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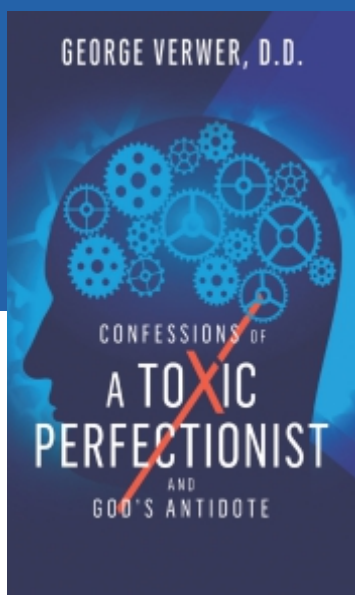
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A Journey of Faith



**Mission through  
Social Media**



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## Confessions of a Toxic Perfectionist and God's Antidote

— George Verwer, D.D

A strong commitment to excellence, and doing things right in any realm is admirable.

But when it develops to a toxic hidden streak as perfectionism under the pretext of perfect Christian life it can be murderous. Dr. George Verwer brings out in this book examples from his life and mission of over 65 years. There is a strong biblical basis for what is shared here, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23) which he paraphrases, all are toxic and fallen short of the glory of God.

Billy Graham had rightly said, "The greatest obstacle to our sanctification or godly life is our inability to see ourselves as we really are."

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# Editorial



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

God's creatures long to be with their own kind, and not just as family units, but often as communities that remain within sight and hearing, and often within touch. Human beings articulate this best. The connect facilitates sharing and thus contributes to the enrichment of their lives.

The written word, as poetry, drama and narrative, the proscenium stage led to cinema, radio, television. Social media is its third millennium evolution, born of the computer, and internet, and globalised riding the ether of the internet. The smart phone with its Wi-Fi and GPS is "the future come today".

But technology is just the carrier, the coach or bus that brought you to the theatre or the cinema. Content, now as it was then, is king. It can move man, woman or an entire social group and nation, to good, and it has

the evil potential to rouse them to targeted hate, violence, and also, if less often, to an individual or collective death wish.

The pandemic, and the physical isolation and distancing it imposed, has brought it home with an unnerving chill.

Statisticians tell us that almost half of the world's population, 45% or 3.5 billion people to be precise, i.e., are today active on social media. Over 90% of all Millennials, 76% of Generation X and nearly 50% of Baby Boomers use social media spending an average of 3 hours per day on it. The power of social media is being used to harness the markets, to tap customers, to build brand loyalties, to influence, to advocate and to transform society.

So, what is social media? Wikipedia defines social media as, "interactive

digitally-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing/exchange of information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.” It is internet based and fed largely by user generated content that is produced and made available through websites or apps designed and maintained by social media organizations.

In its infancy in 2005, (the first noticeable social media site “Six Degrees”, was created in 1997), only about 5 percent of users in the United States were involved in social media. In 2019, that number grew to about 70 percent.

Today our teens live on social media. According to the Pew Research Center: 97 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds use at least one of seven major online platforms for about 9 hours every day. Facebook is by far the largest social media platform with over 2.32 billion active monthly users.

Social media brings with it a sense of connectedness whether it be to a real or an online community and is an effective communication and marketing tool that is increasingly being used by corporations, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, political parties, and governments.

The downside is worrisome. Social media is susceptible to

disinformation, which in common parlance is referred to as Fake News. According to a 2019 study published in Science by MIT Sloan professor Sinan Aral and Deb Roy and Soroush Vosoughi of the MIT Media Lab, “False rumours spread faster and wider than true information.” The researchers found that falsehoods are 70% more likely to be retweeted on Twitter than the truth and reach their first 1,500 people six times faster. This effect was more pronounced with political news than other categories.

People, apparently, spread fake news faster because they “are drawn to information that is novel and unusual, as false news often is.” They also found that people who share fake news are more likely distracted or lazy, rather than biased. But add ‘Bots’ to the equation and you have an almost indefatigable machine for spreading rumours and false news.

A recent example from our own country, India, was the rage following the widespread news on social media about the protesting Indian farmers allegedly putting up a "Khalistani" flag and displacing the National Tricolour atop the iconic Red Fort even though visuals clearly showed that the national flag was not touched. Such is the power of social media.

In 2018, Mr. Amit Shah, the Home Minister of India and then the

President of the Bharatiya Janata Party, had told a group of social media volunteers that they had the power to make any message go viral, whether real or fake. “We are capable of delivering any message we want to the public, whether sweet or sour, true or fake. We can do this work only because we have 32 lakh people in our WhatsApp groups. That is how we were able to make this viral.” Mr. Shah had claimed.

The impact of social media on politics cannot be overstated. It has been proved time and time again, from the election of Barack Obama to Narendra Modi and Donald Trump, social media has played an important role in electoral politics.

Its impact on society has been tangible -whether it be commerce, jobs, family, community or religion. But it has also led to the manipulation of society.

Social media's most debilitating produce is a rise of ‘slacktivism’ where social sharing has limited people only into sharing their opinions and concern through social media without actual and active engagement with the issues.

But what about Church and Christian Mission? Are we able to use Social Media to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ? Are we able to use Social Media to not only communicate the Gospel but also Kingdom values? Are we

susceptible to a kind of Christian ‘slacktivism’ where we have replaced Kingdom living with proper looking and sounding posts on social media?

There are Churches and Christian missions that are using social media effectively as much as there are others who are resisting it. But we ignore it at our own peril. The Generation Z, now so named, breathes social media for its spiritual, emotional, mental and physical needs. They seek a community of faith that can ride the digital wave with them; a community that is participative and open. Social Media, they are sure, opens the door to the world that is online and is searching for the answers to the questions that haunt all humankind.

The question is, can the Church engage on social media without appearing too smug or self-righteous, without appearing too preachy, without coming across as partisan or being caught up in the ‘outrage wave’? Can the Church open its digital doors wide so that people can come in freely and can the Church go all out so that people could be met at the point of their need? Can the Church find a way to be the digital community of faith that lives and reaches out online in love and compassion to serve and to glorify Christ? Tell us.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal



# INTERNET EVANGELISM: WHY AND HOW

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

Over 50% of the world is now online, reported a reputed magazine, *The Economist*, in 2019 itself. At least 726 million people came online in the years 2017 through 2019 with 'much of the rise coming from poorer places, notably Africa and India' (the same report said). Mobile data usage per smartphone was the highest in India among all the countries of the World (according to an Ericsson report of 2019). From these numbers come a missionary call!

## **THE INTERNET MINSITRY CALL FROM GOD'S PAINFUL QUESTION**

Why do I say that? Because I have read the last verse of book of Jonah which goes this way: "And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand

people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" (Jonah 4:11 NIV). Those are the words of the Father God. The huge numbers of people in the city of Nineveh who did not know left hand from right hand concerned God. Bible Scholars explain the phrase 'did not know left hand from right hand' this way: the people of Nineveh were morally confused, so much so, that they called what was wrong as right, and what was right they called wrong. It was akin to people of a contemporary city applauding for crimes such as rapes and showing utter disdain for acts of love such as dressing of a leper's wounds by a nurse. The numbing numbers of people that were present in Nineveh with horrendous moral confusion made God concerned about them. The huge numbers of people online any given time of the day and a vast majority among them

using data for porn consumption or fuelling illicit relationships outside marriage bonds using the convenience of certain dating apps should move us to being concerned as well. The God who was disappointed with Prophet Jonah who had turned a deaf year to the missionary call from the numbers of evil-embracing people, will he be also disappointed with us as well?

Why not we become imitators of our missionary-hearted God we read about in the book of Jonah? We not we get involved actively in Internet Evangelism and Online Disciple Building efforts?

### **THE INTERNET MINISTRY CALL FROM APOSTLE PAUL'S POINTED OBSERVATION**

Apostle Paul talks about people in the city of Rome who "always (were) thinking up new ways to do evil" (Rom. 1:30, CEV). The internet has provided the convenience and the platform to do just. During the pandemic, online classes were the order of the day for students (they still are as I write these words in January 2021). And when it came to online exams, students were quite inventive when it came to cheating. While the older generation would hide chits that would provide hints as they wrote the exams in their socks

and shirt sleeves, the Google Generation, creates WhatsApp/Telegram/Signal groups to unfairly seek help as an online exam is on. Why should the internet only fuel new ways of doing evil? Why can't it fuel new ways of sharing the Gospel and winning the lost?

### **THE INTERNET MINISTRY CALL FROM THE LOCATION THAT JESUS CHOSE TO MEET THE SAMARITAN WOMAN**

Jesus did not wait for the sinful Samaritan Woman to come to a synagogue. Instead, he went to a non-sinful place which she frequented – the city's well. And there he met her. And he began conversing with her. He did not wait for her to start the conversation (Read John 4 and find all about it). Pretty soon, this marriage-hopping woman became a soul-winning woman! Jesus' approach gives us a clue as to how we must evangelise: We must be in non-sinful places which the unsaved frequent! And the place which the unsaved frequent the most these days is definitely, the internet. So, we must be available on the internet to meet with them and share the Gospel!

