Psalm 91, claims that 'whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.' The word 'rest' here gives us a sense of comfort, peace, and satisfaction which no person or technology can provide. In Exodus 33:14, the Lord said to Moses, 'my presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'In His presence, our Good Shepherd makes us lie down in green pastures, leads us beside quiet waters, and refreshes our soul (Psalm 23:1-2). Before any danger comes, our Lord is already there to help us. In Psalm 27, David desired to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life because he considered God's presence as a safe zone for him as well as for all the believers at the time of trouble. Believers should know that the presence of God is not a temporary abode at the time of trouble but it is our ultimate and permanent residence. The loving and compassionate arms of God are always open to receive anyone at any time. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28,'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.'Wherever we go, whatever we do, we find ultimate rest in Him. St.Augustine, a renowned theologian

once said, “God has made us for himself, and our hearts are restless until we find rest in Him.” Further Blaise Pascal (1623-62) a mathematician and physicist referred to this restlessness as the God-shaped vacuum found in every human being. We come to His presence not by our works but by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and those who live a life of communion with God are always covered under His grace of protection.

## **2. Trusting His Protection (Vs. 3-13)**

When David fled to Gath from the fear of Saul and tried to seek protection from the enemy, he was in the restless state until he called the Lord (1 Sam. 21:10–22:2) and God delivered him from all fears (Psalm 34:4). We should trust that in the presence of God we find ultimate protection. The person who trust His presence also trusts His protection. God protects us from all dangers: whether in the form of plague, virus, enemies, natural disaster, or any kind of fear, etc. His feathers are like cushions which envelop us from any kind of evil attack. In verses 10-11, God's Word says, 'no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.' Jesus took all our sins, infirmities and sickness on the cross of calvary so that we may be delivered from these curses once for

all. Satan has no power to separate us from the love of God. In the sight of God, precious is the death of His saints (Psalm 116:15). God has placed his ministering angels to take care of us. We are well guarded by His angels. Even satan referred this to Jesus in the wilderness as recorded in Matthew 4:6. In the Book of Exodus when the Lord brought out the Israelites from Egypt and was taking them to settle in Canaan, the journey was difficult. But the Lord said to them, “I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared”(Exodus 23:20). His ministering angels 'encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them' (Psalm 34:7). Hence, God not only gives us refuge to people at the time of trouble but also provides strength to bear the suffering. Even in worse circumstances, His strength becomes the guiding force that leads us forward in the journey of faith fearlessly. The spiritual armor of God mentioned in Ephesians 6:10-18 protects us from evil power and enable us to fight against the principalities of darkness. So, Christians have an active role to play when we are attacked by any kind of evil because God of the Bible is our refuge and our strength (Ps. 46:1). We are more than conquers in Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ protects us from all evil attacks. We

should believe that we have overcome the world by the blood of the Lamb and no virus can destroy our lives. Andrew Murray says, 'where the holy blood of the Lamb is sprinkled, there God dwells, and Satan is put to flight.'

### **3. Trusting His Promises (Vs. 14-16)**

In this last section, God will rescue, protect, deliver, satisfy His people with long life and provide salvation to those who will claim to His promises. We can only claim His promises when we trust Him, repent from our sins, love Him and acknowledge His name everywhere. By acknowledging His name, we declare His powerful works in the lives of the people and to the whole creation. We need to profess and propagate boldly what He has said in the scripture. In this unpredicted world where promises are often broken, God always keeps His Word. 'Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful' (Hebrew 10:23). We need to treasure the precious promises of God in our hearts. Charles Stanley writes, 'If we claim the Lord's promises with a right spirit and pure motives, we will honor Him, receive what we ask, and grow in intimacy with our loving Father.' Claiming God's Word without any doubt will help us to

stand against the principalities of darkness. We need to value and honor the promises that God has made for us. Charles Spurgeon stated, "Do not treat God's promises as if they were curiosities for a museum, but believe them and use them." We need to claim God's promises every day in Jesus' name. We need to encourage every member of the church to pray individually and along with the family members against this deadly pestilence. Jesus said, "if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:19-20). We need to come together in one mind and spirit and agree that God has the power to destroy this deadly pestilence through His son Jesus Christ. Jesus said, 'and I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it (John 14:13-14).'

The Church today in India as well as throughout the world is active in combating this invisible virus. Through God's given wisdom we are confident that soon our scientists will be able to create the vaccine. And through fervent prayers and strong faith, we will also be able to overcome this evil. We serve a powerful and living God who

divided the Red sea into two parts, saved Shadrach Meshach and Abednego from the fiery furnace, protected Daniel from lion's den, raised four days dead Lazarus to life and there are plenty of examples in the Bible which shows that our God's active role in His creation and His deep concern over the suffering. He is a loving and caring God who has not abandoned us but continues to heal us with the precious blood of His Son our Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen us in the time of suffering through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Let Us Pray

*O Lord, how awesome to be in your presence. It is only through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we have the opportunity to be part of your holy fellowship. Many times, we have failed to acknowledge your protection as well as your promises in our lives. We are truly sorry for this. At the time of distress when the whole world is suffering from this deadly disease, we pray for your mercy and grace. Let your divine intervention protect the life of every creature on this planet. We pray for our government, health professionals, scientists, leaders and*

*all those who are engaged in providing essential services to others to grant them divine wisdom, understanding, and protection at this juncture. We promise to live in harmony with each other and value the relationships you have established that interconnects us with you and with the rest of the creation. We claim the promises that are mentioned in Psalm 91 for every individual. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen!*



### **Rev. Dr. Samuel Richmond Saxena**

*University Chaplain & Head, Department for Advanced Theological Studies, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences, Allahabad, India & Member, Theological Commission, World Evangelical Alliance.*

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#### Reference

A.C. Oommen, 'What Gandhi Taught Me about Jesus: A Pastor's Memoir' JUNE 14, 2015 in <https://www.persecution.org/2020/04/02/indian-christian-leaders-pledge-help-combat-covid-19-letter-prime-minister/>

Indian Christian Leaders Pledge to Help to Combat COVID-19 in Letter to Prime Minister <https://www.persecution.org/2020/04/02/indian-christian-leaders-pledge-help-combat-covid-19-letter-prime-minister/>



# MAKING THE MOST OF THE WORST OF TIMES

Dr. Saphir Athyal

The whole world is a battleground! We are all under a siege! With the present swift exponential increase of Covid-19 throughout all the countries, where we are headed to this time, no one knows. Thick dark clouds covering the whole world and every nation. Suppressed anxiety and fear on most faces. Global lockdown and economic disaster. Doctors and medical personnel on the front line of this war working overtime with alarming shortage of staff and medical equipment risking their own lives. No vaccine nor even a medicine for this in view in the foreseeable future. Data and statistics of people getting sick and dying showing rapidly increasing numbers every minute.

## LIVING WITH QUESTIONS UNANSWERED

This is not a time to blame God, any nation, any government, or any scientist. We are in it all together as the human race. This 'enemy virus' does not know any boundaries in

terms of nations, race, gender, culture, age and social status. Our usual concept of power, the power of wealth, military, titles and positions, all are bowed down to the dust before this puny little organism of coronavirus. We are forced to submit to the truth of Ps 144:4, “Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow”.

Where is God when we need him the most? If he is all powerful how can he stand aside and do nothing? Has he abandoned the world—his world, his people? We should not be presumptuous to try to explain what God is doing or not doing. Sickness, pandemics, deaths and tragedies that we experience in this shattered world are the outcome of the misuse by humankind of God's precious gift of freedom of will. Yet, he stands with us in our miseries, and he helps us to make some good come out of it all.

## CORONAVIRUS AND SIN - AN ALMOST PERFECT MATCH

There are significant contrasts, but some of the similarities are noted below. Though tempted to elaborate on each, I will not do so to keep this article short.

1. The covert, secretive and stealthy way of both, in spreading from person to person

2. The source of both is alienation from God. His will for us is our wholeness and goodness.

3. Both attack the vital organs. The virus attacks the lungs, and sin attacks heart, mind and the whole person.

4. Shelter from both is in keeping a safe distance. Social distancing. “Flee from evil” (Paul)

5. Both no respecter of any boundaries—national, gender, age and status, thus leveling all.

6. The Virus needs a living cell to live and replicate. Sin is not abstract; needs a living person.

7. The sheer power of both the virus and sin on people

8. Facing the fact of the problem and its seriousness is the first step toward a cure. In virus, transparency and truth to people, and in sin, confession to God and to those sinned-against are necessary.

9. Even when conquered, both sticks around. Virus mutates

and comes back in another form. So also, does our sinful nature unless it is overcome by the power of the gospel of Christ.

## **IS THERE A BRIGHT SIDE TO THIS DARKNESS?**

Some good results have come out of this crisis.

1. WHO says that air pollution kills 4.6 million people globally each year—in China 1.3 million and in India 1.2 million. As industries, factories, and travel by air, train and private vehicles are curtailed, if not stopped, for a few months now, the atmosphere is significantly cleaner. So, one may say (insensitive to the loved ones of the many thousands who died) that Covid-19 is saving the lives of many times more people than those who die of it?

2. Countries with the largest economies boast of their power with a spirit of arrogance that in wealth, military and scientific knowledge lie their strength and greatness. With heavy global economic disaster and impending recession, maybe they will be more accommodative of countries with weaker economies.

3. Nations are learning in a new way how we are all interdependent and interconnected, and how we need one another. They know that they have to put aside geopolitical squabbles if they have to work together to develop

medicines and vaccine for this, and save as many lives as possible. So also, the need for humane cooperation to make life on earth more livable.

4. The spirit of godlessness, irreligion, secularism and immorality has been on rapid increase in the world. Deriding faith in God as unscientific and foolish is common and in vogue. Could it be that because of this crisis, a lot of people in times of helplessness, agony and anxiety seek some power beyond them and turn to God?

Also, with the closing down of places of worship, many have come to realize that religiosity and rituals are in themselves no substitute for true spirituality.

5. Now we get to enjoy the small and simple things in life, so also, the ordinary things which in busy lives we missed. We eat simpler food which we learn as what is only necessary, cherish our environment, talk to neighbors over the fence, and appreciate colors, flowers and birds around. Now we do things such as, remembering highlights of old days, enjoying old photos and files, dreaming of our future and may be making definite goals, and learning new things about the use of internet, mobile, Zoom platform, and online business (as the world because of Covid-19 becomes more a virtual world.)

6. There have been several

other collateral gains amidst losses. True, people go through serious adverse effects such as, the loss of jobs and livelihood of millions; growth in domestic violence as rise in the percentage of distress calls indicate; many prisoners being released by which there is an increase in thefts and crimes; and a surge of misinformation, fake news and pornography through internet. And others.

Yet, there have been several notable gains. Parties for weddings and anniversaries that normally had very large number of guests have become much smaller and wiser. With the absence of household helps all family members learn to do some chores at home—our women would like this good thing to continue. Drinking habit of many had stopped as liquor shops are closed—for their sake and of their families, we hope many of them will live free from drinking. People are learning to curtail unnecessary expenses as money is in short supply. Many volunteers have joy and satisfaction of selflessly helping those in dire needs, leaving us examples to follow.

Also, there have been improved hygiene with all the hand washing, baths and better restroom etiquette; quitting the general habits of licking finger as we turn pages of newspaper or currency notes; preference of Namaste the greeting over shaking hands; and significantly, muc

cleaner air and atmosphere everywhere.

As a new world order is emerging post-Covid, we earnestly hope a better world will develop from all this chaos we go through now—in spite of the weakening globalization (except for this global virus), rising populist nationalism and declining democracy globally.

## MANAGING THIS CRISIS FOR OUR GAIN

It is adversities that make life truly richer and not riches and comforts. Suffering can produce good benefits. For most of us we are living in the worst of times. We need to find the best way to make the most of it. **We should not waste this crisis.**

With “stay-at-home” orders when weekdays and weekends look alike, office and home are merged, Sundays and the other days of the week are identical, and with no strict schedule to follow, what do we do with all the time at hand?

Being driven in life with 'the urgent' we failed much too long to understand what is truly 'the important'. What are some of 'the important' things?

1. **Time to be honest before God**—alone in his presence. Our integrity—the coherence between our real inner self and our appearance before others, our claims and our inner fears, our masks/attires and the real persons they cover. Let

us take time to reconnect with ourselves, each one asking, “Who am I—who is the real me when nobody is looking except my Lord”.

2. **Time to understand what is true religion.** When opportunities of corporate worship are closed, we need to hear again, “Where two or three are gathered together I am in their midst”. Let us make no mistake, it is corporate worship that strengthens and sustains our faith, that is, provided that faith is there.

Without inner religion, religion becomes “opium of people”. Christian faith is primarily an inner reality without which corporate worship and outward rituals become a cop out and escapism from the challenges of a personal bond with God through Christ—“a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim 3:5). Do we shelter ourselves from our spiritual vacuum by joining a crowd of worshippers?

3. **Time for our families.** In our earliest years of childhood, family was our only world. And in our last years, our world again becomes just our own families. Take time to cherish and nurture each one's only real world. If our children and grandchildren grew up never having Sunday church worship, Sunday schools and religious activities, what would their faith be by just observing our lives and listening to our words? Let us

'reconnect' with our families, nuclear families and families at large.

4. **Time to deepen our relationship with our Lord and strengthen our faith.** This is a time we can obey his words, "Be still and know that I am God." To deepen our relationship with anyone, it takes time to be together: this is very much true in our relationship with our God. We should develop a method of systematic study of God's word, and not casual reading of it as our usual practice, but carefully listening to its message and knowing God closer. Learning the word of God is primarily by obeying it. Also, we need to spend much time in prayer, praying for the many critical needs relating to this pandemic.

5. **Time to reach out to others who are aching.** The comfort that we receive from "the Father of compassion and God of all comforts" can flow through us to those in trouble (2 Cor 1:3-4). This is a time to serve others through phones and online, while in a lockdown. Also, there will be opportunities to be of some service to those who cannot move around as we can. There are those who are not working and so without money and means of living. Whatever way we should be God's instruments of help for others, let us be available to him.

6. **Time to develop courage and hope to face our mortality.** Death is an absolutely sure thing in

life. The Easter event reminds us that this inevitable enemy should be seen as not having the last word. It appears as a snake, but one without any venom. Christ's death and resurrection guarantees our resurrection to an indescribably glorious life forever (1 Cor 15).

### **GOD'S POWER, PRESENCE AND PROTECTION**

The context of the very familiar Psalm 91 must have been some unusual disaster and pestilence. The metaphor used is of baby birds finding shelter under the wings of their mother bird. God is one who is very present with those who suffer. His protection is promised because of his faithfulness and love. From under his wings we get power to face tragedies. Engulfing the reality of our suffering is the greater reality of the loving presence and protection of God.

The very name of our Lord 'Immanuel' assures us that he stands with us in our pains and gives us his peace even when we do not understand what is happening to us and why.

The book of Job does not answer the problem of suffering, but it tells us where to go when we suffer—and have a renewed vision of God eclipsing our crises, and hear his voice.

Fear is only natural in circumstances of crises. But our faith in our Lord

should conquer our fear. Our faith is that the almighty hands of God uphold us. “Underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut 33:27). The hands that created the world to start with, the hands that did marvelous miracles, the hands that stilled the storms in the Galilean sea, the hands that fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, the hands that healed the sick and raised the dead—those hands are around us and under us.