Well, we have seen the "why" of internet evangelism so far. Now to



the "how". I believe that should be left to the individual believer's choice. Some are good at video production. Some are good at responding quickly to chats. Some are good at voice calls. We need to examine what activity we enjoy doing while we are online and use that very channel to build God's kingdom. You may not be able to carbon copy someone else way of doing internet evangelism. The key is to see your smartphone as a tool for evangelism – not a toy for self-gratification.

In our ministry, the Grabbing the Google Generation from Gehenna Mission, we have a team of internet volunteers. Vikas Yadav cuts my long Youtube messages and makes them short, adding titles at the start and at the end. He includes a background music as well. These shorter videos are viewed by more people. Lijo John receives audio messages from me via WhatsApp that bring Bible truth wrapped around contemporary events. He finds pictures from the internet that represent my words and strings together a video which in turn blesses many as it gets forwarded on

WhatsApp. Sunny Karumanchi using his high-tech camera that God has given him shoots 'short videos on hot topics' from the Bible with me behind his lens. Gipu James, Harsha, Ferry, John and Lamuel, help design posters for the events I preach God's Word in. This list is not exhaustive.

What about you? Will you get involved in internet evangelism after reading this? You must!



**Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj**  
*is the founder of Grabbing the Google Generation from Gehenna Mission, a ministry that reaches out to present day people via writings, pulpit preaching and counselling. Find out more at [www.dukev.org](http://www.dukev.org) or by WhatsApp to +91-8886040605. He is a fulltime itinerant preacher and writer-in-residence with this ministry*

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1 KJV

A photograph of a person in a dark coat holding a book, standing in a field at sunset. The text 'GREATEST MISSION OF ALL' is overlaid in white serif font.

# GREATEST MISSION OF ALL

Ms. Stuti Farmer

Since March 2020, when the Covid - 19 pandemic dragged this world to the threshold of lockdown, we all knew that from this point onwards our lives will be changed completely. Every human experienced a lifestyle shift due to this. From March to July, everyone struggled but as September kickstarted, everyone was able to thrive despite the challenges that clouded their daily routines. The most drastic shift experienced was by our minds. The State of our minds went through a rollercoaster ride. Many non-believers started posing questions about the existence of God and many started reading and reposting things related to hope.

This **State of mind** during lockdown is the very essence of **Mission through media**. Due to the massive amount of Covid cases, the people around us have started to ponder

upon life and death. They have started spending more time on social media than usual. They thirst for hope and love, not the one which this world gives, but the one which would last forever. Jeremiah 29:13 tells us that those who seek God with all their heart, find Him. State of mind is what makes Mission through media so important. I will be mentioning few points which you should keep in mind while involving yourself in Mission work through media;

- **Be a Doer yourself** - During the lockdown, before I took any leadership whether in my church or my fellowship, I spent time in personal prayer and in reading the Bible. I realized that before lockdown, how less of my time I used to devote to grounding myself in scriptures, how shallow was my longing for God's

fellowship, and how many times I pointed at the specs of sawdust in other people's eyes but paid no attention to the plank in my eye. Hence, before you involve yourself in a mission through media, build your life on Christ as Col 2:7 tells us, and strengthen your faith. Do not just be hearers, but doers of God's word.

- **Commissioned** - The second point for you to understand is that every believer has been called to live a life of mission for the gospel. It is good to set goals be it related to academics, career, fitness goals, etc. but your primary goal should be, a believer is Christ. When Apostle Paul was locked down in prison, he wrote letters not only to encourage the churches but also did his ministry among the prison guards and shared the gospel with them, who in turn shared it with their families. So, when we are locked down in our homes, we can use media as an opportunity to bring our friends closer to God.
- **Creative ways to use** - The creative ways for mission through media which I'm going to share with you have proven to be very useful and you can implement them in your fellowships:

**-Taking initiative in the lives of**

**your friends:** Jesus was the one who took initiative in talking to the Samaritan woman by asking her for water. Jesus took the initiative to talk to Peter by getting into his boat before the great catch. Before you invite your friends to online programs, build your relationship with them. At least once a week, drop a text asking them how are they doing? Offer to hear them out as they share their struggles.

**-Focus on Mobilization:** When you plan an online event with your fellowship, example a Church camp, a college Bible study, or a Gospel Retreat, rather than starting to plan about the worship, singing, dates, speaker, etc. first focus on mobilization. The more people attend and benefit from it, the better. Suppose, if you and your fellow leaders are organizing a gospel retreat as a pre-evangelistic effort to reach out to your friends who are non-believers and also from the other faith, list out your friends' names and get in touch with them a week or so beforehand. Let's say you are inviting 25 friends, start praying for them fervently so that the Lord may prepare their hearts. While telling them about the program, always make them feel like they are a part of your fellowship family. After this, send them the invitation and the link to the online platform you'll use (Zoom, Google meet, etc). Then

send them 2 reminders and alongside, keep a check on the mobilization of your fellow leaders. If a total of 30 friends attend your program, make sure to appreciate their time taken out and follow them up.

**- Bring out the geek in you:**

Enhancing your technical skills is useful for both ministry and career. Make attractive invitations for your online programs using Canva graphic design, Greetings island app, and Adobe photoshop on your laptop or smartphone. During fellowship, play online games, prepare short quizzes as icebreakers when you have new friends joined. Don't keep your online programs for a long duration. People tend to waste their time on Youtube, watch and forward appropriate Christian content. I would suggest Bible Project and Ligonier ministries on Youtube, sermons by Paul Washer, RC Sproul, The Gospel Coalition, and many others which your elders and mentors may suggest. Encourage others to invest their time in reading magazines such as AIM and Campus Link.

**4. Practical tips:** Online ministry with studies/work and is a challenge, but if you manage your time you can balance them well. Don't attend every online program just for the sake of attending, block your time for online fellowship and the best

way to do it is to finish your chores or works beforehand. Don't miss your daily quiet time. Make a new daily schedule for each day to define your priorities. Focus on Personal Evangelism through Whatsapp texts, pray with friends over conference calls.

Even your Instagram and Whatsapp status should be like a comforting voice amidst the chaos. There will be days when you may feel that everything within and around you is shaking, remember that God promises you a kingdom that cannot be shaken. The kingdom of God is near and you are commissioned to tell your friends the good news of Christ's love, to repent, and to believe. By His grace, use media to fulfill the greatest mission of all. Start from today, don't wait for tomorrow. Yes my friends, start from today!



**Ms. Stuti Farmer**

*is a college student, pursuing B.Sc 3rd year. She loves to write and fellowship with friends and family.*



# Mission in times of Twitter

Dr. Shantanu Dutta

Christians, like other religious communities, have for long wrestled with changes in modes of communication and what that means to the expression of faith. To begin with, Christians have felt that the sacredness of the word is tied to its form and later, Christians pondered whether the word of God and the mission of the church were perhaps compromised by changes to that form. We saw similar struggles in explorations of whether the word of God could be conveyed through film and television, in deliberations about the significance and challenges of Bible apps, and in conversations regarding whether the Christian church can be sustained in digital spaces and using various forms of social media. While some Christians are not comfortable with new media, others accept media change without looking at the way that their faith

claims and practices will alter in new media eco systems. They envision new media as the coming of increasingly customized amplifiers permitting an unchanging message to reach ever larger and distant audiences. However, in fact, different media make it feasible for many unique ways of thinking, relating and coexisting at the same time.

The arrival of writing, the shift from scroll to codex, the printing press, the spread of education, the advancement of electronic media (radio, telephone, film, and television), and the later upsurge of digital interaction (social media, websites, digital publishing) offer clear examples of the changes in forms of communication. Opposition to new media and its influence is long recognized.

Jeremiah (chapter 36) reports that the prophet embraced the new form of the scroll to send a word of the Lord to King Jehoiakim, and that the king reacts by throwing the scroll into the fire. In Scripture, this is the first documented act of religious defiance to new media and its power. Judaism was founded in the era of scroll, and the Torah as scroll has a ritual act not substituted by the codex, in which pages are attached between covers. The early church adopted the codex, the new media of its time. Later, printing made it feasible to put multiple translations of the Bible within the reach of ordinary people and forced the church to consider the implications of this change. We might explore this further by unpacking the intricate links between publishing, literacy, and the upswing of modern understanding of the individual. Print didn't merely put the scriptures in more people's reach. Learning to read gave them a new experience of scripture, enhancing the possibility that they now saw themselves as interpreters of the word. In the same way, in the age of televangelism some Christians welcomed the technology, and the genre of the television crusade, without realizing the ways in which they would be dragged into the shapes and extremes of celebrity culture.

Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and their ilk have made spontaneity a new social standard. This is definitely at odds with what God asks of us and wants for us and the manner in which He wants us to do life. We're not expected to be regulated by whim or the tyranny of the minute. We're meant to reason and abide in Him and live abundantly. Churches must therefore shield themselves against abusing technology or becoming slaves to it. Because technology provides instant information and response, churches have indeed the challenge of constantly maintaining a fine balance. Because our technical-driven culture needs productivity, expediency and enjoyment, churches are expected to provide that. The result can be a worship experience of seclusion and entertainment rather than one of veneration and active involvement.

On the other hand, digital advances have refurbished our thinking. Our tech fuelled age has produced changes in the way we relate with the information-rich world around us. These things can definitely help the church. But it demands an uninterrupted flow of appropriate, shareable, spiritual, and useful insights to disseminate to the church's network of information-hungry members. With such means

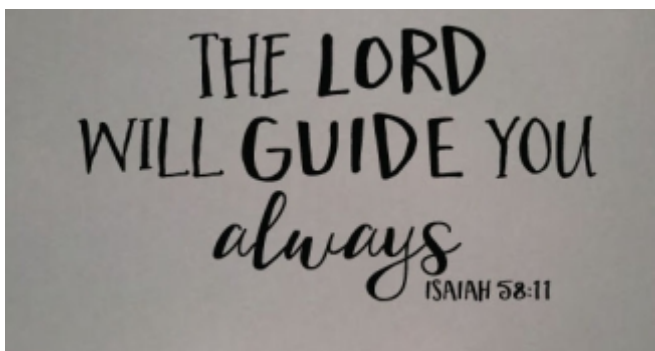
in the adept hands of today's digitally active members, we will uncover a treasure-trove of personal ministry activity, possibly forming the most strongly inspired delivery network for the gospel that the church has ever known. The Barna Group insightfully makes this point: *"Generation Z's lower cognitive regions, which stimulate impulse, are constantly being activated by the bombardment of neurological arousal provided by text messages, Facebook updates, and video games. At the same time, the so-called Google culture of learning—finding answers to any question within seconds—continues to change the way Generation Z youth concentrate, write, and reflect. . . . Their capacity for linear thinking has been replaced by a new mode of thinking, in which they need to take in and dish out information in a fast, disjointed, overlapping manner."* Certainly, this trend spreads beyond just Generation Z. Each generation—from the youngest to

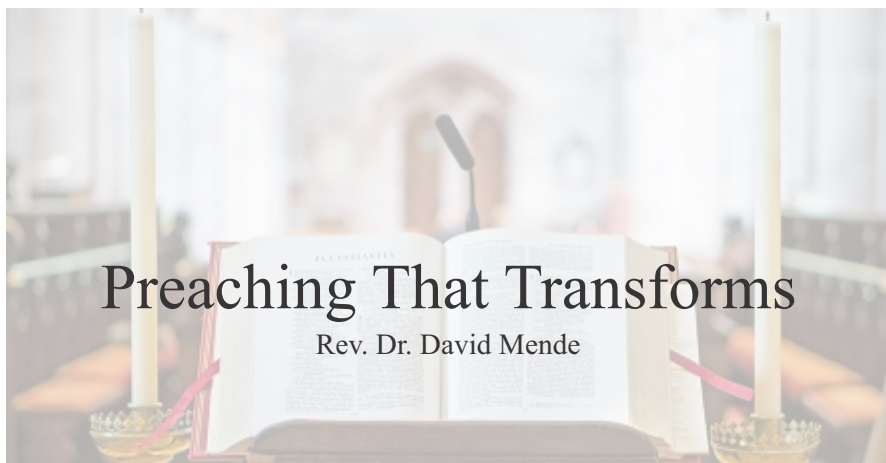
the oldest—that employs digital technology may, potentially, experience disruption – both positive and negative. But I believe that believers should never be afraid to use technology — it can help us reach the lost and expand the Kingdom — but we should never put our faith in it alone.



**Dr. Shantanu Dutta**

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# Preaching That Transforms

Rev. Dr. David Mende

## Introduction

Today there is a dearth of solid and biblical preaching. On one hand, many preachers, especially those who never attended a seminary, wrongly assume that preaching that is centered on the Biblical text makes a sermon boring and irrelevant to the audience. On the other hand, many preachers who have studied in a Bible college are rightly focused on getting their interpretation correct, but they often preach messages which are irrelevant to their audience. Without exegesis, a sermon becomes a mere moralistic speech; without relevant application, a sermon becomes a theological lecture. However, I believe that Spirit-anointed preaching that is biblical and relevant will motivate the listeners to carry out the exhortation of the preacher and ultimately result in their transformation.

When I say that our preaching should

be biblical, I mean that it should be Bible-centered. In other words, a preacher cannot use the biblical text merely as a springboard. Rather, the whole sermon should be based on the Bible and the interpretation should be faithful to the text. When I use the term relevant, I mean that a preacher should preach in such a way that the listeners will understand how the message specifically applies to them and carry out the exhortation.

## Preaching that is Biblical and Relevant

If we keep the Bible central in our preaching and also make it relevant by giving appropriate illustrations and application points, then our listeners would be motivated to heed our exhortation. Ramesh Richard rightly says that biblical preaching without application leads to frustration in the audience just as an application without the authority of the Bible leads to a distrust of the



preacher. But an application that is not relevant to the listeners can lead to a dangerous impression that the Bible is not relevant to them.

As a professor of Homiletics, I have observed that in many textbooks on preaching, the students are taught how to exegete scripture. However, there is not enough emphasis on studying the audience. Richard says that the preacher must promote the integration of biblical truth with life which can be done only by exegeting the culture of the listeners. He says that exegeting culture is as much a discipline as exegeting scripture. Scott A. Wenig too observes that transformational preaching is rooted in the Bible but contextualized to a specific audience. So, it is important to study the text as well as the audience if the preacher wants the listeners to carry out his or her exhortation.

Also, in order to be relevant, the preacher must give interesting illustrations with which the listeners can identify themselves. Many significant teachers of Homiletics assert that even storytelling can grab the attention of the listeners and motivate them to put the Word into practice. That was the method that Jesus himself used. Besides storytelling, preaching with imagination can make the sermon relevant to the audience. Warren W. Wiersbe suggests us to try to imagine how various people in the congregation will respond to the sermon. For instance, the preacher

should imagine what the passage has to say to the abused child, the struggling teenager, the laid-off breadwinner, the retired businessman, the lonely widower, the weary housewife, the new believer, the young bride, and groom.

Similarly, Bryan Chapell, the author of the popular book *Christ-Centered Preaching*, explains that biblical preaching moves from exegetical commentary and doctrinal exposition to life instruction. He says that such preaching exhorts as well as expounds because it recognizes that Scripture's ultimate goal is to conform God's people to Christlikeness. Chapell states that "Preaching without application may serve the mind, but preaching with application results in service to Christ." Therefore, the preacher's task is to make the text central by expounding the Scripture and at the same time to make the sermon relevant to the listeners by exhorting them to act upon the message.

## **Conclusion**

Therefore, I believe that Spirit-anointed preaching that is *biblical* and *relevant* will motivate the listeners to carry out the exhortation of the preacher and ultimately result in their transformation. This is not an easy job. Preachers have their task cut out. That is why it is often said that preaching is ninety percent perspiration and only ten percent inspiration. Yet, it is worth the effort!

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As far as I know, Muslims do not grab property that belongs to mosques. Some Hindu priests might assert their right to head their particular mutts, but I have yet to hear of any ordinary Hindu grabbing property that belongs to temples. But all over the land, there are instances of Christians grabbing property that belongs to churches—particularly mainline churches.

- Prakash grabbed a church building and started to conduct services, claiming that the building did not belong to the Church of North India, formed by the merger of several denominations, but to the members who were not interested in belonging to the CNI but to their old denomination. Later on, after attending some revival meetings and experiencing a conversion, Prakash wrote to the bishop of the CNI, asking him to

come and take charge of the property. He had never received charge of the building, but had simply grabbed it. So, all the man needed to do was to just vacate the premises in the same way without anyone from the denomination being present to take charge. The bishop did not respond because if he had, he would be giving legitimacy to the man and his claims—that he was handing over, when it was not his to hand over. On the grounds that the bishop had not come running to take charge, Prakash then continued to hold on to the property that belonged to the CNI.

- A retired church superintendent was given the charge of a small church and in lieu of his services, he was given a parsonage for him and his wife to live in. When the superintendent's wife broke her

leg, they needed help as both were old and ailing. Mrs S\_\_\_ who was attending the church along with her husband, offered to move in and look after the superintendent's wife. When his wife became well enough to look after herself, in keeping with the rules of the denomination, the superintendent thanked the couple for services rendered and said that he and his wife could manage on their own. At this point, Mrs and Mr S\_\_\_ refused to move out and started abusing the superintendent and his wife. The man S\_\_\_ had been a branch manager of a state bank, but had embezzled funds by granting loans in fictitious names. He was supposed to be absconding, but apparently had paid off investigating officers, who reported that he was untraceable. The couple needed a place to stay and getting into the parsonage had guaranteed them permanent residence. S\_\_\_ claimed that he had been ordained by a splinter group of denomination 'X' and that the church building (to which the parsonage was attached) belonged to denomination 'X'. S\_\_\_ invaded the sanctuary to hold services. When he was prevented by some court and police orders, he started to hold the services in the veranda of the church. By the way, an amazing

number of people have got ordination from this particular splinter group of denomination 'X' as a way of laying claim to old Church of E— properties on the pretext that the denomination 'X' is not the successor of the Church of E—.