### CONCLUSION

We live a broken and messy world. But this is God's world. What is he up to, we should not be presumptuous to assume. Granted that the mess is created by us, our help should come from outside of us. Finally, are we learning that we cannot play the part of God?

We cannot afford to have a world of power without principles, governance without accountability, knowledge without the wisdom to use it, science without compassion, and relationships without self-sacrifice. When will we learn, if not in this crisis, that life is very fragile, and that a person without God is only an animal that lives, eats, reproduces and dies?

When this pandemic is leveling all of us globally, nationally and locally, we need to learn, how painfully it might be, that finally we are all mere humans, one interdependent people needing every one, small and great, to make our life together possible.

If we do not relearn this lesson this time, we have 'wasted' this crisis and have lost a big chance of becoming humans as God intended us to be—reconnected in mutual justice and selfless love to the Almighty and to one another regardless of nationality, gender, religion and class. God has provided a way for this in and through Jesus Christ, if only unconditionally we submit to him as our Savior and owner, and receive his embrace.

*Oh, our Sovereign God! Have mercy on us and help us to totally surrender our lives to you and to obediently respond to your offer of “life in its fullness”. Amen!*



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# WORK AS UNTO THE LORD

Rev. Dr. David Mende

Every year, May 1st is celebrated as Labour Day in our nation to honor the contribution of working men and women. There are more than 500 million workers in India! Labour Day is a helpful reminder that we must give our best as we work. But some people drag themselves to work every day. Well, work can be difficult sometimes. As a result of the Fall, work became tough and even painful (cf. Gen. 3:17-19). Moreover, we don't always receive the labor of our reward. But God doesn't want us to see our work as drudgery. Rather, he wants us to give our best as we work. But you may say, "I don't like my job at all." Even if you don't like your job, the Lord wants you to work at it with all your heart, as unto the Lord.

Many adults spend nearly 50% of their waking hours working. Since we spend so much of time working, God is concerned about our work. Since work is inherently good, we

must work as unto the Lord. In this article, let's see what the Bible teaches about work.

## **1. God himself works.**

We work because God also works. God doesn't do sloppy work. In the creation account, we read that he made everything "very good." The Bible says, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31; cf. Gen. 2:2-3).

Even Jesus worked while he was on this earth. While he lived on this earth, the Lord worked tirelessly to complete the Father's work. Jesus says, "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn 9:4-5). Jesus accomplished the work that the Father gave him (Jn 17:4). So, when we work, we imitate God.

## **2. Work is good.**

Some think of work as evil. But the Bible mentions that God commanded Adam to work even before the Fall: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). So, work is not the result of the Fall. Rather, God had ordained that man should work even before sin entered into this world. If we don't realize that work is inherently good, we will see our work as a necessary evil. On the contrary, work must be seen as a ministry and our workplaces must be seen as mission fields.

Work is inherently good if it doesn't go against God's Word. There are some jobs which are clearly sinful. For instance, human trafficking is a terrible sin. Making drugs and selling them is sin. Prostitution is a sin. Taking bribes and being involved in corruption is sin. We need to make sure that our work is above reproach. Our jobs should not cause others to stumble and fall into sin.

Since work is inherently good, when we do our work well, it gives us a sense of accomplishment. Particularly, when our work helps others, our work becomes a channel of service. When my wife and I moved to another city, we didn't take our car over there. Every time, we would take a cab, I would thank God for the service offered by the cab

drivers. The cab drivers may not see their work as a service, but it's a very helpful service indeed. A few days ago, I had to get my bike from the servicing center, so I tried booking an auto, but it was not unavailable. So, finally, I booked an Ola Bike which picked me up from my doorstep and dropped me at the servicing center for just 22 Indian rupees!

When we go to a store, a salesperson helps us to select the right products. A restaurant offers us lip-smacking food when we are unable to cook food for ourselves. A teacher serves his/her students by teaching them. The maid who works in your house is a blessing as she helps you to concentrate on other important things. The Lord gives fulfillment and joy to people including people from the other faiths, as they serve others through their work.

The first time a person is mentioned as being filled with the Spirit, was a craftsman (Exod. 31:1-5). We derive pleasure as we toil. That's because that work is God's gift to us (Eccl. 3:12-13). Work is the means through which God meets the needs of your family (1 Tim. 5:8). Also, it's the means through which the Lord meets others' needs (Eph. 4:28). Through our work, we can even support the ministry of the Lord. So, work is good!

## **3. We must fight laziness and work hard.**



Every able-bodied person must work hard. Imagine a society where nobody works! That will lead to all kinds of sinful activities. Both the Old and New Testaments condemn laziness. Especially, the book of Proverbs repeatedly rebukes laziness and encourages hard work. Let me remind you of a couple of Scriptures.

“How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man” (Prov. 6:9-11). So, laziness hinders productivity and leads to poverty.

“In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty” (Prov. 14:23). Hard work is profitable, but empty talk leads to poverty.

True spirituality requires that we work diligently and provide for our own family (1 Tim. 5:8). What's more, Apostle Paul instructs that “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). He goes on to tell them to “work quietly and to earn their own living” (2 Thess. 3:12). The Bible teaches a strong work ethic (Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:8). It reminds us that we are called to do good works (Eph. 2:10). So, let's fight laziness and work diligently.

#### **4. We must work as unto the Lord.**

I guess that most of the slaves in Colossae didn't like their jobs. They didn't apply for these jobs anyway. But Paul writes these words to them: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (Col. 3:23). Paul's instruction reveals that even if you don't like your job, you must do your work as unto the Lord and thus glorify him. You may say, “But I hate my job!” Until the Lord directs you to move out of your job, keep working wherever he has placed you and give your best as you work.

It's easy to fall into the trap of becoming people-pleasers at our workplace. Some people work hard in order to gain the approval of their bosses or colleagues. I know we all like our work to be recognized and appreciated. But our work is not about us. It's about God. That's why, Paul says that we must work “not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord” (Col. 3:22). When we seek our own glory, we work to please people. There's no reward for such work. But when we work for the Lord, we keep him at the center and do our work “with sincerity of heart.”

Our work must not be sloppy. Instead, we must work diligently. The Bible says, “Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men” (Prov. 22:29). We must excel in whatever we do and

leave the matter of rewards to God. God wants us to be faithful in what he's entrusted to us. We must not work for money, power, identity, or fame. Rather, we must work for God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31). So, let's work for the Lord and receive his rich reward (Col. 3:24)!

### **5. We must take time to rest.**

Since work can be physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausting, we need to take a day off once a week to rest and rejuvenate ourselves. On one hand, we must avoid being lazy. On the other hand, we must not be workaholics. Some think that the world would cease to function if they don't work endlessly! But the Lord, both worked and rested. God himself rested in order to set a pattern for us: "And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done" (Gen. 2:2). And he commands us to do the same.

It's important to balance work with rest. The Bible says that "It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep" (Ps. 127:2). So, sleep is a gift from God. Your body is "a temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). That's why we must take care of our bodies. We must realize that humans were not designed to work continuously. If we don't take ample rest, we will

experience burnout. So, we need to take care of our bodies by taking adequate rest. Along with a weekly day off, going out on vacations occasionally with your family can benefit you physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. So, take some time to rest today.

### **6. We must retire from our jobs, not from our work.**

Retirement is a recent phenomenon. But today, many young people dream of early retirement. They would love to enjoy their retirement money on themselves for the rest of their lives. But we will be wasting our lives if we live just for ourselves. Our lives will eventually become meaningless and purposeless.

Numbers 8:23-26 is the only passage in the Bible that refers to retirement and it's a specific instruction to the Levites. So, this passage doesn't apply to all people. However, note that even after retirement, the Levites were required to "minister to their brothers in the tent of meeting by keeping guard." They are not supposed to just relax and do nothing.

Also, many of the godly people mentioned in the Bible, worked till their final days on earth. Like them, we must strive to serve God and his people until the very end. Even those who are retired can mentor others in their field of expertise. They can spend much time praying for fellow

believers and lost people. They can sign up for some ministry in their local church and serve the Lord passionately. They can be involved in sharing God's goodness with the next generation: "So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come" (Ps. 71:18). Oh, how this world needs godly men and women who will faithfully pass on their faith to the next generation!

Our labor for the Lord, even after retirement, will not be in vain. Apostle Paul writes, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58). I'm reminded of my dad who served the Lord actively even in his post-retirement days. One of the best things he did after his retirement was to plant a church. As a result of his efforts, fifteen years later, that church is a blessing to many people! So, retire from your job, but not from work. Our labor for the Lord will never go vain!

**Conclusion**

As our nation celebrates Labour Day on May 1st, let us be reminded that: Since work is inherently good, we must work as unto the Lord.

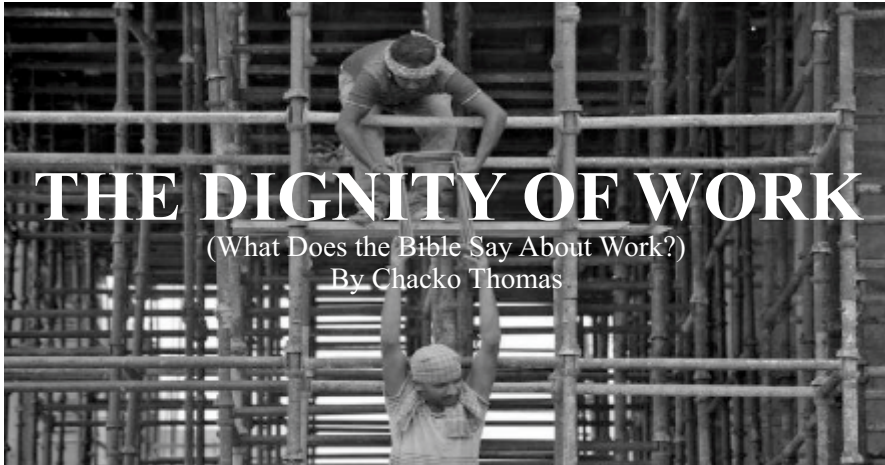
Let's fight laziness and work diligently. As you work hard, make sure that you take time to rest as well. Your job or business is not just a means to make your living. Seek to glorify God through your work. Even as you go to work tomorrow, remember that it's your privilege and responsibility to glorify the Lord through your work. Be a blessing to someone through your work. As you work, "work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" (Col. 3:23).



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"Let all that you do be done in love."  
– 1 Corinthians 16:14



Many countries around the world celebrate the annual “Labour Day” on May 1. It is great that they honour work and workers. Different countries have different outlooks about work, influenced by their dominant religion. “The Reformation work ethic” is a product of Christianity and what the Holy Bible says about work.

Work consists of a big part of life. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Bible has a lot to say about it. It also has a lot to say about employers, salary and even of REST from work. Thanks be to God.

### **World's First Labour Law:**

The first- ever recorded Labour Law is found in the Bible. It is about 3500 years old. It comes to us from our Creator, who takes great interest in our work week. He regulates it. And it comes to us in the form of a

Commandment, being one of the Ten Commandments.

God says, “... Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or your maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days, the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” Exodus 20:8-11.

Here you have God's “Labour Law,” governing employers and masters. He wants no worker exploited nor the employer cheated. This law applies equally to all and to working animals. Notice that it has nothing to do with high born or low, male or

female. it is the longest of all the Ten Commandments. And it is quite comprehensive and elaborated upon throughout the Bible.

### **The God of the Bible is a working God:**

The majestic words that opens the Bible says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” And the next few statements go on to show how he went about creating and making all things. The Creator's story of creation ends by saying “And God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good.” His work did not end with the initial creation of the universe. The Bible reveals that He sustains the creation and guides and redeems it and eventually will judge the world. All human beings who have ever lived on this planet will be brought back to life and judged according to their work. The Ever-present God is at work continually. And the Bible ends with God saying, “I am making everything new.” We look forward to that glorious New Creation of New Heaven and New Earth.

### **Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ worked with His hands:**

Jesus chose to be born in a carpenter's home. He worked as a carpenter, till he began His itinerant ministry at the age of 30 for little more than three years. The Lord

Jesus said, “... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” (Matt 20:28) St. Peter said of the Lord that “...he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.” (Acts 10:38). I am reminded of Mother Theresa, when I think of good works.

The outstanding title given to our Lord, before His coming into the world was “The Servant of the Lord.” And when He came, “He took the very nature of a servant” (rather than a king or military leader.) He served His Father perfectly and taught that all who follow him should emulate his example. (Philippians 2:5-11, John 13:14-15). There is no shame or stigma attached to work, even humble jobs.

### **A true Christian is known by his good works.**

St Paul writes, “For we are God's workmanship, created in in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10.) May we all discover those good works the Lord has prepared for us to do and do it. The book of Titus has a lot to say about good works, that we should “be eager to do what it good.” (Titus 2:14.) The Bible exhorts, “He who has been stealing must steal no

longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. (Ephesians 4:28.) And again “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.” (2 Thess. 3:10.)

### **Primarily, we all work for God.**

The great Apostle said, “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. (Ephesians 6:8; notice the next verse is for masters of servants.) The thought is clearer in Colossians 3:22-25 “... with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ... with all your heart, as working for the Lord ... since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ...” So, the worker can ask God for his reward, even when he is shortchanged by his/her earthly master/employer. We are all to ask God for our daily bread. (Matt. 6:11)

The Labour Law itself, does not mention salary, although it has much to say about it elsewhere in the Bible. It could be that the commandment, in principle, is to apply for all; for employers, self-employed, unemployed, lazy, workaholic, the calculative, retirees, children; us all.

We all are to work, including social work. I have been a Volunteer worker all my life. God has met all my needs. He wants us to look after one another, contribute to society, and to the planet earth itself. It is His earth (Psalm 24).

### **Natural mindset vs the Christian mindset:**

A Christian mind is a renewed mind, being transformed by the gospel of grace and truth. The great Apostle Paul, although rich, educated, great scholar and leader, worked with his own hands, making tents to pay for the living and travel expenses of his team. Where did we, in the Global South, get this mentality that “I am a pastor, I cannot sweep the floor” and the likes. “Superiority Syndrome?”

In the renowned “Gandhi” film, there is a scene of him demanding his wife to clean a latrine, which she refuses to do. She argues that it is the job of the untouchables. His response was, cleaning toilet is not below anyone's dignity. Well, all those years in the west, the Mahatma has picked up a few new values. I must say, God's values.

The Bible does not apportion out some work (usually well paying) for the so called high and for other jobs (usually poorly paid) for the low; or one type of work for men and

another, low, dirty work for women. No. Remember that our Lord Jesus stooped down to wash the feet of His disciples (John 13:3-17). We must get away from the “you will work, and I will eat” mindset. As Christians, we do not live to be served, but to serve. Yes, to love and serve my neighbours, my country. In the Bible, it is God who steps down from His throne to help mankind, as parents help their children.

I remember a highly qualified Indian doctor in Singapore saying to me, “that given the opportunity all races are equal”. We are all made in the same image and likeness of God, says the Bible. (Genesis 1:27.) I believe it to be true, having travelled to 107 nations of our world.

Some Nepali Believers in London asked me to write the story of a Nepali Christian leader from El Shaddai, in Kalimpong, North Bengal. Besides bringing many to faith through his preaching and writing and Nepali Bible Translation, Brother Daniel Rai, was remembered for his practical skills. He was good with his hands. He had left his mark on many of their places of worship and homes. (I saw a beautiful stairway he designed for the attic of one of the leaders of a Nepali church.) It was said of him that “Jesus Christ was not only his

Saviour but also his example to follow.” (“Daniel Rai, A Servant of God” is available from OM Books.)