- In many parts of North India, whole groups of Christians go overnight and occupy vacant lands belonging to a denomination. Sometimes to ensure that they have outside support, they include non-Christians in their number. They know that the denomination will not be able to get the police to act without a court order. They know that if the church takes the matter to court, it would be stuck in court for a very long time. For all intentions and purposes, they are now home safe as owners by possession.
- Matthew was an Evangelical leader and an elder in his church for many years. On retirement, he did not hand back his quarters to the organization he worked for. He left the quarters in the possession of his daughter and family, who had been staying with him. The daughter and family keep making promises about vacating, but never do. Whenever the Evangelical leader

returns to town, he makes noises about complying, but leaves without ensuring that the daughter has given vacant possession of the quarters to the Christian organisation that had employed her father.

Increasingly, I find that Christians—Evangelicals and Liberals, Pentecostals, Brethren and mainline church folks—all, are guilty of the same sins. The only difference is that some claim intimacy with Christ, while others are committed to the church or to philanthropy. Some affirm the Bible as the Word of God, others don't. In the end, there is no difference when it comes to conduct in matters pertaining to property and finances.

### **Credibility Gap**

I could give many more examples of misconduct. But these are sufficient to comprehend that we have a serious problem in the Christian community in India. There is a credibility gap between our faith and practice.

Such things always get reported and everyone gets to know what is happening among Christians. Once upon a time, people in India admired Christians for their integrity and honesty. When I was growing up, I heard a story about the late Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru saying that a

sensitive job should be given to a particular Christian because Christians are known for their integrity and could be trusted not to exploit their positions. Where have all those Christians gone?

A number of those who grab church properties, project themselves as doing it for the sake of their evangelical faith. The argument goes like this. “You know that the mainline denomination 'x' is a liberal church. I want to do evangelism and win people for Christ. They stand in my way and oppose my work.” The unspoken suggestion is that what the man is doing is okay because he is doing God's work.

### **We must ask ourselves two pertinent questions:**

- If our opponents are liberals, do we automatically gain the right to take property that belongs to them because we on the other hand are believers?
- Does doing evangelism and serving the Lord give us permission to use any means to fulfil the task?

The Bible does not tell us that it's okay for Christians to rob unbelievers. Rather, they are to be the object of our love and care that they may be drawn to Christ.

God's Word does not teach us that God's work can be done by any

means whatsoever, as long as the job gets done. It is not Christian to believe that the ends justify the means. That is the ethic of the world. We are called to be like Jesus instead.

### **Miracles Aren't Enough**

Our Lord said, "Not all people who sound religious are really godly. They may refer to me as 'Lord,' but they still won't enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The decisive issue is whether they obey my Father in heaven. On judgment day many will tell me, 'Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Go away; the things you did were unauthorized' " (Matt.7: 21-23, NLT).

That is a remarkable passage. If we ever thought that prophesying, casting out demons and performing miracles are signs of being the Lord's own, and the evidence of His approval of our ministry, this saying of our Lord denies us that privilege. If we are not doing the Lord's work in the way He wanted us to do it, then He does not accept our offering and says that whatever we did was without His authority or approval. If He won't accept our work, who are we doing it for?

It is obvious that we serve ourselves

when we don't act in holiness of motive and deed. We take the Lord's name in vain when we claim that we do these things in His name. In fact, it's worse than just taking His name uselessly. We are actively engaged in tarnishing His glory and spoiling His name. We bring Him dishonour.

### **A Question of Faith**

Can Christians in India bring the gospel to our people if we are showing them that our experience of the gospel of Christ has not made us holy, selfless, and god-fearing? Our lives are the only proof that the gospel of the saving, transforming power of Christ works.

Look at it any way. There is no justification for Christians ever grabbing the property of the church, whether it is a Bible-believing church or not, whether the hierarchy is honest or not, whether the Lord's work is being done or not. The only justification that we can find would be our own need or greed. It is not Christ we serve then. We serve ourselves.

Greed, we know, is a sin. But our own need can be a powerful motive that overrules our desire to do what pleases the Lord. Our sense of desperation can get the better of us. I admit that in the face of our need this is a big temptation. But this is where we must prove our faith. Can we trust God to take care of us?

I once faced a desperate situation of need. I was sorely tempted to fix my problem in the way such problems are fixed in the world today. I thought I would fix it first before continuing in the way of Christ. In the end, I had to recognise that it was a test of what I really believed. Did I really believe that my God could do all things and one way or the other He would rescue me from my plight?

For too many Christians, faith remains an affirmation, but without reality. It has become a matter of spouting the right jargon. One must merely talk the language of believers, but it doesn't really matter that when all the shouts of "Hallelujah!" are over, they do things that demonstrate that they don't expect God to take care of them and so, take recourse to methods that He wouldn't adopt.

I have always been impressed with the answer that the three young friends of Daniel gave Nebuchadnezzar. Faced with the threat of being burnt alive, their response was, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, Your Majesty can be sure that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up" (Dan. 3: 17-18, NLT).

That is the kind of faith we need. We should not serve God as beneficiaries with expectations. Our God is able to save us and protect us and bless us. But whether He blesses us by rescuing us from our fiery trails or He walks with us in them is entirely up to Him. We should determine that we will not serve Him for what we can get out of being His servants, but just because He commands our service, and He is worthy of all. The Christian's conduct is not to be determined by the consequences or potential rewards of the activity engaged in. Christians are to simply follow their Master Jesus. For our part, we must simply believe that our God is sovereign and has all power over the circumstances and problems we face in life. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom.8:28)

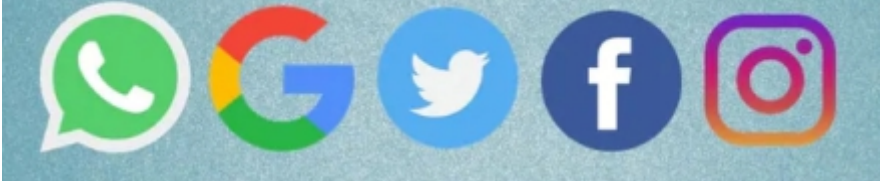


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# Mission through Social Media

Mr. Chacko Thomas



February 13 is set aside as "World Radio Day" by the United Nations.

**"Radio brings people together.** In an era of rapid media evolution, radio retains a special place in every community as an accessible source of vital news and information. ... As we strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and tackle the climate crisis, radio has a key role to play as a source of information and inspiration alike. On this World Radio Day, let us recognize the enduring power of radio to promote diversity and help build a more peaceful and inclusive world." [UN Secretary-General António Guterres]

**It is hard to overestimate the role of Radio** in the mission of the church in the last several decades. We, in

India, are familiar with the ministry of Trans World Radio (TWR) and Vishwa Vani (VV). You may have heard of HCJB based in Quito, Ecuador, and FEBA broadcasting from Seychelles. All these and hundreds more stations all over the world are carrying the Gospel of our Lord into all corners of the world.

I remember reading about Chinese Christians copying the Bible by hand as it was read out to them slowly over the radio in the 1950s, when Communism took over China and all the Bibles were confiscated from Christians. I also remember taking a large suitcase full of new Cassette tapes to a country where the Gospel was forbidden. These tapes were for Christians in that land to record radio programmes to be broadcasted from Seychelles. Radio was God's means



of ministering believers in closed countries of China, The Soviet Union, Vietnam, and the Muslim nations of North Africa and the Middle East. Today, the Church is growing in all these places.

Radio has also served us well in countries where there is freedom for the Gospel. In some countries, the gospel is heard 24 hours day. The first thing my wife does as she enters the kitchen is to turn her radio on, to Premier Christian radio. It is a great means for well-known Bible teachers to teach the word of God worldwide. Below are some up to date information on how God is using the radio and other modern communication tools to fill the earth with the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

**The great World Mission Handbook** for information and prayer, "Operation World", has been highlighting radio and other mass ministry tools, country by country, ever since its inception in 1978. I am blessed to have gone through each edition, ever since. Here is what it says under India in the 2010 edition (the latest edition). "Radio and TV are increasingly important media as millions more Indians tune in each year. Christian broadcasting has won an enormous following among Christians and non-Christians alike.

"Pray for: Programme producers – there is great need to generate quality programmes and to find talented, committed, native speakers. ... Broadcasters: The major agencies are – TWR, FEBA and FEBC – broadcast between them 770 hours per week in over one hundred languages on both shortwave and medium wave frequencies and increasingly on national and local radio....

"Internet evangelism is poised to become possibly the most significant media ministry in the country as India continues to accelerate in its technological revolution ... The number of active internet users was 1.4 million in 1999, 45 million in 2009. Engaging and effective Christian content and sites for both evangelism and discipleship, in many languages, are needed now and even more for the future."