A whole book could be written on what the Bible Says About Work. But I must conclude here. Let us look out and see what we can do in the name of Jesus Christ for the church, for the Gospel, for the poor, the aged, orphans, widows, strangers, sick, your neighbours, and the list goes on. Let us “abound in the work of the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 15:58.



### **Chacko Thomas**

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# Labour Day: Divine Design, Distinct Dignity, Diligent Duty



Rev. Dr. J.N. Manokaran

Labour day is celebrated in India on 1st May to demonstrate solidarity with the working class, peasants and daily wage earners. Labour day is a reminder for Christians to affirm the value of work, establish healthy work environments, systems to guarantee rights of workers, protection from exploitation and affirm entrepreneurial endeavours that create job opportunities and wealth.

## 1. Divine Design

God designed and shaped the earth like a skilful craftsman. God was delighted in His creation and commented that each day was 'good'. By creating a garden for human habitation, God was Gardener and he also created Eve for Adam. (Genesis 2:7; 21-22) Then Lord commissioned and delegated Adam and Eve to continue the work he had begun.

Work was part of paradise, ideal environment and before Fall. Hence, like food and rest, fellowship and spirituality; work is natural, normal essential. Work is for physical fitness, mental satisfaction, emotional contentment and spiritual worship. Therefore, 'unemployment' is a complex problem for individuals, families, society and nation.

God is the Sovereign Lord of the universe. There is no power or authority apart from him. God has ultimate victory and only His Plan and Purpose would endure. Hence, it is understood that each and every person born in this world has a purpose in life. The births are not accidents, life is not blind fate and history is not just happenings or a chain of isolated incidents. A person is born in a particular country, among certain people, in a cultural context, in a family and in a certain



place. These things are not human choice but divine appointment. Therefore, in any context, God can lead a person to lead a triumphant, fulfilling and meaningful life. Lord Jesus Christ said that even the hair of a person is numbered. (Luke 12:7) With this understanding of God's Sovereign authority, Lordship and power, a Christian could seek to glorify God all times by all means by choosing right job assigned for him/her.

This, we can term God's specific plan for each one as 'calling'. When Christians are sure that God has called them to do a particular work, they are empowered by the call and anointing to fulfil the call. Any job, including a security guard or bus driver or servant maid needs the conviction of call and divine empowerment.

Motivation for job is not the product of work, which is money, that helps us to survive; Instead the very work is needed to survive and be complete human beings.

## **2. Distinct Dignity**

Humans work because they are created in the Image of God. Work affirms God's seal on humans. In the world, in fact, humans are delegated representatives of God. Hence, work in itself has dignity, irrespective of hierarchical status accorded by humans. "Work is our design and our dignity; it is also a way to serve God through creativity,

particularly in the creation of culture."

Indian society is divided into hierarchy of castes. The top, Brahmins who descend from head of God use 'Mind power' for their work. The second who come from chest, use their 'Militant power' to work as Kings and warriors. The third, who come from stomach, provide for stomach, use the 'Money power' and skills to farm, harvest, process food, sell and buy etc. The fourth who are from the legs are supposed to serve the other three with their 'Muscle power' fulfilling menial jobs. In effect, there is hierarchical disdain towards who are lower in the rung; that could result in abuse, coercion, harassment, denial of rights and violence. In this ranking God as Gardener, Lord Jesus as carpenter would occupy the third status, and Christ identification of slave to wash his disciple's feet would place him in the bottom rung. Hence, biblical world view rejects all hierarchies and its accompanying evil.

Work can give dignity but not identity. When we work for identity, or make work as identity, we make work as 'idol'.

Christians in India could be trapped into 'Indian Dream' – getting IT job, six-digit salary, working spouse, own house, own car, children to pursue higher studies in West. The community that produced teachers who shaped the future are missing as

money trumped over God's will; dream trumped over Godly vision and mission. Biblical basis for choosing work: 1) Choose work that you can do well; 2) Does that work help people by making their lives better; 3) Does this work help to build the community and develop the work itself. Choosing to work according to our calling, talents and gifting. The priority of our work is to help others and make the lives of others better.

### **3. Diligent Duty**

Essentially, work means to bring order out of chaos, create a new entity, understand patterns to create new designs, analyse, classify, categorize, prune, interpret, organize...etc.

As Christians, we are called to serve the world as servants and stewards.

Hence, Christians should not steal, but work hard to survive as well as to help others. (Ephesians 4:28) Paul exhorts all to work, unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23). It is not unto to boss or spouse or reputation or money; but unto the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31). Not laziness or negligence, but hard work and diligence is expected (Proverbs 14:23; 10:4; 12: 11; 22: 29).

Work refines a person and brings in traits and discipline that leads to maturity. Parents and teachers discipline children by providing work that seems mundane.

However, these works help them to shape up or builds their character. In the same way, work imbibes discipline, character and diligence.

According to Martin Luther, all work is a calling 'to love your neighbour'. A driver loves his people whom he drives to work when he does his work diligently, cheerfully and lovingly. A mechanic loves those who will drive and use the car, when he fixes it with diligence. In the hospital, doctors and nurses love their patients, hence provide excellent, diligent and joyful service.

Diligence is not called for in an ideal, favourable and perfect environment, instead in a Fallen world where there are 'thorns and thistles.' Christians are also expected to be stewards of God's resources. They should use all opportunities, resources and time: optimally, creatively and strategically. In the world after Fall, even though, work does not bear expected optimum result or fruit, we have no other option but to work hard expecting lesser fruit. Hindrances, frustration, and exhaustion will be part of our work.

Diligence means to look at work with an attitude of realism. There are two dangers of two extremes: Idealism that presumes to have power to change the world; Cynicism that concludes nothing could be changed, hence no hope. Instead discern, God given role in

the world. Paul writes that we are Instruments of Righteousness (Romans 6:13); servants of righteousness. God intends Christians to serve in the world facilitating justice and demonstrating righteousness.

There is a distinction between work and toil. Vishal Mangalwadi writes: “The Bible distinguished 'work' from 'toil'. To work was to be like God, but toil was curse on human sin. Toil was mindless, repetitive, dehumanizing labor. This enabled Christian monks to realize that human beings should not have to do what wind, water, or horses can do. People should do what other species and natural forces cannot do – use creative reason to liberate human beings from the curse of toil.”

Paul brings out the principles of work (Ephesians 6:5-9): First, Christians should work with fear of God that leads to being courteous and humble. Second, the heart should be sincere, and the focus should be concentrated. Third, should work as diligently, even when not seen or supervised or monitored. Four, work diligently, cheerfully, joyfully and wholeheartedly. At the same time, Paul writes to employers: First, they should not threaten or

motivate people to work inducing guilt or coercion or emotional sentiments. Second, treat the slaves with dignity and respect as created in the image of God and for whom Christ died. Third, do not be haughty having Class or Caste pride. Challenge

The biblical world view helps Christians to celebrate life, contribute to society, fulfill their calling and glorify God. The Local church motivates, inspires, trains and equips all members to understand this and transform the world around them. Labour day helps us to be grateful, celebrate all work and affirm dignity for all who work.

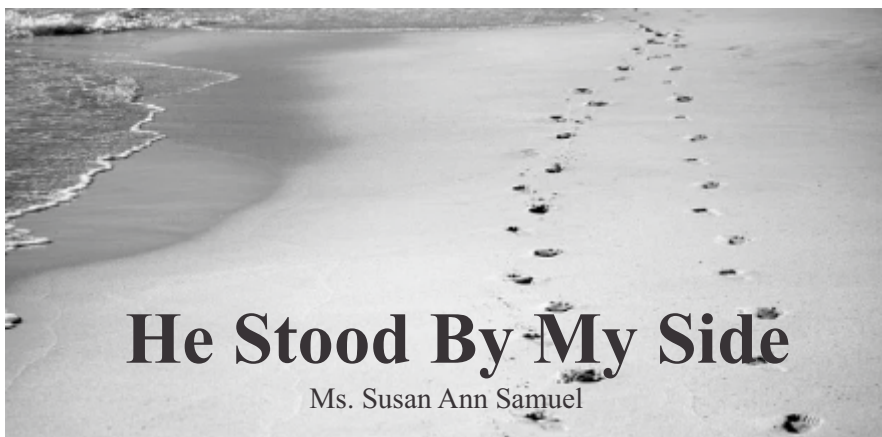


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1. Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf, Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work (New York: Dutton, 2012), p.55.  
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# He Stood By My Side

Ms. Susan Ann Samuel

We are living in strange times with the strangest of ordeals to face at every moment. The space around us is vacant with the thought of what might fill the future. Will it be fair or far from our dreams? Nothing is sure, nothing is unsure, it all happens to be a clogged thought, at the moment. The pandemic has ravaged the world. For the first time in our lives, we're confined indoors, praying, worshipping and having communion all by ourselves or with families or roommates. We're struggling to tune into the new reality of making Zoom calls and video chats more appealing and live broadcast of the Church services sweep into our headphones as we whisper a prayer, for ourselves, our loved ones, our world. This Lent of 2020 found us befitting ourselves to an uncomfortable truth, that we are alone in worship before our Saviour.

Ten thousands of deaths, millions infected with the virus... damaging the fabric of society, economy, the

structure of normalcy. Everything distorted in just a few days, weeks and months. Now, all we have is ourselves to believe in the fact that if tomorrow is an opportunity to breathe again, we'll breathe in a better hope for the future. When Aristotle remarked, "Man is a social animal", maybe he never foresaw such a day as this, where social distancing was the key to survival. We are taken to the edge of everything and made to understand a wisdom that transcends it all.

May 15 is the International Day of Families. We have a lifetime to cherish that which by grace has been bestowed to us, to nurture the society with love, hope and gratitude. And for those who don't have families, we're yet again barging into the wider angle of where faith makes us profess that the 'family' we're in is a community of believers.

*We are One in Him! We are a family in Christ!*

This sense of belonging has been totally uprooted for ages, when Churches and para-churches diverged from the concept of unity to that of denominational sovereignty and manipulations. Now, under the steeple, when rows and aisles are empty, we are in the depth of our own longing for Home.

### **What is Home?**

I have heard conflicting reports on its definition, and people have written and spoken about it in the wildest fantasies of what they deem it to be or should be. I have shed tears on reading articles where people have attacked each other, rather than uplifting them, even when they professed to do so, and in disguise heaped insults. I am aware of how fragile a home can be, when superlatives rule and not the raw emotions and feelings that are guarded in perseverance is held not in esteem rather ill judgement take the roots. Slips are always there, no home is immune to these trials, but a family that prays together, stays together. Where are we as Christians heading to when we can't cherish hope, and can't express His love superseding our emotions?

We're not just meant to co-exist. Life is more than it. Co-existence is that which brings us in frustration to another. Co-existence is not what God wanted. Life is an essence of true merging with the realities and rebuilding each other, to together face what's ahead. We're not meant

to let love slip from our hands. Because when our LORD is with us... whether we're alone or together with family, whether our relations with ourselves or our relations with the family are having problems, whether our contemplation of tomorrow or our worries for today might keep us stranded in the frozen feelings... let us never forget that God is with us. He is the head of the family, He is our Home, and our Home which He weaves in His love, is a community, a global community where we all wait for our LORD to come again. Until then, let not anything separate us from Him or His love everlasting (Romans 8; 35). We as a global family are meant to be one with the Triune God.

When the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to Timothy, he specifically added this statement, which has been a great comfort to me lately, "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth" (2 Timothy 4: 17).

We are born and nurtured for a purpose, and God will fulfil it. This mission, this call, this hope that is in us, is for us to proclaim it... not just to the world, but maybe to ourselves, because we tend to forget it easily. When Paul wrote this, he started this verse by a 'But...' and when we enquire as to why that word was written, we understand, how much

he suffered during his house arrest, when he was all alone, and people deserted him. How he longed for company, and his cloak which he left with Carpus at Troas, his scrolls, his parchments. He was intentional in writing about the 'metal worker who caused him great harm', he was intentional in writing about his first defence where none supported him. He was intentional in writing his heart out, in this letter to Timothy when he was in a lockdown in Rome after his third missionary journey, and the Home he had, was the fellowship he cherished with God and through Him, all the Believers united in one faith, one love and one hope. When God's children are left alone, God will never leave them alone... but if we fail to support them or pray for them... and even if they go wrong to simply pursue for them... God will not cherish our faith that sways on the superlatives of what the crowd sees. It is inside the locked doors, faith becomes the anthem that penetrates the souls across the whole World.

Do we feel the need to pray? Is God prompting you to fall on your knees and intercede for US, Italy, Iran, China, UK, India, Poland, Somalia, Burundi, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, Nepal, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Japan, Iraq, Syria, France, Russia, Finland, Hungary, Portugal, Brazil, Chile, Netherlands... The list goes on... Do we feel the need to pray for the 720 districts of India? Do we feel the

urge to pray for a far - away missionary or their children, a single mom you know who is struggling to feed her child and mother, a father desperate to come back home but is stranded, a youngster who can't move from his hostel, a doctor working in a rural hospital without even a PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), an old age home you know of, a church that is weeping for their dying congregation. We are here in these strange times in the strangest of ordeals, vulnerable as we are, to lift our hands in these locked doors, and pray.

He who stands by our side and who gives us strength is still weaving a story of love through us all. We have a Home in Him. Let us cherish it and be intentional in interceding for it.



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## **UN PEACE-BUILDERS: PEACE IN TIMES OF WAR**

Ms. Stuti Farmer

Peace-making seems to be a daily struggle in our lives. Peace is more about conduct than about character. This is something which I learnt from the writings of A.W. Pink. A peaceable spirit is required in order to carry out the actions of peace-making. UN Peace-builders act as support tools for peace-making professionals. A major part of the UN's overall efforts is to 'promote peace' by resolving international disputes and internal conflicts.

The UN seeks to achieve full reconciliation among adversaries and new mutual understanding among parties. Now, the main question pops up: who is a true peacemaker? Peace is an essential element in the life of a believer. In order to be a peacemaker, you ought to promote peace, which is something each one of us should strive for. But most peacemakers do

not know that there is no lasting peace outside of Christ. Having tasted the mercy of God, shouldn't we be merciful in our dealings with others? In Matthew 5:9, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called Sons of God."

According to Rev. Billy Graham in his book 'Where I am', which is my current read, he mentions the two elements of peace – 1. Peace with God 2. Peace of God. You need to experience the first one in order to experience the latter. As sinners, we naturally are in an invisible war with God and when we repent from our sins by seeking His forgiveness and believing in His name, we are "justified by grace through faith" and we have peace with God.

Romans 14:19 encourages each one of us to make every effort which leads to peace and mutual

edification. The greatest example for us is to follow Jesus Christ. Though He had done no violence, though there was no deceit in His mouth, He was assigned a grave with the wicked. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. We as individuals, if not at the higher levels but at lower day to day levels, can promote peace, be it with our neighbors, our society, when they are wrong or raise allegations against us for no reason or falsely talk about us, we can forgive them and mirror the example of the Perfect Peacemaker in front of them. Can we pray for families facing disputes, divorces and especially domestic violence, and encourage them to act sensible and fair? Can we break the stereotypes which are fabricated in the minds of some of the narrow-minded elders around us? India's land is rooted in diverse cultures and religions. Do we dislike any particular sect, class or race just because of some disgusting humans who have mortified their community's name? Can we love when people don't love us? Can we be kind when they are unkind? Can we forgive like Jesus forgave the ones nailing Him to the cross while He died, bearing the sins of all mankind? God was merciful at the same time just. We have to promote peace and at the same time be fair and just. He didn't give us eternal life just like that, He gave us conditions; to repent from our sins and believe in

His name. Even though we promote peace, we have to be just, we have to fight for our rights, stand up for what is right, protest and raise voices against the crimes of our country. We can love, forgive, show peace, and have mercy and also be just when we follow the Prince of Peace, who is Jesus.

The United Network of Young Peace builders is a global network of youth organizations which is active in peace-building and carrying out the annihilation of conflicts mostly in regions of violence. It was founded in 1989 and mainly carries out the activities of fund-raising campaigns, providing resources, carrying out research, and focussing on peace-building programmes.

Millions of people persevere to seek a true, long-lasting peace which can only be found in Christ. Romans 3:17 states that man hasn't known the way of peace. Since creation, mankind has been seeking and searching for peace in most of the wrong places. Be it children, youth, adults or the aged, they seek peace in money, career, other humans, drugs and alcohol, but always end up contributing to their own diabolic state of minds. They hunger and thirst for the tiny beautiful moments which give them a small degree of peace to last forever. Eventually, their sunsets don't last, their perfect cup of coffee finally gets cold. After

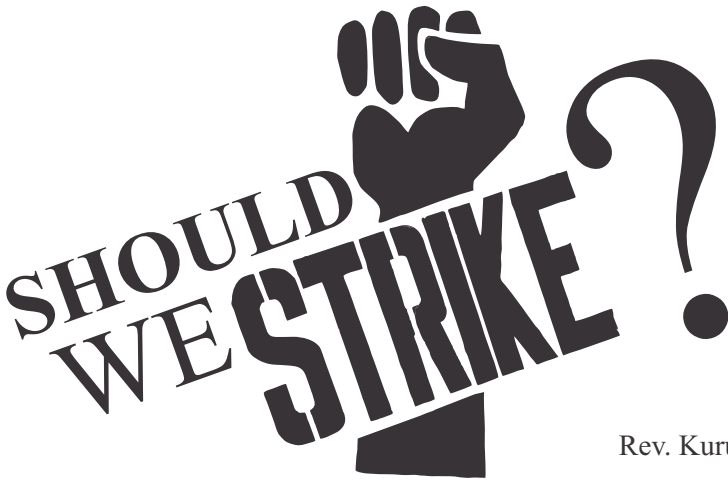


hours of talks with friends, they finally have to head home. But even though the moment has passed and becomes a memory, this isn't the end. God allows war, so that the good news about the love of Jesus and hope for eternal life is preached. Even today, all nations including mine, are fighting against the global pandemic of coronavirus. All of us know the solution: act justly, love mercy, walk humbly. We need to turn to God for peace in times like these, and no doubt it shall be worth it.



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2nd year. She loves to write and  
fellowship with friends and family.*





Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

During my college years, I had friends who were already factory workers and they would talk about how difficult it was dealing with unions. The consensus was that Christians could not join labour unions.

In 1987 for the first time, there was an All India strike by university and college teachers. They failed because some did not strike – staff of Christian colleges in the south and some in the north. Full pay during the strike period and favour with the management were the underlying reasons.

H.F.R. Cather wood has observed in his book, *The Christian In Industrial Society* that, "In the experience of most unionists those who did not join were seldom, if ever, acting for the principles of individual liberty."

Only a few had religious scruples. Others, simply avoided collective obligations.

### **Biblical Teaching on Work**

The Apostles gave instructions on running households (Col. 3:18-24; 1 Pet. 2:18-3:7). Today, we equate masters and slaves with employers and employees. However, it needs to be observed that, while the principles of behaviour may be extended, the status, conditions and rights of a modern hired employee are quite different from those of a slave. For instance, Peter refers to corporal punishment of a slave for his faults (1 Pet. 2:20). Legally, no modern employer can lift his hand against an employee with impunity. He may inflict punishments such as loss of pay, suspension, demotion, or dismissal, but only according to rules. Whereas, in ancient society,

there were no rules to limit the punishment of a slave, except in the case of Hebrew society, where a slave-owner was required to free his slave if he had been maimed by his master's punishment (Ex. 21:26-27).

There is sometimes a mistaken notion that Christians must forego rights as a matter of humility. This is not biblical. Paul asserted his rights as a Roman citizen when wronged at Philippi (Acts 16:37-39) and appealed to Caesar when he wasn't getting justice (25:10-12). We owe it to posterity that rights and liberties are not lost by abdication, but preserved.

The Christian ethics of work is that we are to work as if the Lord Jesus is our employer. Whatever we do should be done with a sense of dedication. Human considerations such as approval and rewards are not to be determinative of our behaviour. Honest application to the work means that the work is done even when not supervised. It is not 'eye service' by 'people pleasers' (Col. 3:22-23).

Sadly, what is addressed to the workman is sometimes used by Christian employers and managements to extract undue cooperation from those employed.

The apostles were teaching voluntary submission by the workman, not coercion and extraction of work by the management. It is an abuse of Scripture to attempt to make others feel guilty and thus to take advantage of them.

### **Christian Insubordination**

The subordination of Christians to ordained authority (Rom. 13:1-2) dominates Christian thinking. It is this principle that participation in trade unionism seems to deny. But what the Christian needs to learn is that all subordination is not Christian. There is a place for saying, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29; 4: 19).

Subordination to God may sometimes conflict with those in rebellion against God's ways. There is a time for insubordination. A Christian may not simply obey orders. He or she must evaluate all orders, measuring them against the norms of God's Law. Simply obeying orders is what some did under Hitler and they went on to be participants in a programme of genocide.

### **The Origins of Trade Unionism**

Trade Unionism began at the Exodus. The Israelites had worked

under oppressive conditions. When God gave the call, they struck work and marched out of slavery on the road to freedom to the Promised Land. Pharaoh viewed their going away as a withdrawal of labour (Ex. 14:5), and used military might to attempt subduing the labour force and getting them to return to work.

Trade unionism has been one of the most powerful forces shaping our society. What is not always remembered is that it is a Christian phenomenon. It found birth in a society that had been Christianised in values, and only a Christian climate could ensure its survival. Cather wood observes that, "It is perhaps significant that those countries with the strongest Christian tradition have also the strongest trade union tradition." He observed further that one did not hear of trade disputes behind the Iron Curtain.

### **The Methodist Contribution**

It was a religious movement that touched the working class even in the midst of their miseries. Methodism had a great following among them. The class meetings developed a community spirit. The men attending these meetings grew in self-confidence as they saw that the working class could organise themselves, and leadership could

emerge. Christianity was seen as a religion that was concerned with the physical well-being of poor people. They were taught that God was against exploitation of humans by other humans. As a result, Britain experienced a peaceful transition from an agricultural to an industrial society. Methodism tempered revolutionary aspirations.

It was the Methodist revival that saved England from the likes of the French Revolution. John Wesley made England a liberal democracy and not a totalitarian democracy, and, according to Michael Poole, in *Theories Of Trade Unionism*, it can rightly be said that "trade unions and the Labour party owe more to Methodism than Marxism."

### **Lord Shaftesbury**

There was another Christian who laboured for the cause of the working class. Anthony Ashley Cooper was the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury and lived from 1801 to 1885. He was a member of the Clapham Sect.

This was a group of evangelical laymen in London dedicated to applying Christian principles to public life. Chimney-sweeping by little boys, child labour in factories, women working in mines, the long hours of labour, lack of safeguards, unhealthy working conditions and

lack of medical care were the open festering wounds of British industry then. Shaftesbury campaigned against them religiously. He was opposed just as religiously by the powerful bishops and other churchmen.

Shaftesbury fought on in the face of such "dedicated" opposition—dedicated to the cause of preserving the church and all that was "decent." Finally, the British Parliament passed the Ten Hours Bill limiting the hours of work and in 1874, the Factory Act, ameliorating other working conditions.

### **The Christian Absence Today**

Despite those Christian roots, trade unionism has been hijacked, and people of other philosophies, values and methods dominate unions today. If Christians had continued their presence in trade unionism, they would have shaped not just the unions, but nations.

In a world where wealth and power go together, the wage-earning worker is in no position, as an individual, to negotiate with the employer or management. The latter has all the advantage of money. He can purchase labour at his price. The wage earner needs the money for his basic necessities to sustain life and, therefore, is vulnerable. He/she is

totally at a disadvantage and stands every chance of being exploited. In such a situation, strength lies in wage earners uniting.

Only when the employer is unable to purchase labour, will he come to the negotiating table. Only when the labour force is consolidated, is it on level with money power and exchange of labour for money becomes more equitable.

It is not enough that the labour force be united in negotiation. At times, negotiations fail and the labour force needs some means of persuasion. Striking work provides the means of persuasion. The two rights underlying union strategy are the right of association and the right of collectively withdrawing labour. These are rights that are permitted in a democracy. They do not conflict with Christian ideals.

Unions being democratic, if the right people are involved, they cannot but go right. It is not because trade unionism is inherently wrong that union activities become questionable. As much as Christian activity is an outcome of Christian presence, the rightness of union activity depends on the right people being involved.

But unions are regarded

suspiciously, and it is assumed that trade unionism is akin to Communism, and Christians and other good people steer away from participation in unions. That vacuum is quickly filled by the wrong people who are bent on exploiting situations and who are nothing but power-mongers.

### **Christians and Strike Action**

Most Christians are averse to strike action. But they forget the Biblical history of Exodus when they regard all calls to strikes as being inherently wrong. Christian subordination must be a qualified thing. We can be subordinate only to what is right and good. Our subordination should not be the sanction for exploitation by the powerful, the privileged and the moneyed. Therefore, sometimes there are occasions for insubordination. When negotiations for a fair deal fail, is one such occasion for insubordination and the form it takes is the collective withdrawal of labour.

The effectiveness of the wage earning workers' withdrawal of labour depends on its being collective. The strength of wage earners is their unity. Divided, they have no bargaining power. Thus the breach of collective action by a minority destroys the effectiveness of strike action.

Are Christians who steer clear of participation in strikes acting in total selflessness? They want the best of both worlds. They want the majority to take all the risks of striking for increased benefits, which will come to them automatically once gained, while they themselves are in with the management. That is inherently unfair.

### **In Defence of Wrong?**

It is certain that a Christian cannot support every cause adopted by labour unions. Once, unions believed in the defence of rights. Today, far too often, unions are engaged in the defence of wrongs. There is said to be a nexus between many politicians and criminals. There is also official protection of kith and kin from the ill-consequences of errors and wrong doing. In such a climate, it is not surprising that such a rationale as a right to do wrong should exist among people who have been awakened to the equality of rights and privileges in a democracy. But it is a logic that will destroy society. Such thinking has already set in.

Nothing but an influx of right people who think in terms of what is right and good can turn the tide. Christians have been called to serve as the salt in just such a world to arrest decay and to add flavour. But salt cannot

salt in isolation. Similarly, Christians who withdraw from human society fail to influence others.

### **Strike Leader Gandhi**

Trade Unionism in India has not always had only the support of suspicious characters. None other than Gandhi gave his leadership to striking mill workers in Ahmedabad. But he had his conditions. Firstly, there would be no recourse to violence. Second, there would be no forcing of non-strikers to join the strike. Third, the strikers would seek alternative employment for their sustenance during the strike period, instead of seeking charity. Fourth, the strikers would remain firm in their resolve, no matter how long.

Can a minority influence the majority? It happened once in this country. One man did show that in a democracy it was possible to influence the majority and make them adopt non-violence in the struggle for national freedom. In the course of all that happened, he did

have to pay a price. Similarly, there will be a price to pay for those Christians who join trade unions in the hope of safeguarding rights while imparting a sense of doing what is right. They face victimisation by managements and opposition and ostracism from their colleagues.

But isn't there something in Scripture about a Christian wanting to follow Christ having to bear his or her cross as the cost of following Christ? If we insist on following Christ, we need to remind ourselves that He walked the road to Calvary.



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*The prayer of a righteous man  
is powerful and effective.*

# TAMING SEXUAL TEMPTATION IN WORK PLACE LIKE JOSEPH



Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

Genesis 39 – I have read that chapter over and over again. I continue to do so. From it, I have discovered several life lessons that will enable youth at workplaces to overcome temptation. Shall I share them? I believe, the very name J-O-S-E-P-H, can serve as a memorable outline for the secrets to overcome sexual temptation which Joseph illustrated in Genesis 39.

## **J-JOURNEY WITH THE SPIRIT**

Let us read on. It says here in Genesis 39 that the "Lord was with Joseph..." (Vs. 2). That phrase is repeated in verse 3 and verse 21 too. The phrase 'God was with Joseph' is repeated in the New Testament as well (see Acts 7:9). Joseph journeyed with the Holy Spirit (to use New Testament terms). The point of the author of Genesis 39 is not hard to grasp. Being constantly in the presence of God helped Joseph

say "tata" to temptation's tango. Yes. When we are in God's presence, temptation's powers will not seem titanic. P. T. Forsyth, said, "Unless, there is within us that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is about us!" Within Joseph what was above him and so, he did not yield to the temptation about him! Someone said, "To attempt to resist temptation, abandon bad habits and control passions in one's own strength, is like attempting to check by a spider's web, the progress of a ship!" Joseph would resist the temptation that would soon come to him, not by using his own strength, but the strength he gained by being in God's very presence. Joseph knew that he could not stop the progress of the temptation ship with a spider web!

## **O-ONE SMALL TEMPTATION – BEAT IT FIRST**



When we go back to Genesis 39, we figure out that Joseph is given a promotion as the number one servant in the house of Potiphar (vs. 3-4). We note "the Lord gave him success in everything he did" before the Devil gave him temptation (vs. 3). Very often this happens. Some of the darkest temptations can follow our successes and promotions. So, we need to watch out when success knocks at our door. Temptation also may not be far too behind. Jesus knew this, I believe. That is why we see that he rushed to pray alone after his successes. When he fed a huge hungry crowd with five loaves and two fish, he "went up on a mountainside by himself to pray" (Math. 14:23). I have felt the pull of temptation after I have yelled Yahweh's Word, with great results, to yahoo youth! So, I would snatch extra minutes of supplication after such success seasons!

Often, I would ask the young people I have preached to what the first temptation Joseph faced in Genesis 39 was. They would invariably talk about a "bed" temptation – a woman was pulling Joseph to bed when no one was around. I beg to disagree. I believe the first temptation that Joseph faced in this chapter was the "broom" temptation, rather than the "bed" temptation. Puzzled? The other servants in Potiphar's house, when no one was there to oversee them, perhaps did not sweep the

house well. They gave into the little "broom" temptation. But Joseph won over that temptation for the Word describes him as "a faithful steward" (vs. 4). That is why he propelled and pushed Joseph as the head for all the servants in his home! Do you want strength to beat huge temptations? Then start beating small temptations first. One small temptation – beat it first. Say "no" to the temptation to look over your buddy's shoulder in the examination in the exam hall. Then you'll have the power to say 'no' when the temptation comes to dirty-touch your friend of the opposite sex below the shoulders! Don't you remember the famous lines of the hymn, "Yield not to temptation..." which goes this way: "Each victory will help you some other to win!""? Yes, it does!