In the late 70s, I learned that it cost Campus Crusade for Christ, two Million US Dollars to produce the now world famous "Jesus" movie. With more than a little concern about such spending, I mentioned it to Dale Rhoton, an American, and a Colleague of George Verwer. He responded quietly, "It is a worthwhile investment". That was

not the answer I expected. Notice what the Operation World Handbook (2010 edition) has to say about Jesus Film:

"The Jesus Film has had several billion individual viewings worldwide since 1979, through the work of more than 1500 Christian agencies. This has yielded over 200 million responses. Available in over 1000 languages, well over 99% of the world's population should be able to view the film in a language they know." Now, I thank God for the people who invested their money by faith for this project, a movie on the life of Jesus based on the Gospel of Luke. In India, Jesus film is available in 110 languages. Let us be praying for the hundreds of partners using this film to have success as they plant churches across India.

Here below are some exciting and up-to-date reports from ministry that is impacting our COVID 19 stricken world as well as the "Restricted Access Nations". It helps us to see what God's people are accomplishing in the Middle east and North Africa. The first is a ministry called SAT-7.

### **"2020 SETS RECORD FOR VIEWER RESPONSES TO CHRISTIAN PROGRAMS.**

While 2020 was an extraordinarily hard year for many, it was also a year in which God was on the move in extraordinary ways. Soaring audience engagement with SAT-7 channels shows that amid COVID-19, the hope of Christ shared through television touched more people than ever in the Middle East and North Africa.

"As we enter a new year, SAT-7 looks back on 2020 as a record year of interactions between our viewers and our audience support teams. After the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) began confronting the challenge of COVID-19 in March, a 30 percent climb in audience engagements for SAT-7 overall showed how many turned to Christian programs for support.

"The growth was especially marked for the channels that serve Turkish viewers and Arabic-speaking children, and for SAT-7 ACADEMY education programs. Audience engagement for SAT-7 KIDS climbed by 90 percent (to 47,300 contacts). Contacts for the Turkish channel, SAT-7 TÜRK, rose 120 percent (to 25,300), and audience engagement for SAT-7 ACADEMY soared by 328 percent (to 47,500). Between January and September 2020, SAT-7 received 310,000

audience engagements in total, almost a third more than during the same period in 2019.

As millions in the region faced months of COVID-19 lockdown and its severe effects on health and incomes, many depended on SAT-7 as a trusted source of spiritual support and emotional support, companionship, and even health advice.

From the beginning of the pandemic, and even when an explosion in Beirut caused mass destruction and trauma, SAT-7 studios in Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, Cyprus, and the United Kingdom resolved to maintain as much live programming as possible. Our belief is that it is essential to remain alongside our millions of viewers in perplexing and unfamiliar times. ..."

**I hope that young people**, with the support of old folks, would make use of modern communication methods for spreading the light in our world of darkness. Look at what I found from a Seventh day Adventist website, a challenge to consider:

**"Can you guess what happened in the last 60 seconds online?"**

1 million people logged onto Facebook. 3.8 million searches were made on Google.

4.5 million videos were viewed on YouTube. And 347,222 users were scrolling on Instagram.

That's a lot of activity. But I'm curious to know how many of those people read a blog or watched a video that told them more about Jesus?

With so much online activity, our church needs to employ digital evangelism methods.

Digital Evangelism is strategically using internet, mobile, and social media platforms to meet the needs of others and share the Gospel with the online world. Making use of digital means to further the Gospel work means that more church members can be missionaries, Adventist presence online will be stronger, and more people will know of the saving love of Jesus.

There are approximately 7 billion people in the world.

4 billion use the internet.

And 3 billion are on social media.

Digital Evangelism helps us spread the Gospel into all the world at a rate we never could've imagined before. Moreover, it connects us to the younger generation."

In 1957, the great Evangelist Billy Graham discovered that while he preached to 2 million people face to face in 16 weeks, Madison Square Garden, his Saturday meetings televised across USA brought the Gospel into 6.5 Million households. It was equivalent to 52 weeks of full Madison Square Garden crowds. He has been on the forefront of preaching the Gospel on radio, television and films as well as printed media.

**The humble Mobile phone** is also employed in God's business during these days of pandemic. A team serving among the Turkish people in London, mostly communicating on WhatsApp, where people calling to know about Life and Death, have been able to baptise several. During this Pandemic Year, 2020, I have taken more meetings (on Zoom) than I did the year before. God has given us these technologies for advancing his purpose.

Below is the story of Correspondence Course School in Turkey which is enhanced by the use of internet. You might also be encouraged to pray for the church in Turkey. "The Bible Correspondence Course (BCC) began in 1962 with the purpose of providing not only Turkish Bibles but also to provide study materials for those who

wished to learn more about Christ. Except for the Bible Society, the BCC is the longest running evangelical ministry in Turkey.

The BCC began as a small and covert operation. However, the 1980s brought a new level of openness. Local magazines and newspapers began to accept small BCC announcements. The advertisements were based around a simple question, "Have you ever read the Incil (New Testament)?" Explosive growth started soon after. In 1991, church planting teams and tiny local fellowships were brought on board for follow-up and course grading, so that the BCC became the key tool in church planting around the country. In 2005, we started advertising on the internet. Our websites have resulted in highest number of new students since the beginning of the BCC.

50 years ago, no one could have imagined that the BCC would become an important part of the planning and development of the local churches in Turkey, but that is exactly what God has done. Several years ago, a survey estimated that 55% of all Muslim background believers in Turkey charted their spiritual pilgrimage through the BCC. The Lord has blessed the BCC and it has grown from its small group

of foreigners into a dynamic locally led team. And in 2015, we moved into a new office building that both increased our capacity and enhanced our security. The Lord has put this ministry on the hearts of people around the world and the BCC continues to grow and have a major impact in Turkey.

The media team's most recent project was a big push to continue to encourage seekers to Read, Watch, or Listen to scripture on [Kutsalkitap.org](http://Kutsalkitap.org).

Sometimes, it is helpful to remind people of the multiple resources available on this platform. So, we created a short video that shows what resources are possible to use on our site and we put it on YouTube. In just 2 weeks, it has been viewed 34,194 times!

A Turkish person wrote:

"Thank you very much for sending me a Bible. On the day that the Bible arrived, I was with my friends. They also liked it very much; both its printing and its details. They are also researching life's issues. They asked me to request 2-3 more Bibles from you, so that they too can read and research and benefit from it. Is it possible to send a few more? If not, thank you for the Bible I received. Thank you again."

**A change of mind is needed:** My church sent me out with much prayer and blessings (not finance) to serve God in North India. But soon, they were disappointed. They heard I was spending eight hours a day distributing thousands of tracts and selling hundreds of "Gospel Packets" with OM teams. "This is not ministry," my father was told. He even tried to get me into proper "ministry". Thankfully, the church never stopped praying for me. In the 1970s, we (about 300 plus young people) were distributing 12-14 million pieces of Gospel literature every year.

When radio became available, some Christians began to use it for preaching the Gospel. Soon objections were raised for using the "airwaves", because it was "the domain of the prince of the power of the air", the devil. Thank God that not all Christians thought like that. Rather, they invested in this blessed but very costly way of communicating the Gospel. Today, the great Gospel of our God fills the air all-across the globe.

**A Story from In Kabul, Afghanistan:** A fourteen-year-old boy, Zia Nodrat, enrolled in the Noor Institute for the Blind. He already knew the whole of Qur'an by heart. He completed the six primary grades

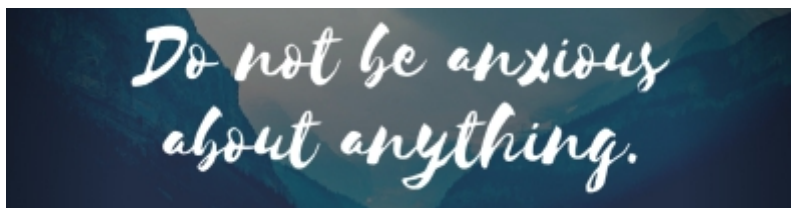
of the institute in three years. His prized possession was a transistor radio. He began to listen to radio broadcasts like the "Voice of the Gospel" coming from Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. Finally, he shared with a few Christians that he desired to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. They told him that he would be killed for this. He answered, "I am willing to die for the Messiah, since He has already died on the cross for me." He was among the first few known believers in Afghanistan and went on to become the spiritual leader of the few Afghan Christians. To make a long story short, he mastered English, German, and went on to translate the New Testament from Iranian Persian to his own Afghan Dari dialect and much more. Well, he did not go unnoticed by the enemies of the Gospel. He had received many death threats. After many years of fearless witness for the Lord in Afghanistan and Pakistan, he paid the ultimate price. In his mid-thirties, he was kidnapped. There was no news of him for decades. It is believed that he was tortured and brutally killed, according to news

that are floating around, apparently from some who saw his killing. He left behind his wife and two children. Today, the Gospel is heard all over Afghanistan on the radio and there are also a few churches around the country. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. May the radio waves, be the beginning of a new wave of churches planted in the soil of Afghanistan.