### **S-SURRENDER YOUR BODY DAILY TO THE LORD / SAY 'NO' THE FIRST TIME WHEN INVITED TO SIN**

Let us release the pause button in the story of Joseph in Genesis 39. What do we get to see? A description of Joseph's physical appearance: "Now Joseph was well-built and handsome..." (Gen. 39:6b). I put my head on my chin and racked my mental faculties and mulled over that description. This thought came into my system: "Joseph's body was not only a superb body but a surrendered body!" Yes! That is true! It was as if he heard Paul writing in Romans,

"Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness" and obeyed it in his life (Rom. 6:19). I am certain Joseph surrendered his well-toned body to his Maker each day saying, "My head is yours, Lord. May I use it today for your glory. My hands are yours, Master. May I use it this day to magnify your name. My heels are yours too, Savior. May I use them in a way to bring delight to you!" Can we not do the same, chum?

On the other hand, Mrs. Potiphar's body was not a surrendered one. One version puts it this way: "She cast longing eyes on Joseph..." (vs. 7). In other words, she was not able to control her eyes and they were aflame with lust. Time magazine reported Monica Lewinsky's following statement as to how Bill Clinton used to look at her during their torrid affair in the White House: "And the way he was flirting was inappropriate. So, I think it was the eye contact, and the way he looks at women he's attracted to. He undresses you with his eyes. And it is slow, from the bottom of your toes to the top of your head back down to your toes again. And it is an intense look. He loses his smile. His sexual kind of energy comes over his eyes. It is very animalistic" (reported in its March 22, 1999 issue). That was the

kind of look David gave the bathing Bathsheba. How are our eyes that are supposed to be the lamp of our bodies according to Jesus (Math. 6:22)? Do we control them? Or do they control us? While Joseph had his entire body doing what he wanted it to do, the eyes of Mrs. Potiphar swayed and sucked without a whiff of it. Who do you resemble - Joe or Mrs. Potiphar?

The Genesis 39 story moves forward. Mrs. Potiphar's request is shameless: "Come to bed with me!" (vs 7). We understand Joseph's reply to that invitation was ruthless for we read in the Bible "he refused" (vs 8). He said "No!" when sexual temptation met him directly. My young friend, do you know how to say 'no'? Notice that Joseph did not say at this juncture, "I have worked the whole day, ma'am....I am dead tired. Why not talk about this tomorrow!" Please note that our Joey boy did not change the topic when Madame Potiphar told him in-effect, "I am ready – are you ready too?" For example, he did not say, "Madame, we do not have cooking oil in the house. Can you give me money so that I can buy it and come!" in reply to her request. He simply looked her in the eyes and said, "No!" Would you follow Joseph's example when you are invited to watch an online porn movie by your buddies or invited to join a smear campaign (gossip session)?

## **E - EXPLAIN TO THE TEMPTRESS/TEMPTER WHO YOU ARE!**

Verses 8 and 9 of Genesis 39 give us a peek into Joseph's mind – his line of logic in refusing Mrs. Potiphar's pleasure package. This is what he says to her in-effect: "Madame mind you – I am not your husband! I am your servant. What is more is that I am the most trusted servant of my Master – your husband! I can't do this and ruin my Master's great trust on me!" Joseph explained to Mrs. Potiphar who he was. A true realization and genuine appreciation of who we are will help us overcome temptation. It surely helped Joe to overcome his temptations. Who are we? We are called to be "holy people" (I Cor. 1:2). Let's live up to that awesome name! What is the trust God has placed on us? That we will "walk worthy of the Gospel of the Holy One – the Lord Jesus."

## **P-PARROT GOD'S WORD AT THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION**

Joseph did not stop by merely talking about his Earthly Master to his mistress who made sexual advances to him. He also talked about his Heavenly Master to her when he asked, "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9). When I read that stunning sentence that Joseph used to diffuse the temptation bomb that his Mistress tossed at him, I discovered something that made me

jump for joy! I discovered that he was merely echoing God's words to the disobedient and deceived Eve that was, "What is this you have done!" (Gen. 3:13). What God asked Eve, Joseph asked the wife of Potiphar in a different way! Joseph hid God's word in his heart so that he would not sin against God (Psa. 119:11). Joseph parroted God's Word he had stored in his heart at the time of temptation. Would you strive to do that? Will you not write out relevant Bible Verses suiting your area of temptation and keep them in your pocket and read them whenever you get time – while traveling, while waiting in a queue! Jesus did not court the Devil. His secret? He quoted the Scriptures (three verses from his favorite book of Deuteronomy) to send the sidetracking Satan scurrying (Math. 4).

Is your temptation to abuse your colleague? Quote I Samuel 24:11, (David used a "F" word here against the abusive Saul – he called him "Father!"). Are you tempted to produce fake medical bills to save tax? Quote Luke 12:15, ("One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions!"). Quote Eccl. 5:10, ("He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income!"). Are you tempted to gossip against your boss? Quote Exodus 22:28, ("You

shall not revile God, nor curse the ruler of your people”). Tempted to watch porn? Quote Song of Songs 8:10, which teaches in-effect that you will lose your peace when you behold the breasts of a woman not your wife! Tempted to be jealous of a colleague? Quote I Cor. 3:6, (“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow!”).

### **H-HEAD FOR THE EXIT**

And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her." That was Genesis 39:10 for you. From that verse I learn two things: One, temptations will keep coming. Mrs. Potiphar wasn't content to tempt Joseph just one day or once in a while. She did it daily. Constantly. Ms. Temptation took no tea break in the case of Joseph. It was also true in the case of Jesus. He was not only tempted at the start of his adult life and ministry (I refer to his “bread” temptation, “building” temptation, “bowing” temptation recorded in Mathew 4). He was tempted throughout. When Peter (his disciple) told him to not to head towards Jerusalem to be crucified, it was a temptation for Jesus. When people lampooned him with the words, "If you are the son of God, come down from the cross!", it was huge temptation for Jesus. He was indeed the Son of God and he could effortlessly comedown from the

cross if he wanted to. If he stayed put there, it was because he wanted to beat temptation that trailed him till the end. Temptations will also trail us and tail us relentlessly. After we have switched off the racy show on TV, the temptation can come through the magazine we are flipping over. After we are through with the magazine, it may come through a WhatsApp message that has leaped onto your cellphone through the airwaves.

The second lesson I learn from this verse is far too obvious: the way to victory over sexual temptation is, fleeing from the source of temptation. Notice that Joseph "refused to even be with her" (Gen. 39:10). It was as if he had read Paul's writing to young Timothy to "flee the evil desires of youth" and wanted to follow it (2 Tim. 2:22). So, Joseph refused to crouch near the source of temptation deliberately. He headed for the exit.

I guess Mrs. Potiphar deliberately packed off the servants in the house to different directions with instructions. "You get some vegetables!" "Hey, you! Shop for some good fruits!" After she finished giving the instructions, she was alone with Joseph. She looked this way and that way. There were no one around. Husband was at work. All her servants except Joseph went shopping. Wasn't it the best time for

some fun? But Joseph looked up. He knew his omnipresent Maker was watching him! And he realized that even if he stayed with her for one more second, he would lose his self-control and yield to that titanic temptation. And so, he ran. He left his shirt - which his temptress caught hold of - and ran! "I have nothing for shirts. My father gave me a shirt - a multicolored shirt. I got into trouble the day I wore it. If you want, you can have my shirt. But no sex please!" he perhaps told her as he ran.

### **WHEN YOU OVERCOME TEMPTATION, YOU MAY SUFFER**

The story moves forward. Mrs. Potiphar who perhaps gave compliments to Joseph like "Hi! Handsome!" now refers to him as "the Hebrew servant" (vs. 17) to her husband after he got back home. She accused him falsely of trying to have sex with her. I am no prophet. I am not even the son of one. But I prophesy. When you take a stand for Jesus, you will be stoned. It may not be with stones made of silicone but "stones" from the mouth of people.

### **WHEN YOU OVERCOME TEMPTATION THERE IS A BLESSING**

Joseph became a picture of Jesus Christ without even knowing it (we

have already seen this) – what a blessing, this is! A. W. Pink in his classic book, "Gleanings from Genesis," gleaned out 60 similarities between Joseph and Jesus (Google this!). Here are two similarities which I quote as a sample: "Joseph was falsely accused (39:16-18); Jesus was falsely accused (Mat. 16:59, 60).<sup>29</sup> Joseph attempted no defense (39:19); Jesus gave no defense at His trials (Isaiah 53:7)."

When we defeat temptation consistently, we become more and more like Jesus and that is God's ultimate goal for us (Rom. 8:29).



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# Where Hope lives

Mr. Hansraj Jain

## **REALITY CHECK:**

A 24-year-old called about a week earlier, saying she was ending her marriage.

Ooh!

Why the 'Ooh'?

It was six months earlier that she had her husband had moved away from his parents. Now, she was moving away from him.

When asked for her reasons, she said, "We have no communication between us, we have no emotional bonding, no common interests or topics that we can talk together. We are so incompatible".

However, there was something alive between them. That presence was verbal violence, silent treatment, and

angry expressions against one another.

"I have had enough. I am waiting for Corona lockdown to end. I shall return to my parental home", she told me with finality.

## **IS OUR FEAR OUR DRIVER?**

Now we know that this is not an uncommon scenario in the marital relationship today; And I am not talking about violence alone. The outcome that follows such violence is even more potent - divorce!

What about the Family? Is there any difference? Can one conclude that when our marriages are dead, our Families, too, are dead?

I am uncertain how you answered the question raised. We recommend viewing the issue from a couple of

angles. The first among the two is to understand how marriage and Family are defined, especially in our current contemporary world views.

The second perspective would emerge from checking out the origin of marriage and its metamorphosis into a Family.

Definitions:

We define marriage and Family first. "Although families all over the world have, with time, transformed substantially in its structure, content and expression", the United Nations by setting aside a day in which to recognise "the Family as the basic unit of society", speaks volumes about the imperativeness of Family.

Following the description, we examine the ingredients that transformed marriage into a family; albeit a healthy and lasting family.

### **Defining Marriage:**

"Marriage, according to the first definition of Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is 'the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognised by law'."

Dictionary.com defines marriage as a noun which, "(broadly)[speaking],

any of the diverse forms of interpersonal union established in various parts of the world to form a familial bond that is recognised legally, religiously, or socially, granting the participating partners mutual conjugal rights and responsibilities. [This union includes], for example, opposite-sex marriage, same-sex marriage [gay marriage], plural marriage [blended marriage], and an arranged marriage.

"Anthropologists say that some type of marriage has been found in every known human society since ancient times." (Dictionary.com). The researches were, however, unable to say from their findings the type of marriages that would have existed in those ancient societies.

## **FOUNDATION OF OUR FUNDAMENTALS**

The Bible, on the other hand, offers us some insight into the type of marriages that existed in ancient societies. But there is a catch. That catch is the view where the opinion is that the Biblical records are mere religious documents with mythical stories weaved within it. For example, the Creation story; Moses dividing the Red Sea; Drinking water by hitting a rock. Then there is Joshua making the sun to stand still until his people destroyed their enemies. The ultimate stance is that

scientifically Jesus' virgin birth is a fake. Joseph, as in our days, too had a live in relationship with Mary. She got pregnant – a baby he refused to accept as his own and so thinks of leaving her.

Consequently, the Bible and its world view is brushed aside, if not rejected outright, as being imaginary and mythical than being scientific and rational.

In this article, our point of reference is the Bible. We believe that Biblical account of the origin and purpose of Marriage and Family are both historically reliable, authentic, accurate and true to life experiences. We believe the Bible to be inspired Word of God written within the historical context addressing issues of the time. Its relevance continues today. As for the figurative and metaphorical narratives that are chronicled, the Bible shies a way from recording them as such making no other claim than what they are.

Founded on this aspect about Bible's infallibility, reliability and relevance, we ask questions which includes the following:

- What does the Bible say about marriage?
- How does the Bible explain marital relationship's transformation into Family?
- Is there such a thing as a healthy and contented Family?

- What are those characteristics of the metamorphosed healthy and contented family life?

### **The FAMILY, albeit, "The Original Family":**

Although not all questions raised can be answered within 1000 words or so, we will look at, briefly, Biblical narrative of creation of Marriage and Family.

#### **A. Family: The Beginning (Genesis 1,2,3,4)**

Marriage, in line with Biblical narrative, teaching and affirmation, is to be only between a man and a woman. That was the set pattern and norm created and established by the Creator God (Gen.1:26,27; 2).

#### **B. Marriage: Established & Purposed**

Chapter one verses twenty-six and twenty-seven of Genesis states, in brief, the creation of the man and the woman. Chapter two gives us the reason, context and purpose of the marital relationship. Chapter three provides us with a window through which we have a glimpse on how the Family life is built and lived by the man and his wife. Chapter 4 details the result of undiscerning decision-making. The couple is forced out of their home of birth. It has become a place out of bounds for them and their children who would be born to them, forever.



### **C. Costly Brokenness:**

The ex-communication and suspension are real. From living in the comfort and safety of the home they knew and enjoyed without condition, they now faced the unprecedented consequences of poor judgment. Rejection and broken relationship with one's parents is never easy. Yet, to accept one's mistake, failure and to apologise, is equally hard. Ego, doubt, greed, and self-will, poor judgement, and undiscerning listening to the twisted logic and lies, all led to the fall. It was a great fall. It was an event that neither the man or the wife could have ever imagined. Sadly, the couple or their children, it appears, never sought to rectify their wrong nor tried to apologise and return "home" - a home and a place of birth, safety, belonging, responsibilities, trust, honour, and abundance that they called their own home.

#### **Family Today:**

How is all this ancient event relevant to the reality of our modern and advanced civilisation?

The truth is that neither science, technology or knowledge have made our behaviour, attitude and worldview on our marital and Family relationship any impact or change. If there has been any progress in our dealing with each other in the Family

life, it is that we have developed our first parent's art of self-defence, blame-game, faulting others, etcetra to a finesse!

#### **Broken but Recreated (2 Cor. 5:17) & Not just Fixed:**

But it does not need to be that way. Jesus affirming marriage and Family warned that no one should even think about breaking down or harming filial relationships. (Mt.15:3ff).

#### **Why?**

Because the Creator had sought to fill the emptiness that loneliness and aloneness brings, saying it was not good that man was alone and the creatures He brought were incompatible to alleviate his loneliness. Of course, animals and others may fill the gap a little temporarily. It was the woman whom God created taking the bone from man but made in God's own image, that dissipated his loneliness. Clearly it was the union of a man with a woman that filled to overflowing their lives.

As at the beginning, today too, it is this union of marriage that creates our Families and is marked by unconditional love, acceptance, sharing, sacrifice, mutual dignity and respect, compatibility in body, mind, soul and spirit - physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially

and independently, that the world is crying to regain. (Gen.2,3 & NT). International Day of Family prods us know to work to construct our Family life by fortifying our marriages.

I am so glad that the United Nations has, set for us 15 May, calling everyone who loves the original model of Marriage and Family to celebrate our priceless possession at home, viz., our families. This is more so today even in the midst of COVID-19 that threatens our existence. May Christ-like character mark our Families worldwide once again in being one Family united in and by His sacrifice and resurrection.

We wish you a blessed, prosperous and contented Married and Family Life!



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# Making Peace and Keeping Peace

Dr. Shantanu Dutta



'Peacekeeping' is a complicated concept with complicated uses, being the result of a difficult coordination between the political sphere – UN, Secretary-General, Security Council and Member States – and the operational sphere – type of conflict, geographical area, and parties confronted and as a result, historically, peacekeeping operations have lacked the consistency that they should have had to be effective. While the United Nations is not the only intergovernmental organization (IGO) to undertake peacekeeping missions, it is the most experienced. Since its ratification in 1945, the United Nations has deployed 55 Peace keeping Operations. Remarkably, 42 of these have occurred since the end of the Cold War. Depending on one's criteria for the success of a PKO, the number of U.N. missions that have been

successful ranges from none to almost all of them. However, a standard evaluation of success is based not on a mission's peacekeeping ability alone, but also its peace building ability. Peacemakers strive to create peace and attempt to reconcile things and people that are at odds with one another. Peacekeepers, on the other hand, strive to keep peace at all costs.

King Solomon, in Proverbs 10:10 (NLT), says, "People who wink at wrong cause trouble, but a bold reproof promotes peace." Peacekeepers, by not acknowledging wrongdoings in an effort to maintain peace, are actually winking at them. In that sense, Peacekeepers and peacemakers can actually be considered complete opposites of one another. It's interesting that Jesus is not calling us to be peace-keepers, but peace-

makers. Some of us are predisposed to have peace at any cost in an effort to avoid conflict with someone. Often this is just pretend peace, as tensions go underground and come back again because they were never dealt with. Peacekeepers do not want to create discomfort and hurt by disrupting the peace. It is important to realize that not all hurt is harmful. The disciples are a prime example of this. They first had to disrupt peace to usher in an even greater peace. If they wanted to simply keep peace, they would have never mentioned Jesus' name ever again.

We often avoid people who are different from us in order to keep peace that might be disrupted if we engage others who may view the world differently. Whether it is caste issues or speaking with our neighbour from another culture or tribe, it is important to make peace with each other, not keep a faux-sense of peace that might actually be disguised prejudice, narrow-mindedness, fear or bigotry. Although it won't be easy, it is important that we take our lives back from being peacekeepers and instead become peacemakers. It's easy to be naive about peace, because it is in fact, very elusive in our relationships, in our culture, in our church, and in the world today. That reminds me of what one person said about Christians who quarrel: "Where two or three come together

in Jesus' name...there will eventually be conflict."The fact that the lack of peace is so pervasive, so prevalent is really nothing new. We can trace it all the way back to the book of Genesis. Humans have been at war with God ever since Adam and Eve sinned. And, beginning with the conflict between Cain and Abel, which eventually led to one brother killing the other, we have been in a battle with our brothers and sisters up till now.

In the midst of this continuous conflict and incessant strife, Jesus speaks some stunning words in Matthew chapter 5 as we look at the seventh beatitude. In order for us to find happiness, we are to be pure before God and this beatitude challenges us to be at peace with others. When Jesus pronounced a blessing upon peacemakers, He used a very strong word for "maker." It literally means "to do" or "to create." Peace must be actively made because it never happens by chance. Left to ourselves, we drift toward divisiveness. Peacemaking is a messy work and is often resented. Peace must be pursued until we have it, and then guarded so we don't lose it. A peacemaker does what it takes to establish and maintain peace. No peace will exist between nations until peace reigns in each country. And no country will have peace unless peace resides in each community. And no community will

have peace unless peace dwells within its people. And no people will have peace unless they surrender to the “Prince of Peace”.

How can God use us to build bridges between people who are in conflict? Peace is hard to make and even harder to keep. It's usually easier to walk away from a problem instead of getting involved in someone else's difficulty. Be like Francis of Assisi, who prayed, “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon.” It's a pretty big order to bring peace to the world, but each of us can make a difference if we decide to be peacemakers right where we are. What if we responded to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. What if we understood that conflict provides opportunities for us to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be more like Christ? Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to disintegrate,

actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation by forgiving others as God has forgiven us and seeking solutions to our differences. Commit to being a peacemaker because peace does not happen by chance. Jesus died on a cruel rugged cross to make peace for us. His blood was shed so that we might know the meaning of eternal peace. In order to be known as a child of God, we should be willing to do no less.



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# World Water Day

Rev. Puneet Kumar Jha

I would like to start my writing with a beautiful quote by some wise person who loves nature. “To a thirsty man, a drop of water is worth more than a sack of gold.” There is another quote about the importance of water, “Thousands Lived without Love, but not without water”. This is more than enough to understand the value of water. The establishment of civilization throughout the world is based on water availability. As in many other parts of the World, civilization in India also flourished around rivers. Some people in our nation have valued water so much and even considered rivers as sacred that they are even being worshipped. The world's major civilizations developed along rivers, which have both united and divided human beings. Water is life, our life and that of others too! Without water, there would be no human civilization.

Water is one of the other urgent needs for life. A human can go without food for about three weeks but would typically only last three to four days without water. This sentence is enough to know the importance of water.

Annual observation of World Water Day, on 22nd March every year, is about focusing attention on the importance of water. As the global population grows, so does the demand for water, which depletes natural resources and damages the environment in many places. Water is the most precious resource of all creation. We must use it in a more responsible way.

Let us see the Biblical response to this world water day.

A world without water would be dry

and dead. Water is essential for life! When we read the scripture, we get so many ideas about water and its relation to God and to nature and to the men and women. Genesis 1:1-3, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters." This verse shows that God is in control of water. It is a part of the creation. We can sense the care of the creation by God himself. The verse says that Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the water. Water is not God, but water relates to God because it is His creation and God himself is interested in keeping the natural resources safe. There is another verse that shows the intention of God behind the care of water and creation. Genesis 1:7, "So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so." God has His own purpose behind the creation and care of water. It is God who kept water in this universe for the creation, especially for the human being.

There is one interesting incident found in Genesis 21:19 "Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink." Here, we find about Hagar, when she was in the wilderness with

her son and her son was thirsty and about to die. Hagar was not blind, but she was unable to find the water. God opened her eyes and He allowed her to see a well. It was all by His grace.

Having drinkable and sufficient water for all the purposes of our life, is a grace of God. We human beings should not misuse the grace given in the form of water. There is a beautiful Psalm in the Old Testament, Psalm 23:1-2 "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures: he led me beside the still waters." God will abundantly satisfy all of our needs. He is a faithful Shepherd that leads His flock to places where they will be spiritually satisfied. In these verses, we not only see the Spiritual aspect of God's goodness and the peace and joy that the Spirit brings but also that God keeps the things or resources for his children. He is not only a giver but he also leads His people to where he has kept the resources.

In the New Testament, we see the response of Jesus towards the water. John 4:13-14 "Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." In this verse, Jesus uses the metaphor of

water with his love and salvation. By using this example, he values the water and acknowledges the importance of the water for human life. Revelation 21:6 “Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.” Jesus is clear that He is the source of both, physical and spiritual water. Both are essential for life. Jesus is not denying the importance of the spiritual water for people but he strengthens the value of worldly water also. Water really plays an important role in our existence. It will be surprising to know how much water our human body consists, here is a survey. “Up to 60% of the human adult body is water. According to H.H. Mitchell, Journal of Biological Chemistry 158, the brain and heart are composed of 73% water, and the lungs are about 83% water. The skin contains 64% water, muscles and kidneys are 79%, and even the bones are watery: 31%.”

Is it not surprising? I think, it is! The more we know about the creation, the more we praise the creator. He is awesome. There is so much water available on this planet. The earth has abundance of water, but unfortunately, only a small percentage (about 0.3 percent), is usable for humans. The other 99.7 percent is in the oceans, soils,

icecaps, and floating in the atmosphere. Still, much of the 0.3 percent that is useable is unattainable. As responsible men and women, we have to be serious about using water. Honestly speaking, we need to be wise in using water.

Whether we live in a city or village, whether we are educated or uneducated, young or small, we all have to be wise in using water, so that those who are poor and struggling for useable water, may also have a privilege to get the useable water. I would like to discuss a little bit of the skills to use water in a wise way.

I once visited Stelenbosh in South Africa. It is a beautiful place but there was a water crisis and I was blessed to see how they utilized the water and overcame the challenges of water crisis.

These tips, being already used in some places, may be useful for all.

1. Various surveys show that a lot of water is wasted everyday, while bathing or brushing your teeth.
2. Turning off the tap while brushing, can save more than 5 liters of water per minute.
3. Unknown leaks in your bathroom



and household can waste up to 3,000 gallons (11,000 L) of water a year.

4. As a matter of fact, the majority of the showers use 2.5-5 gallons of water per minute.

5. You can easily cut down on your daily water usage by installing a low-flush or dual-flush toilet.

6. A rainwater tank is one of the best ways to conserve water. The water collected from rain can also be put to good use. You can water your plants using it.

7. Small and effective methods, like collecting cold water, that we run every day while taking bath, before the water is hot enough to shower and using it to water plants or flush the toilet can make a huge difference.

8. Water used to rinse the dishes once can be used to soak other dishes as well.

9. One of the innovative ways to save water is by using a pail of soapy water to clean your car. Keeping the hose closed while washing, saves thousands of liters. Use the hose only when you rinse your car. Also, use a spray nozzle when rinsing your car, for more efficient output.

10. Moreover, leaving the traditional

methods behind, you can opt for water less car washing systems available in the market.

11. A pool can lose up to an inch of water in a week. Multiple factors including temperature, humidity, wind and more, affect the process. Covering your pools can save thousands of gallons of water.

These are few practical ideas, I believe may be useful to save water. Let us be a good steward of the creation. Let us ask the wisdom of God to preserve the water for our coming generation.



**Rev. Puneet Kumar Jha**

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# TAKE THE NAME

Rev. Kuruvillea Chandy

How should we think of Jesus? How should we identify Him in worship? The New Testament has the answers to these questions.

For the most part, the apostolic authors profiled themselves as servants of Christ Jesus.

Paul described himself as a “servant of Christ Jesus” (Rom. 1:1), “called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1), “an apostle – sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead” (Gal.1:1), “servant(s) of Christ Jesus” (Phil.1:1), “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope” (1 Tim. 1:1), “a servant of

God and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (Titus 1:1).

James described himself as “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Jas. 1:1), while Peter said he was “an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:1) and “a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:1) and Jude identified himself as “a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James” (v.1) and John simply as “the Elder” (2 Jn. v.1; 3 Jn. v.1).

## **Fellowships of Saints**

In the beginning, the Church met from “house to house” apart from their mass gatherings in the Temple courts (Acts 2:46). It is unlikely that the Temple was the place for their distinctive activities of abiding under apostolic teaching, prayer and

“breaking bread” (the observance of the Lord's Supper), as they would not have got permission from the Temple authorities to do their own thing. However, like everyone else they could use the courts as a place to connect with one another and keep track of what was going on in their community.

As the community of believers grew and spread to other cities, they continued to meet in homes (Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15). There was no plan to build dedicated places of worship. This fulfilled Christ's vision for His Church, that they would be a people who would not worship in designated holy places (such as Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim), but would worship in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4: 21-24). Theirs was not formal, ritualised worship, but worship that was non-formal and intimate.

The descriptions of the people of the faith fit this image of being an intimate group bound only by their love of the Lord: “loved by God and called to be His holy people” (Rom. 1:7), “sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be His holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord” (1 Cor. 1:2), “God's holy people...the faithful in Christ

Jesus” (Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2), “God's holy people in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:1), “the church...in God the/our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Th. 1:1; 2 Th. 1:1), “God's elect...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with His blood” (1 Pet. 1:1-2), “ those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours” (2 Pet. 1:1), “who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” (Jude v.1).

### **Apostolic Greetings**

Next, we consider what the apostles said in greetings. Here's what Paul said:

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:2; 2 Th. 1:2).

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father” (Col. 1:1)

“...in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you” (1 Th. 1:1)

“Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2).

“Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour” ( Titus 1 : 4 ) .  
“Greetings”(Jas. 1:1)

Peter greeted them with “Grace and peace...in abundance” followed by “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1 Pet. 1:2-3). Next time Peter wrote, “Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Pet. 1:1-2).

John wrote, “Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son” (2 Jn. v.3).

Jude said, “Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance” (v.2).

### **Apostolic Benedictions**

Finally, we consider the closing ascriptions of glory to God and/or benedictions given:

“Now to Him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ... to the only wise God be

glory for ever through Jesus Christ! Amen” (Rom. 16:25, 27).

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen” (1 Cor. 16: 23-24).

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14).

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen” (Gal. 6:18).

“Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love” (Eph. 6:23-24)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen” (Phil. 4:23).

“Grace be with you” (Col.4:18; 1 Tim. 6:21; Titus 3:15)

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (1 Th. 5:28; 2 Th. 3:18)

“The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all” (2 Tim. 4:22)

“Now may the God of peace, who

through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen...Grace be with you all” (Heb. 13:20-21, 25)

“Peace to all of you who are in Christ” (1 Pet. 5:13)

“To Him be glory both now and for ever! Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18)

“To Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen” (Jude vv.24-25).

### **Language in Fellowship**

These passages of the greetings and benedictions represent the way the churches of the New Testament period took the name of Jesus in the context of fellowship. What is noticeable is that without exception there is no reference to Jesus as “God, the Son” in invocation and/or benediction.

There is one instance of Jesus being identified in greeting as “the Father's Son” (2 Jn. v.3). That was because John was battling the Gnostic heresy which said that Jesus was not the equal of God, and was only a demigod. It was in that context that John assertively proclaimed that Jesus was God (Jn. 1:1) and that the glory of God was revealed in Him (v.14). In his first letter he declared that anyone who does not accept that Jesus was the Christ (2:22-23) and was God in the flesh was no less than an anti christ (4:2-3).

Even though in their preaching and in theological statements in their letters, they proclaimed that Jesus was God's Son, they did not greet each other in the name of “God, the Son”. For instance, Paul affirmed that the gospel was “regarding His Son, who as to His earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 1:3-4). That was a theological affirmation of who Jesus was and is. However, when addressing Christians or pronouncing greetings or blessings in the name of Jesus, there was no sacred formulation as practised in many churches today:

- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit
- The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
- The blessing of God, the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit

Jesus did command that baptism was to be administered “in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). However, it is questionable whether He was giving a “baptismal formula”. The book of Acts says that people were baptised “in the name of Jesus” (2:38; 10:48). If Jesus had meant them to use a formula, it is highly unlikely that the early disciples would have departed from such a clear teaching of Christ, and that too, so soon after Jesus was resurrected (just fifty days later on the day of Pentecost).

The truth is Jesus didn't teach any rituals to His disciples. While He fulfilled the law, He virtually dismantled the whole religious system that had been built around the law. He instituted no rites and offerings. So it is unlikely that He meant that baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was to be reduced to a sacred formula.

To be baptised in the name of Jesus meant that they identified themselves as followers of Jesus, just as John's followers were baptised as his followers, and the Pharisees had their own disciples. It was an initiation rite. However, Jesus said that when people were baptised they were to be taught all that He had taught and the reference to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit must therefore be seen as a definition of the content of His teaching. There was to be no denial of the Father, who was known through Creation, and the history of His covenant dealings with Israel, and there was to be no denial of the Holy Spirit who would come in place of Christ to encourage and empower them for their mission. They were to be held in honour just like they honoured Him.