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# Reflection on Farmers and Rural Mission?

Rev. Dr. J.N. Manokaran

There is a small region in the South of India, where Jasmine flowers are cultivated in abundance. The fragrance of the flower is preferred by perfumers. In France, there are perfume manufacturing companies who started importing jasmine flowers as essence and natural oils for their products. The flowers were harvested, transported about 100 km and airlifted to France. After few months, the French companies complained to producers about crushed flowers reaching them. Then, they totally stopped the import. The reason was that the road between their fields and the airport was riddled with potholes, and during the process of transport, the tender flowers got damaged.

The farmers were worried at the loss of market and income. The Central government officials who should promote export did not bother, as it happened somewhere in remote

corner of South India. The local politicians did not take up the issue as the beneficiaries were of different 'caste;' why should they make them rich. Then, the farmers resigned to their 'fate'. Meanwhile, a poor country in Africa created infrastructure like roads and airport and captured the market.

## **Bible and Farming**

God created the Garden of Eden; hence, he is the first farmer. God also placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and commanded them to till the land and have dominion over it. (Genesis 1:28) God also gave all plants, trees, fruits and seeds as food for human beings. (Genesis 1:29) After the Fall, Lord commanded that Adam will have to work in the land, with his sweat he had to eat his food (Genesis 3:17-19). God is the owner of earth, humans are just care takers or

stewards of the earth. Hence, farming is stewardship of God's resources. Farmers should use the land for productivity; preserve it and do sustainable farming for the sake of future generations.

After global flood, Lord promised that there would be farming as long as the earth exists. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22) Lord has promised to bless our land. (Deuteronomy 28:8) In the Parable of Rich Fool, Lord Jesus taught that hoarding is futile, sharing with poor is essence of stewardship. (Luke 12:13-21)

Farmers ought to be people of faith. Those who wait for perfect weather may never plant or harvest. (Ecclesiastes 11:4) Those who are lazy in right season, will not plough or plant. (Proverbs 20:4) Planning and hard work brings rich dividend for a farmer. (Proverbs 21:5)

### **Status of Agriculture in India**

Though India is bestowed with varied climate conditions and 46 varieties of soils to grow nearly 250 different crops. Though India is the second largest producer of food grains every year; yet we are ranking 103rd out of 119 countries in global hunger index. The logistics, storage, infrastructure and effective distribution are real issues. As per

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 40% of food grains are wasted in India, while Food Corporation of India puts it at 15%. With such amount of grain losses, 1/3rd population in India could be fed.

### **Minimum Support Price**

Jasmine does not have 'minimum support price' (MSP) fixed by the government. Vegetables, fruits, flowers, pulses and grains are agricultural and horticultural products. Except for wheat and paddy and in some states 'sugar cane', there is no MSP for any of the farm products. MSP is a guaranteed price at which farmers' produce would be purchased by the Government. The idea of MSP was to encourage the farmers to produce wheat and rice, so that India can become self-reliant in terms of food. The farmers did a remarkable job that they produced not only for the needs of the nation, also surplus that would be good enough for few years in case of famine.

In Western countries also, such price protection for farmers was given by the Government.

### **Misplaced Priorities**

When there was focus on wheat and paddy, other crops were neglected. When there was huge wastage of fruits, vegetables, flowers that are



quickly perishable, government did not act. Infrastructure like Food Corporation of India was not developed to store the perishable products in cold storages. Farmers could not store and sell when there was demand. Infrastructure development would need heavy investment including providing electricity supply and effective transport system.

### **Divided Farmers**

Farmers are divided in India according to what they produce, caste, district, language, state and region. When farmers from Tamil Nadu went on strike in Delhi, there was no support from farmers from other States. Many farmers committed suicide due to unpayable loans from private lenders in Maharashtra, there was no sympathy or help from farmers of other states.

### **Marx failed to foresee**

Karl Marx theory could not foresee the present situation. In his times, he was able to see only two classes of people: Rich and poor. The poor have to be in solidarity to collectively bargain their rights and share in the wealth. The rich controlled with Money power (real estate, machinery, capital) and the poor had only Muscle power or Manual power.

Gradually, rose the middle people –

who used the mind and were bridge between Money power and Muscle power. This middle class will not show solidarity with the working class but aspire and ape the Money Power Class. These middle people got Information Technology and operated through invisible tools. While rich had to operate with visible assets, poor had to work with visible tools. This IT middle class used Apps (invisible tools) that could maneuver the economy. Yes, Karl Marx could not foresee this eventuality. Hence, the concepts of class struggle and class solidarity became redundant.

### **Agricultural Reforms in earlier times**

There were agricultural reforms in earlier times also. Those who were tilling the land could become owners of the land in certain States of India. However, it was not fully and wholeheartedly implemented. Free electricity for farming, tax exemption and Minimum Support Price were some of them.

### **Co-operative Society movement**

Government also initiated rural co-operative societies that helped farmers and other rural people to come together and initiate new enterprises. Sadly, only Amul (Milk producers' co-operative society) became successful in Anand, Gujarat. Many co-operative

societies became corrupt and were quietly buried.

### **Christian contribution to Agriculture**

Amrita Mondal lists some of the Christian contribution to Agriculture in India: William Carey founded Agriculture Society of India in 1820. William Carey in 1824 introduced cash crops seeds from America and Mauritius: cotton, sugarcane, tobacco, coffee and cereals. In 1826 William Carey renamed the society as Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India. The first vegetable exhibition and competition was held in which Indians were rewarded for the first time. In 1831, maize seeds were brought from America. Until then, it was little cultivated. Today, it is the third most grown grain, after rice and wheat. Arrowroot from the West Indies was also brought and cultivated. In 1832, ginger from Jamaica and potato from England were brought. In 1835, peas and cauliflower were introduced in India. In fact, the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India became the model for Royal Agricultural Society of England that was founded in 1838. In 1841, 32 varieties of wheat were brought from Europe and Egypt and introduced in India. Cocoa plants were introduced in India from West Indies in 1843. Bougainvillea came to India from South Africa in 1858. From 1862, many ornamental plants from

tropical and subtropical countries were brought and are now popular as garden plants in India; best examples: chrysanthemum, dahlia, carnation...etc. In 1962: Carey Institute of Horticulture was set up in the Society to conduct a 1 (one) year certificate course in horticulture, affiliated to Calcutta University. Birla Laboratory set up a society for R&D in horticulture and floriculture.

There were some organizations and institutions, Bethel Agricultural Fellowship, model farm developed by Dr. Vijayam, Hyderabad and Allahabad Agricultural Institute (which later became Sam Higginbottom Science and Technological Institute) ...etc, are some of the initiatives. There were some grassroot level initiatives also. Afro-American scientist George Washington Craver was able to bring out 300 products out of peanuts, as he combined Biblical worldview and scientific discovery.

### **Christians in Agriculture sector Today**

Among the Christians from Tribal background, there are landowners. Christians from other countries are not landowners, but land-labourers. Few Christians from other caste groups own land in some pockets in South India. How will this affect them? What should the church do?

**Some questions to discuss:**

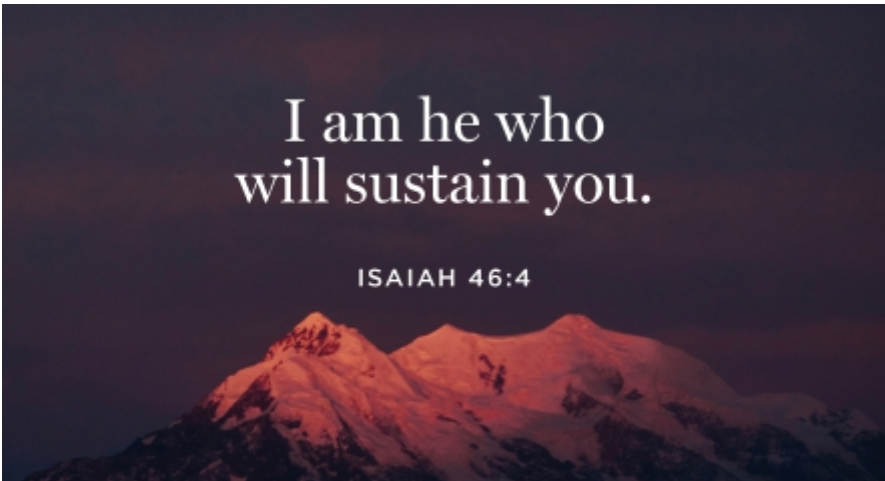
- Can rural churches become store houses of grains?
- Can rural churches become a chain of storehouse, market and relief work?
- Can there be godowns/store houses and cold storage built and managed by Christians/ Christian institutions? Taking the model of Joseph in the Bible?
- Can there be any movements similar to co-operative movement to uplift poor?
- Christians could be engaged in farming. Even kitchen gardens are good for those who have space in their homes. Terrace farming is also another option.
- Very few Christians are landowners. Most of Christian landowners are from tribal communities. Many are agricultural labourers in rural areas. Is it possible to form Farmers Interest Groups among the landowners?