### **A New Reformation**

When we refer to Jesus in prayer or blessing as “God, the Son” what happens is, that we distance Him from ourselves; we diminish the warmth and compassion of the one who allowed us to call Him by a human name. Think about it: when you pray personally do you address Jesus as “God, the Son”? Why don't you? Isn't it because when you

yourself pray you want to feel the intimacy of calling Jesus by name? Then, why pray in church in a way that distances Jesus from us?

The kind of language used in liturgy, developed when the shepherds of the Church began to lord it over the church (1 Pet. 5:3), forcing the Church into the mode of requiring a special class of people to perform rituals. It gave up the essential doctrine of “the priesthood of all believers” (see 1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 1:5-6). The sharp divide between the people (laity) of God and the priestly class had to be buttressed by introducing sacred formulae that only the priestly class could chant.

The fallout of this is seen in the fact that people in liturgical churches are very hesitant about praying in public. It is as if they believe that when praying in public, they ought to sound like their church's prayer book. On the other hand, in non-liturgical churches, new believers (even converts from other faiths) revel in the newfound liberty in Christ—that they can talk to God personally and intimately, as though they are talking to their Father, and they are.

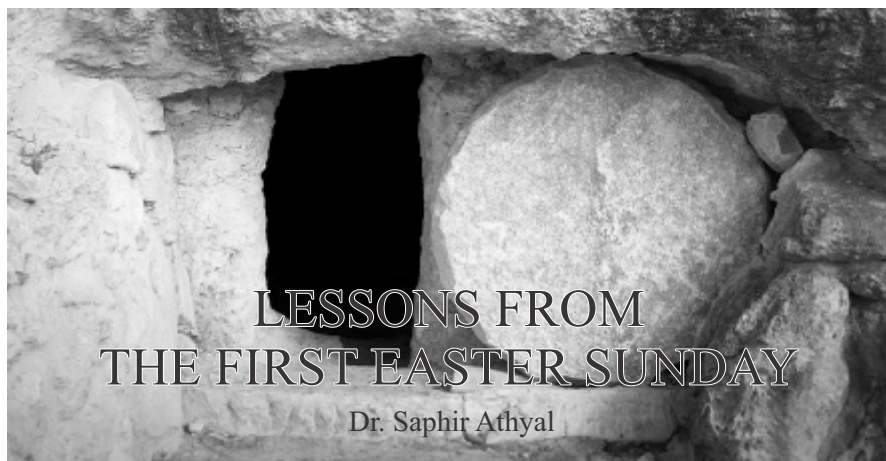
At various times in the history of liturgical churches (Roman

Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc) there have been attempts to reform. Most of these attempts to reform have ended as rewriting prayers and rituals in somewhat modern language without losing any formality. However, as long as they only change the language of prayer, without engaging hearts in a love affair with Jesus, the coldness of formality will remain in place.

Teach people to take the name of Jesus. Tell them that Jesus is really their Friend, and God is really their Loving Father. Help people to lose their fears. Let them know that God who embraced humans by becoming and being human will not be offended if they don't get their grammar right. Tell people that God will welcome conversing with them even when they make a mess of things praying.



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Very hearty Easter Greetings to you and yours!

What are the significant lessons we learn from the very first Easter Sunday? Out of all the eleven recorded post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, five of them were on the first day, including the one to Peter. There must have been many more appearances as in Acts 1:3-4 — “spoke about the kingdom of God”, but not in the eleven recorded).

### **1. Tomb entrance opened.**

The stone door of the tomb was removed not for Jesus to get out, but for the disciples to go in, see and believe. For our own understanding and believing, he opens many doors for us.

### **2. Overcoming prejudice against women.**

(1) The first work of the risen Lord was to comfort and

reassure a broken and shattered woman, Mary.

(2) The very first missionary of the risen Lord was a woman — “Go and tell”.

(3). The first missionary message was hers, “I have seen the Lord”. The essence of our missionary message always has to be that. Those who have not seen Christ firsthand, do not have a message to tell others.

(4) In a culture in which legal courts did not allow testimonies of a woman as valid,

Jesus tells Mary to go and give the news of the resurrection to the “brothers”.

### **3. Opening the Scripture and revealing himself.**

Jesus explained the Scripture to the two disciples on the Emmaus road, and opened their eyes to see him at the table as “he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them”



(Luke 24:30-32). These, he does to us today.

4. Peace when overwhelmed by fear. (John 20:19-23) When the eleven disciples were hiding in a room with “doors locked for the fear of Jews”, Jesus broke into the room and said, “Peace be with you”. Today, we are under lockdown in our houses for the fear of coronavirus, and he comes in with the offer of peace.

#### **5. Cost of following Christ.**

The eleven are shown the wounds on his “hands and side” and told, “As the Father sent me, I am sending you”. Increasingly its symbolized message might become true in India and in many other countries.

#### **6. Being sent into the world.**

The main thrust of this appearance was the commissioning of his disciples into the world. They were to follow the model of Jesus ('as the Father had sent him') in their ministry. They who were hiding for the fear for their lives, now have come out in the open and addressed the large festival crowd and said, “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.-- God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Messiah” (Acts 2:32,36). This marvelous transformation of the disciples is the most convincing proof that Christ was risen.

#### **7. The Holy Spirit, the power behind discipleship.**

Jesus breathed on them on this first appearance and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit”. Only by the enabling of the Spirit we can be faithful witnesses. Through him God indwells in us.

May the above effects of the first Easter Sunday, be real in our lives renewing us. “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom 6:4).

Yours in our Risen Lord,



#### **Dr Saphir Athyal**

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Dear All,

At this critical juncture when the world is facing Covid-19, we as a church has to discover what the Lord want us to do as our response. This is in continuation to the EFI Urgent Release sent on March 25, 2020 with the subject: “Fighting COVID-19 during Lent: Prayer, Relief, Restoring Hope”. We are thankful for the government in caring for the people who are infected by the virus. We are looking at how the church could practically work on addressing some specific groups who are affected by the lockdown. We are focusing on the migrant labourers and daily wage labourers (including HIV infected) who are the most affected groups because of the lockdown.

The lockdown declared by the Prime Minister has forced the factories, hotels etc to be closed. The owners have asked the workers to leave for three months. Some of them have been paid their monthly wages and some or not. These people left the place of residence where they were staying together on rent because they were not able to pay the rent. They are not able to go to their respective villages as all mode of transportation has been stopped. TV reports say that they are stranded in railway station, bus station and different places without proper accommodation. The Chief Ministers of Odisha, West Bengal and Bihar had asked all other State government to provide support for the people and also have assured financial assistance for their food and other needs.

In this situation what the church can do for these people. The church response in the past is commendable. Can we rise up to face the current situation in response to the call we have received to be the salt and the light. John exhorts us to show the love of Jesus in practical even risking our lives (I. John 3: 16, 17). The CNI Diocese of Kolkatta had offered the West Bengal government the church premises to be used temporarily for quarantine facilities and also offered to give food and other items.

There are few steps we have collated together and put it for your response. If you have anyway responded to this crisis as a church or as an individual please pass it to us. We want to collate different models and send to all churches to see what they can do to address this current crisis.

1. Since the curfew is in place the church may find it difficult to move out to support the poor and needy. Contact the nodal officers in each State/district who has the authority to give curfew passes. Get guidance from the nodal officers on how as church we can help in meeting the need of the poor. Try to limit your responses to an area of 2-5 kms.

2. May be there are locations where people are stranded. Nodal officers can

guide you to those locations to reach the poor.

3. Identify poor, daily labourers in your own locations and reach out to them to support.

4. How the church or as an individual member can help?

- a. You can help them by providing cash to the poor labourers.
- b. Where you cannot withdraw cash, you can do online transfer into their accounts.
- c. Provide dry rations where possible for a month.
- d. Transfer cash to NGOs who are working with the poor labourers.

5. Ask your domestic workers, car cleaners not to come for work. Pay them the wages in advance and be generous in giving some advance too which can be adjusted later in their wages or give that as a gift.

6. Identify old aged people who need food supply. It can be prepared by people who does not have any symptoms or were not in a vulnerable position for the past 14 days and supply them. Do not gather more than 3 people together to cook as curfew is in place.

7. Get the phone numbers of ambulance services and government ambulance services and pass to all members.

8. If a family requires medical assistance to reach hospital you can make it available by calling the ambulance service and also pay for the services if possible.

9. Decide first to open the church, school and other campuses to accommodate stranded people. Once decided you can inform the nodal officers of your decision and if needed can be used. Also provide dry rations or give cash to buy dry rations or provide cooked food as per the facility available. Everything you do please get the official permission from the Nodal Officers.

10. NGOs can extend their support to the poorest by providing relief to the people with whom they are working with by allocating some of the funds available with them for other development activities after receiving approval from their donors where necessary.



# Why Should God Heal Our Land?

Rev. Joyson. K. C

We love to sing our national anthem and we take pride in it. Whenever I hear it, my heart leaps with great joy. It is written by Shri Rabindranath Tagore, one of India's foremost literary giants. Let me present few words of our anthem and remind its meaning:

Jana-gana-mana-adhinayakajaya he  
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata

You are the ruler of minds of  
people, let the victory be with you,  
The dispenser of the destiny of  
India

TavaSubha name jage,  
tavasubha asisa mage,  
gahe tavajaya-gatha.

Wake up listening to the auspicious  
name of yours and pray for your  
blessings,

The saving of all the people is lying  
in your hands.

Jana-gana-mangala-dayakajaya he  
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.

You are the one to impart wellbeing  
to the people  
the dispenser of the destiny of India

This is exactly what we Christians pray for India. We pray to the Ruler of the universe who is the dispenser of the destiny of India. We pray for God's blessing on India. We pray Christ would save the people. We pray that God would keep our nation safe, for He is the dispenser of the destiny of our beloved nation.

But should God hear our prayer?  
Is our race superior to others?  
Do we have higher intelligence than others?  
Are we morally better than others?  
During World War II, these are the questions Dr Peter Marshall asked the Americans in his sermon, “Why Should God Bless America?”

We are not facing a war, but we are facing a worldwide sickness which is affecting more nations and more people than even World War II did. And those questions are pertinent today to the Church in India. In fact, they are pertinent to the Church in any nation today. I'm indebted to Dr. Peter Marshall for the following thoughts.

Why should God hear our prayer?  
Why should God answer our cries?  
Why should God look with compassion on India? Why should God heal our land?

OR Has our pride begun to make us think that we deserve God's healing on our nation?

Let us turn our attention to 2 Chronicles 7:14, If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then I will hear from heaven

and will forgive their sin, and heal their land.

This scripture today is perhaps one of the most important scriptures to be brought before the people of our nation. Make no mistake - this is a call for all Indians - irrespective of their regional allegiances. For we sing:

Panjaba-Sindh-Gujarata-Maratha  
Dravida-Utkala-Banga  
Vindhya-Himachala-Yamuna-  
Ganga  
Punjab, Sindh, Gujarat, Maratha,  
Dravid, Orissa, Bengal  
There are echoes in the hills of the  
Vindhyas, and the Himalayas and  
music is mingled in Yamuna, and  
Ganga

This is a call for all Indians irrespective of their religious faith because all are created by God- Hindus & Muslims, Buddhists & Jains, Sikhs & Zoroastrians and even atheists- all are created by God and therefore belong to God. And this call is all the more applicable to Indian Christians who are called by the name of Christ.

But before we look at the four conditions of healing for our nation, let us not be quick to term the present crisis as God's judgment. Such thoughts are not only premature but

also prejudicial. The reason we seek God's healing is because we know that while we are weak and limited, God is almighty and can bring healing which we cannot.

Let us now look at the four conditions:

**The first condition is to humble ourselves.**

Humanity today lives in an era of unparalleled success. These are the days of “self-made men (and women).” We have become intoxicated by our achievements and successes. Humility and gratitude does not come to us anymore. But if we want God to heal our land, the first condition is to humble ourselves. Pride hides our faults, therefore it is the sure path to fall. Humility reveals the truth about us, therefore it is the sure path to growth.

F. B. Meyer once said: “I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves one above the other; and that the taller we grew in Christian character the easier we could reach them. I now find that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other. It is not a question of growing taller but of stooping lower; that we have to go down, always down, to get His best gifts.”

Humility is not humiliation of oneself, but it is glad submission to God - as the Lord of our life. When we humble ourselves, we are admitting faith in God's ability to deal with our circumstance. For the Scripture promises, “Humble yourself in the sight of God and He will lift you up.” (James 4:10)

**The second condition is that God's people must pray.**

God is never more than a prayer away. But the tragedy of our day is not unanswered prayer but un offered prayer. We are able to do a lot of things other than prayer. Many of us have lost the desire to pray. If we feel the Church is not as influential on the society as before it is because the Church has ceased to pray.

However, if today we are knocked to our knees, we are in the right position to pray. Bending our knees keeps us from breaking under the load of cares. Prayer gives strength to the weak and courage to the fearful. For fretting enlarges the problem but prayer magnifies God.

These days we are more qualified to pray than other times for we are in a state of helplessness. Prayer is recognition of God as the source of all blessings. It is declaration of our

dependence on Him. Someone has said - when we work, we work; but when we pray God works. We will get on our feet, if we get on our knees.

**The Third Condition is to seek God's face.**

This means a return to God, to turn toward His direction. Our Nation is in lockdown mode and we follow 'social distancing.' But to seek God, we need not go anywhere or to anyone. God is close to us and yet we are oblivious of Him because of our distraction with other things. Times like these indicate a call for God's people to stop looking for help and purpose in every other thing in life.

The Bible declares God is our Great Physician (Exodus 15:26). Healing does not come by standing in the waiting room, one needs to go in and see the Doctor. Seeking is more than knowing about God, seeking is the desire to know God. It is an effort to find God's will for our lives, His guidance for our behaviour. It is an effort to find God's standards for our ethics. In some way it is true that we know it- then we must seek the strength of the Holy Spirit to practice it.

As we seek the face of God, we will

shine His light just as the moon reflects the light of the sun in the dark sky. Then indeed we will be a blessing to the nation and our nation will be a blessing to the people of the world.

**The Fourth condition is to turn from our wicked ways.**

These days we have become conscious of cleanliness. We wash hands, use sanitizers, bleach materials. We don't want to catch the infection nor does anyone desire to be a carrier of it. But what about the cleanliness of our hearts?

If we want the Lord to bless us like He can and like He wants to, then we are going to have to search our hearts and turn from what is wicked. No one needs to convince another of the hypocrisy and sin in our nation. The ravages of casteism, poverty, oppression, the abuse of power, the physical and sexual abuse of women and children, and so much more...has been a chain around us. It has stopped us from fulfilling our call as a nation.

Not only our nation but we, the church in India also needs to be broken over our sins! We have taken the grace of God granted for so long. What we need is a season of

repentance, to fall before the Lord and confess our sins and receive His forgiveness. For the Scripture says, “He who covers his sin will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

The call to humble ourselves, to pray, to seek the face of God and to turn from our wicked ways is not just for this time when we are facing the Covid-19 pandemic. But this is God's plan to build a prosperous nation.

The political processes, the educational benefits, the technological advancements and the selfless service of the citizens are all important for the development of this nation. But these alone cannot fix what is wrong with our world. We need God to heal our land.

Ah, but it may be objected that better days will come, whether people will humble themselves and pray or not. It may be so. But the moral loss is beyond recovery. It may blunt the moral sense, deaden the national conscience, and cause the heavenly blessings which God willed to bestow, to be lost.

How then shall we return, what shall we do, where shall we begin?

It begins with each one of us. Let us not look for others to turn to God. Let it begin with me, let it begin with you. Let us not be mere hearers but doers. For if we humble ourselves, and pray, and seek the face of God and turn from our wicked ways, God will heal our land. The choice is ours to make. May we be willing to pay the price to see that take place.

God bless India, God bless the Church, God bless you!



**Rev. Joyson K C**

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# CORONAVIRUS PREVENTIVE MEASURES

## Corona Virus Symptoms:

· 3 -7 Days: Fever, Dry cough, breathing difficulty

## How to prevent yourself from contracting Corona Virus

- Since the virus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes, keep 3-5 feet distance from any person.
- When you greet one another say Namaste and do not shake hands or hug a person.
- Wash your hands every 20 minutes with soap or hand sanitizers. Use the following steps of hand washing.

1. Wet hands and apply enough liquid soap to create a good lather
2. Rub palms together

3. Rub the back of the hands
4. Interlink your fingers.
5. Cup your fingers
6. Clean the thumbs
7. Rub palm with your fingers



- As the virus can enter your body either through eyes, nose and mouth, do not touch them unless you have clean hands.
- Wipe all the surfaces especially

door knobs, padlocks every day with soap water or disinfectants. Use gloves while doing it if possible or wash your hands immediately after cleaning the surfaces.

- In case you have to go out, when you come back home, allow others in the home to open the doors and go to the bathroom to change your clothes after having a good bath with soap. The used clothes can be washed immediately with detergents.
- If living in slums which has houses close by, keep a bucket of water with soap and mug. Wash your hands and legs before entering the house.
- If living in a small room, rather staying inside the house seek open space (a playground) to get fresh air.
- Wash vegetables with water mixed with salt.

### **Avoid markets and crowded places.**

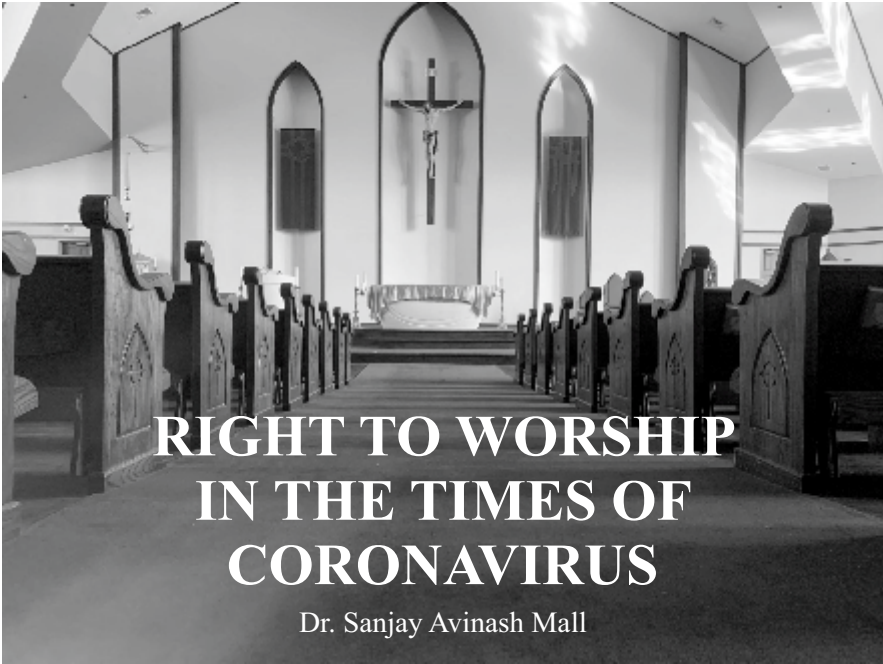
- Practice respiratory hygiene
- Do not spit.
- While sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue. Dispose of the used tissue immediately.
- If you have cough use a mask. You can make a mask with ordinary clothes available in your house like a handkerchief and make it double folded. If thin materials are used it can get through the hole of the cloth and spread.

### **If a person has the symptoms of Corona Virus**

- Note down the ambulance service number in your location.
- Stay home if you feel unwell.
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance.
- Follow the directions of your local health authority.

### **To maintain Physical and Mental Health, the following steps are important:**

- First, eat healthy and nutritious diet which help immune system to function properly.
- Avoid sugary drinks.
- Exercise regularly(dance to music, do yoga or walk up and down the stairs).
- If you are working at home, make sure that you don't sit for long periods. Get for 3 minutes break for every 30 minutes.
- Look after your mental health. It is normal to feel stressed, confused. Talk to people you trust who can help.
- Support your community people.
- Check on neighbors, family and friends.
- Listen to music
- Read a book or play a game.
- Try not to read too much of news if it makes you anxious.
- Get your information from reliable sources once or twice a day.



In all Christian homes, the habit of going to church and Sunday School was inculcated in our lives by our parents since the time we were children. Sunday mornings meant getting very neatly dressed and going to church. However, there have always been people who have always taken Sunday as a day of rest and have stayed away from church. Things have changed over the decades. Going to church now does not necessarily mean going to church in our Sunday best as it was called many years ago. We are free to wear whatever we want as God does not look at the outward

appearances but at the heart. In addition to that, there are pressing calls that we need to attend to when we are seated in the pews. We also have Whatsapp, which is very prompt in delivering messages to us, even in the dead of night.

With the announcement of the Prime Minister on the evening of March 24, we suddenly woke up to the fact that we would not be able to go to church for a few weeks, which could also stretch to a few months. This has definitely come as a rude shock to the Christian community. In the present context, it is the lives of more

than 1.3 billion that is at stake. Over a period of time, we as a society have been divided along religious lines. Now, it is social distancing that is being advocated. We have been advised innumerable times that it is better to be safe than sorry.

The present situation has many implications for the Christian community. For the first time in the history of the country, church services have been suspended. Official communication to this effect was issued by the ecclesiastical leaders of the various mainline churches. This has also been followed by the cancellation of Lenten meetings. We have been at home for Passion Week, Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter. The clergy of various churches have done their best to conduct and broadcast worship services with the use of social media. The efforts that have been made by them to bring the worship services live to our homes needs to be appreciated in letter and spirit.

The majority community is not affected by these changes as it does not have the concept of corporate worship in their faith and culture. They do not worship as families. It is only in our community where we worship as families along with the larger body of Christ.

As a community, we have suddenly realised that church is not accessible to us anymore. This should make us to pause and think. Suddenly, all of us are missing the regular church services. We would do anything possible to go to church. Following an online worship service is not the same as worshipping God in the holiness of the sanctuary. These developments should also caution us that the day may not be far when the Word of God which we hold so casually and at times disrespectfully in our hands, may not be available to us for a long time.

God in His wisdom has brought us to a point where we need to pause and think. This can be His way of making us listen to Him. There are a few things that we as a community need to do.

1. Ask God's forgiveness for all those times when we have stayed away from church on Sundays and somehow justified it.

2. Pray for God to heal the nations and our country especially as we pass through very trying times in the wake of the coronavirus that has plagued our country and the world at large. (2 Chronicles 7:14).

3. We need to realise that we have to work out our salvation with

fear and trembling. (Philippians 2:12).

4. We also need to pray that the situation improves so that the lockdown is lifted and our lives return to normal.

Let us as a community, individuals and families rise, repent and rededicate our lives once again to Christ, who did not hesitate to go to the cross so that our sins may be forgiven by the shedding of His precious blood.

Let us make a solemn promise to the Lord that on Sunday mornings, we will be found nowhere else except in His Holy sanctuary, come what may.

Let us once again draw close to God so that He may draw closer to us.

May God forgive and bless us.



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God is light  
IN HIM THERE IS  
no darkness at all.

1 John 1:5

# Intercessory Prayer Points



May 2020

**1 FRIDAY** Thank God for His protection over us as the whole world battles COVID-19 and many lives are lost on a daily basis. Thank Him for extending your life and recommit your life to Him.

Today is International Labour Day. Thank God for the works He has designed for each one of us. Pray that we may fulfill His will and purposes as we carry out our works.

**2 SATURDAY** Pray for Pongring Hope Foundation Centre, Manipur. Pray that the aim and objectives of this ministry would be fulfilled. Pray for God's enablement and empowerment.

**3 SUNDAY** Press Freedom Day. Pray for awareness of the importance of freedom of the press. Pray that the government would be reminded of their duty to respect and uphold the right to freedom of expression.

Pray for pastors who are preparing live sermons from their homes. Pray that God would speak to us through them. Pray also that they are not disheartened but be revived and be used by God powerfully.

**4 MONDAY** Pray for Sharing Love Mission at Tamil Nadu. Pray as they share the Gospel to the Bhil Tribes in Gujarat and that God may use them as an instrument to reach out to many unreached people.

**5 TUESDAY** Pray for children who are catching up on their studies from home. Pray that they would easily adjust to this new situation and be grateful for it. Pray also that they would not miss out on anything that is planned for them.

**6 WEDNESDAY** Pray for Revival Literature Fellowship at Karnataka. Pray that the ministry would focus to encourage people to receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Pray for strength and commitment for those involved in this ministry.

**7 THURSDAY** Pray for Suman Bihar at Nawada, Bihar. Pray that the Lord would show His favour on this ministry and the people involved in it. Pray that many people would benefit from this ministry.

**8 FRIDAY** Pray for all paramedics, doctors and nurses and all working in

the hospitals as we combat COVID-19. Pray for double stamina and protection for them. Pray for wisdom and the ability to make quick and wise decisions. Pray that they would serve the sick with deep compassion. Pray also for them that people would understand their service to humanity and support in all possible ways.

**9 SATURDAY** Pray for those who are suffering from COVID-19 disease. Pray for recovery and full restoration. Pray also that their experience would bring glory to God Most High.

**10 SUNDAY** Mother's Day. Today is Mothers' day. Pray for every mother that you know, to lovingly take care of their families and serve them with the love of God. Pray that God may raise many praying mothers who would be able to bring a change in the community and churches.

Pray for the body of Christ, the Church, to hold on to your truth in testing times and look forward to your promises to be fulfilled.

**11 MONDAY** Pray that the vaccine for COVID-19 would be found at the earliest. Pray for those who are working for this cause.

**12 TUESDAY** Pray for the needs of Evangelical Fellowship of India. Pray that God would continually provide and use this ministry for His glory.

**13 WEDNESDAY** Pray for families who have lost their loved ones to COVID-19 in all parts of the world. Pray for comfort and peace as they

mourn. Pray that the Holy Spirit would minister to them personally at this difficult time.

**14 THURSDAY** Pray for Soul Winners Prayer Fellowship, New Delhi. Pray that the ministry would influence the youth group in a big way. Pray for God's Spirit to move and touch many young hearts to love and serve Him.

**15 FRIDAY** Pray for Presbyterian Church in India (Reformed), Manipur. Pray for the personal and corporate revival for all the members of this church. Pray that the love to study God's Word and obey Him would increase greatly.

**16 SATURDAY** Pray for your neighbors today. Pray that their fear would turn them to our loving heavenly Father. Pray that you would become an agent of peace to them.

**17 SUNDAY** Pray that all humanity would turn to God and seek His face. May God's kingdom be extended exceedingly in the hearts of people throughout the world.

**18 MONDAY** Pray for Soul Winning Mission, Manipur. Pray that many wandering souls would find peace and satisfaction as they hear the Gospel from this ministry.

**19 TUESDAY** Pray for Sparsh Sewa Samiti, Uttar Pradesh. Pray for wisdom, encouragement, discernment to decide and the ability to do what needs to be done. May God bless the ministry.

**20 WEDNESDAY** Pray for North Bank Baptist Christian Association, Assam. Pray for new insights and zeal for this ministry. Pray for all their constituencies to actively shoulder and implement the mission vision. Pray for God's abundant blessings upon them.

**21 THURSDAY** Pray for yourself that you would be a blessing to people who are in need, both physically and spiritually. Pray that God would give you prayer spirit to intercede for those who are lost without Christ.

**22 FRIDAY** Pray for Safe India, Tamil Nadu. Pray that the Lord would bless their initiatives and bring glory to Himself and goodness for the people involved in this ministry.

**23 SATURDAY** Pray for the little children in your locality that the Lord would protect them and safeguard them. Pray also for men and women to be compassionate and loving toward them and not do anything to harm them. May our children long to be in the presence of the Lord.

**24 SUNDAY** Pray for the growth of the church where God planted you. Pray that you may be a good and powerful influence in your church. Pray for various needs of people during this crisis.

**25 MONDAY** Pray for Southern Asia Bible College, Karnataka. Pray for God's leading and empowerment for all the staff and faculty. Pray for God's

provision for the needy students in the campus.

**26 TUESDAY** Pray for the Bible Society of India, Karnataka. Pray that the people of India would increasingly love God's word and obey. Pray that BSI would serve and be an instrument in spreading the Gospel.

**27 WEDNESDAY** Pray for Seva Bharat, Telangana. Pray that the Lord would use this ministry to touch and impact many lives. Pray for God's protection and His favour upon them.

**28 THURSDAY** Pray for Peace Trust, Tamil Nadu. Pray that God would use them as His instrument as they work towards protection of environment, eradication of child labour, women empowerment etc.

**29 FRIDAY** Pray for Scripture Union India, Tamil Nadu. Pray for all the people involved in this ministry as they help others to mature in Christ through the spreading of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**30 SATURDAY** Pray for EFI-National Centre for Urban Transformation (NCUT). Pray that God's words would effectively spread and transform lives in cities and towns despite busy lifestyles. Pray for those who are involved in urban missions.

**31 SUNDAY** Pray for your pastor today that his sermon would be Holy Spirit inspired and would touch the hearts and minds of the congregation.



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B.D. (orientation)	5 Years	10+2 or Equivalent	SSC
M.Div.	3 Years	Any Graduate Degree	ATA
M.Div. (UG)	2 Years	B.Th. (ATA)	ATA
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**Last date for  
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*One in God; Together for Good.*

## Introduction

Evangelical Fellowship of India, founded in 1951, is the national alliance of Evangelicals in India. As a central network of evangelicals and a service organization, it is the custodian of Evangelical faith, movement and values in India, representing the Evangelical voice, building capacity and promoting participation in nation building.

EFI is a charter member of the World Evangelical Alliance. Its membership includes over 65,000 Churches, over 150 Church related mission agencies and organisations and thousands of individual members.

## Our Vision

To see evangelical Churches, institutions and individuals effectively witnessing the good news of Jesus Christ in word, deed and transforming nation.

## Our Mission

As an evangelical alliance, serve churches, institutions and individuals through strategic initiatives, capacity building and forging solidarity, thus facilitating the mission of witnessing to the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed, and nation building.

## Networks

- CEEFI (Christian Education Department of EFI)
- EFI Publication & Media
- EFI National Centre for Urban Transformation
- EFI Children @ Risk
- Evangelical Trust Association of North India
- EFI Micro Enterprise Development
- Evangelical Financial Accountability Council (EFAC)

## Commissions

- EFI Women Commission
- EFI Theological Commission
- EFI Youth Commission
- EFI Religious Liberty Commission
- EFI Commission on Relief (EFICOR)

EFI is a Charter Member of the World Evangelical Alliance  
An NGO in special consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

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