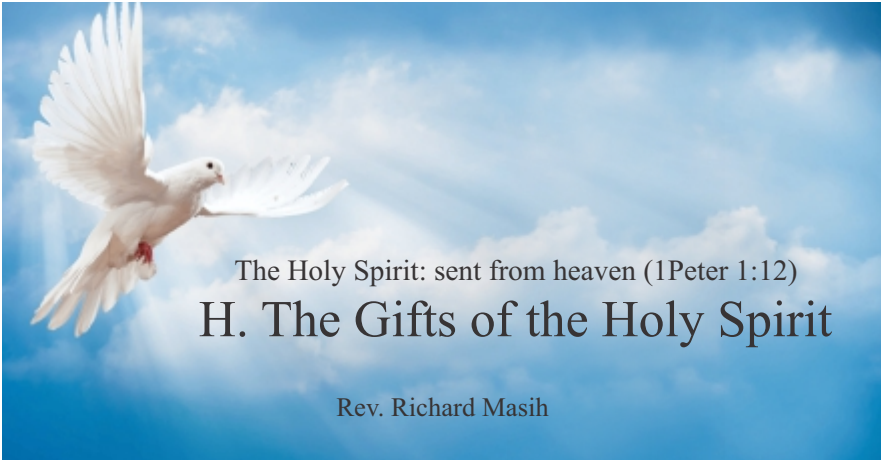
- Christian institutions could create modern farms in various campuses throughout the country.
- Christian business people could pioneer food processing industries in rural areas.

#jnmanokaran  
#reflection  
#ruralmission  
#agriculture



**Rev. Dr. J. N. Manokaran**  
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The Holy Spirit: sent from heaven (1Peter 1:12)

## H. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Rev. Richard Masih

The Holy Spirit himself is a gift to the church by the Lord of the church. Our Lord said that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in his name. "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you" (John 14:26). God promised in Joel 2:28,29 that he would pour out his Holy Spirit on all humanity, "I will pour out my Spirit on all humanity; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will have dreams, and your young men will see visions. I will even pour out my Spirit on the male and female slaves in those days." That is why the Holy Spirit is also called the promised Holy Spirit. Our Lord commanded his apostles not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak about" (Acts 1:4).

Peter affirmed this in his preaching on the Day of Pentecost, "Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, "Fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and pay attention to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it's only nine in the morning. On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all people; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. I will even pour out my Spirit on my servants in those days, both men and women and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:14-18).

The Holy Spirit himself, in turn, gives his gifts to church. His gifts are listed in three places in the Scripture.

One, Romans 12:6-8, "According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness." The gifts listed here are - prophecy, service, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading and showing mercy.

Two, then we have the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:4-10, "Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. And there are different activities, but the same God works all of them in each person. A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good: to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another, the performing of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another, distinguishing between spirits, to another, different kinds of tongues, to another, interpretation of tongues." There are nine gifts given here.

Three, lastly, his gifts are listed in 1 Peter 4:10, "Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as

one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen." There are two gifts listed here - 1. Speaking; 2. Serving. The recipients of the gifts should function as good stewards in all faithfulness knowing that one day, they have to give an account to God of their use or misuse of the gifts. If the gift is the gift of speaking, they should ensure that they are speaking God's word, not their whims and fancy. If the gift is the gift of serving, then they should do so in the strength of God. So, whether speaking or serving, they should wait on God for his strength and guidance. Without God they can't do anything of real, lasting significance (Cf. 'You can do nothing without me'- John 15:5).

Our Lord himself has given five gifts to the church, "And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11,12). Notice, the purpose of these gifts. It's to equip the saints for the work of ministry. The ministry is done by the saints. They aren't just 'seat-warmers'. They aren't just passive listeners. No, they are the ones who play active role in the church. The church is "built on the foundation of

the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20). Their writings were included in the Scripture. Today, we may have the gift of prophecy, but we do not have the Office of a prophet. Similarly, today we do not have prophets in the same sense as we have in the Scripture. There are no more apostles today either. We have instead missionaries today. There are those who are going around posing to be apostles and prophets. But they are not what they claim to be. Their writings cannot be included in the Scripture. I may be wrong. But this is my understanding.

Are there the only gifts of the Holy Spirit which are described in the Bible? What about the gifts of singing, music, painting, writing, drama and hospitality, etc.? It seems to me that whatever gifts a born-again person exhibits are given by the Holy Spirit. Why are the gifts given? 1. They are given to serve others. "Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God" (1Peter 4:10); 2. They are given to glorify God. "If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen" (1Peter 4:11); 3. They

are given to build the body of Christ, the church. "A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good" (1Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:12).

Each believer is given one or the other gifts(s) of the Holy Spirit. None can say that he or she isn't given any gift. "A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person" (1Corinthians 12:7). Everyone isn't given the same gift. Our gifts differ. Cf. 'To one...to another.' 1Corinthians 12:8-10 says, "...to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another, the performing of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another, distinguishing between spirits, to another, different kinds of tongues, to another, interpretation of tongues." These gifts are given as determined by the Holy Spirit. "One and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each person as he wills" (1Corinthians 12:7). We can't determine or demand which gift(s) we want. But, of course, if the situation demands a particular gift which neither we nor anyone else in the church has it, it seems to me that we can certainly pray to the Holy Spirit and ask for it.

When are these gifts given? It seems

to me that they are given at the time of our New Birth. But they remain to be recognized by us and others in the church, and need to be kindled or rekindled by us. Paul says in 2Timothy 1:6, "Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands." Are gifts given by the laying of hands? Possibly. We have one instance here in 2Timothy, and another in Acts 19:6, "And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy." The Pastors and the Elders lay their hands on the newly baptized people and pray for them." Can these gifts be taken away? May be not from God's side. For the word of God says, "God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). But from our side, we might lose them through our careless and sinful living, or not making use of them. Cf., the one who hid the talent in the ground. He was duly punished, and even what he had was taken away (Matthew 25:24-30). Brother Bakht Singh gives an interesting account in his testimony. When he discovered that people were coming to him only for healing, and not for salvation, he prayed to God to take away from him the gift of healing. It was taken away.

We must beware of commercializing

our gift(s). Ministry should not be degraded into money making opportunity. We must not use our gift(s) for our name, fame or fortune. We must neither be conceited of our gift(s) nor covet others' gift(s). The best way to know our gift(s) is to exercise all of them. One of them will stand out. We will feel at home in it. Others in the fellowship would recognize it. We must work at it and sharpen it. Ecclesiastes 10:10 tells us, "If the ax is dull, and one does not sharpen its edge, then one must exert more strength." Let's keep sharpening our gift(s) by improving upon it.



**Rev. Richard Masih**

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# Ministry Through Social Media

Mr. George Philip

The medium that we use for communication has been a constantly evolving one. When Jesus walked the earth, He spoke to multitudes, physically gathering them to Himself. With the evolution of technology, “speaking to multitudes” has also evolved. With the dawn of the internet, we have been able to speak to multitudes at almost no cost. This brings us to the realisation on how powerful media is. If we stop and think about it for a second, we can literally have the power to reach crores of people with minimum efforts.

Knowing the power that Media holds, TWR-India has been harnessing this power and we have been able to reach out to crores of people over the last 43 years of our existence. Though we started off with radio broadcasts, we moved on with the change in technology. We

are currently present on many media platforms like Television, YouTube, Digital Media Players, Smartphone App, Online Radio, just to name a few.

What is the message we are communicating through these different media platforms? We have content for almost anyone who comes our way. Though we have specific programs for men, women, children, young people, one of the most treasured content has been our systematic Bible study program, which helps us study the entire Bible. Our content is available in close to 150 Indian languages from across the nation.

Crosswave is our youth ministry targeted towards Christian church-going, English-speaking youngsters in the age group of 16-28. Questions which are not addressed by the



Church are addressed by experts in the subject.

Apart from the website and social media, the digital space has a lot of potential for innovation and a lot of avenues that can be explored. Podcasts, dedicated Christian video streaming services, large scale integration of the global ministry resource pool to help the people minister to those around them are just a few ways the internet can be used to further the cause.

It is said the tools that we have are only as good as our ability to use them. Digital media is a highly versatile tool that can and will prove

to be a major asset in the long run. We are already seeing the impact that it has had, thanks to the sheer number of users. With the ongoing advances in technology, the World Wide Web is only going to become wider and faster. It is our responsibility to use this tool to its full possible potential for the glory of God and reach as many people as we can.

At TWR India we are constantly exploring new opportunities to disseminate the Word of God, via the digital space.

**Mr. George Philip**  
*CEO, Trans World Radio India*

## Vacancy for the post of Accountant

**THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF INDIA** is on the look out for a qualified person committed to Bible Cause for the post of Accountant for our North West India Auxiliary, for immediate appointment. The applicant should be a graduate in Commerce preferably in the age group of 25 – 35 years with experience in computer accounting, ability to prepare independently annual financial statements, income and expenditure account, balance sheet, coordinating annual budget/ audit, knowledge of GST Rules and compliances etc. Sufficient experience in the Accounts Department of reputed Institution/ Organization/ Publishing Co. will be an added advantage. Pay Scale : Rs.5460-360-9060-400-15060-440-19460 plus other allowance – DA – 82% of basic, HRA – Rs.6,400/-, CCA – Rs.1,500/-, Medical Allowance - Rs.1,700/-, Conveyance Allowance - Rs.2,300/- and Children Allowance - Rs.1,500/- per child for children upto the age of 21 years who are unmarried/unemployed.

Age/ Salary will be relaxed in deserving cases depending on qualification and experience.

Those who are presently employed should produce a No-Objection Certificate from the concerned Head of the Organization. The selected candidate needs to undergo a thorough medical examination in a hospital recommended by the BSI at their own cost, particularly to see if the appointee suffers from any pre-existent illness and whether he/ she is fit to take up the position offered.

Applications on plain paper with detailed resume including age, education, training, experience, salary now drawing and expected, contact details, Church background etc., along with copies of certificates/ testimonials, two reference letters of which one should be from the Church Authority and a passport size photograph should be mailed to the Auxiliary Secretary, The Bible Society of India, North West India Auxiliary, 10 Parliament Street, New Delhi – 110 001 to reach him on or before 8th February 2021.

# BARRING WOMEN

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy



On Monday, January 11, Pope Francis issued the decree *Spiritus Domini* (The Spirit of the Lord) allowing women to serve as readers at liturgies, altar servers and distributors of communion.

The Vatican, however, stressed that the roles were "essentially distinct from the ordained ministry", and didn't mean women would one day be ordained priests. When the Spirit of God came the prophecy that both "sons and daughters shall prophesy" was fulfilled (Acts 2:17). Which is why, it doesn't make sense that the Pope called his decree Spirit of the Lord and then cut out the daughters of God from ministry in the Spirit.

Once upon a time I would have applauded the Pope for holding the fort in the face of eroding and collapsing conservative values.

Now, I cannot, because I am an ardent believer in the doctrine of "the priesthood of all believers."

I grew up in a home where achens (Malayalam word for priests, literally, "fathers") were not just welcome but were made much of. Pastors of the Syrian Christian community of Kerala always wear cassocks when they leave their homes, whether for pastoral visits, or going to the bazaar, or travelling by bus or train. To a four-year old, they were important men in distinctive dress, and lived a charmed life. Then and there I decided to become a pastor. Unlike other little boys I never once wanted to be a pilot or engine driver or anything else.

The Syrian Christian community's claim is that its members are descendants of the first converts

made by Saint Thomas. Both the Syrian Orthodox and the Marthoma Syrian Churches are emphatically opposed to women being ordained. The churches and the community lean rather heavily toward patriarchy.

### **Women's Ordination**

Given that background, I grew up with the idea that only men could be pastors. Back then, in India at least, there were no ordained women in any denomination.

The first time I heard of a woman being ordained as a pastor was when I was in college.

A couple from our church had gone as missionaries to Goa. The husband was the pastor and died while serving there. To keep the work going, the widow was then ordained. I viewed her ordination as just a practical solution to the problem when nobody else could carry on the work in Goa.

After college I went to Union Biblical Seminary (UBS, at that time in Yeotmal). Around that time the controversy about women's ordination exploded on the theological scene. At first theologians and denominations divided on the issue according to whether their theology was liberal or conservative. The conservatives

were regarded as stick-in-the-muds, while the others were perceived as the progressive ones, even called "Modernists".

I easily sided with all the theologians and churchmen who contended that women's ordination was nothing more than another attempt by liberal theologians to undermine the teachings of the Bible. Without examining the arguments from the other side, I just sided with the camp I belonged to.

### **Shaken**

The first challenge to my way of thinking came through a book review in *Time* (August 1972, p.45). It was entitled "Why Priests?" and was about a book by that title, by the Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng of the University of Tübingen, Germany, and notable (or, notorious among Roman Catholics) for his rejection of the doctrine of papal infallibility.

This book review was enough to shake my entire aim and purpose in life. Before reading it, I had never thought of questioning the concept of priesthood—and that too male priesthood.

The *Time* article started with four quotations from Küng's book, two of which were:

- One cannot maintain historically

that the bishops are in a direct and exclusive sense the successors of the apostles.

- Ordination is not a sacred investiture through which [the priest] receives a ... 'character' distinguishing him from the 'layman.'

Since the office of bishop was the highest one in the Anglican tradition in India, I had dreamt of holding it one day. Küng's first quote took from me the hope of becoming a bishop and the second said that I couldn't even think of being in a class apart as a priest.

After accepting Jesus as my Saviour, and exposure to the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of believers, I had begun to think of the pastoral role as preacher-teacher-pastoral caregiver. Since the Roman Catholic branch of Christianity is so steeped in hierarchy and priest craft, I was totally shocked that these opinions and questions were coming from an ordained minister of that church. Küng's views seemed more Protestant, than Catholic.

For weeks what Küng had written kept coming back to me. The thought came to me that if there is no legitimacy to ordination as practised by the Church, then fighting about women's ordination did not even make any sense. I concluded that the

question was not, "Why can't women be ordained?" but "Why ordination?" I felt that the fight for women to be ordained like men was completely wrong. Instead the question was, "Why is there a gap between clergy and laity?" According to the Bible, there is only one people of God (Greek, laos). Preachers and pastors are all in this "people of God", the "laity of God".

### **Women Preachers**

Having set aside the idea of ordination, I still had to come to terms with the idea of women preachers. Many conservative denominations do not countenance women preaching because of their "literal" reading of 1 Timothy 2: 11-12: "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet." Without reasoning it out, I resorted to seeing Paul's prohibition of women preachers as a purely temporary cultural position. Initially I just had a sort of gut feeling that there was something wrong with thinking that the Bible did not allow women to preach.

I recalled that in Hyderabad at a Youth For Christ event in 1965 one of the speakers was a Bengali woman named Winnie Bonner, and I thought nothing wrong with her preaching there. At the same event,

the winner of the Senior Youth Preachers' Contest was a Sinhalese girl. Subconsciously, I just thought it was all right for women and girls to be preachers at women's meetings and youth rallies.

When I finally started to work as a pastor in Lucknow, I had to think through these issues seriously. The late Agnes Loyall was a member of the church where I was pastor. At the all-India level she was the Executive Secretary for the Methodist Church's Women's Division. A few years after I came to the church, she excitedly informed me that a young woman from the neighbouring Hindustani church wanted to attend seminary and get a Bachelor of Divinity degree. Agnes asked me to counsel her.

Officially candidates could be sent only to the denominational theological college. I told both Agnes and Sunita that if Sunita went to the theologically liberal denominational college her commitment to Christ would be ridiculed and she would be taught not to accept the authority of God's Word in faith and practice. I emphasised that Sunita needed to attend a college where her commitment would be nurtured. As Agnes held me in high regard she accepted my advice.

And, so Sunita went to UBS. The following summer, she had to do her "summer practical work" assignment. Agnes and Sunita asked if I would oversee the assignment, which I accepted readily and delightedly. Sunita probably thought that her duties would be confined to some work among women, and teaching children and youth. Instead, I insisted that she had to also preach. After protesting a lot, in the end, she gave in because I forced her. To make her acceptable in the pulpit, I got her to wear a choir gown for preaching. (The Lord did say that we have to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves). No one complained. Much later there was some rumbling, but since the moment had passed, the dissenters could do nothing about it.

Though I personally made sure Sunita preached in church, I had not worked out how to justify women preaching in the light of 1 Timothy 2: 11-12.

### **Women at the Resurrection**

Meanwhile, Women's Lib was becoming more aggressive and conservatives in church and society were resisting their contentions about women deserving equal rights. I held the belief that there was no such thing as gender equality. I felt that the physical and psychological

differences between men and women could not be ignored.

About this time, from the evangelical side came the book *All We're Meant to Be* by Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty. Then there emerged the group Christians for Biblical Equality. With the many voices raised stridently against inequality, I felt it was time for me to examine the biblical data.

One Easter Sunday I had preached that while the male disciples deserted Jesus, the women disciples were not afraid to identify with Jesus. They stayed near the cross, and became the first to believe in the resurrected Lord. I did not preach that to make points about women in ministry. Rather, I was showing that the gospel writers were so captivated by the Resurrection of Jesus that they in honesty depicted themselves as deserters and unbelievers. The truth mattered more to them. Their description of themselves as cowards went against the human tendency to depict oneself as the hero in anecdotes. Their acknowledgement that women were more courageous and believing went against the grain socially. Their selfless testimony constituted psychological and sociological proof that the resurrection did happen. Even though the point of my

message was not about women, I could no longer ignore the fact that the gospel stories lifted women high.

### **Personal Study**

Later on, in my own studies, I noticed that though Paul prohibited women from teaching men, Priscilla, a travelling companion and fellow-labourer, had taught the man Apollos (Acts 18:26). I observed too that while the sacred historian Luke introduced Aquila and Priscilla, in that order (Acts 18:2), he later named Priscilla before Aquila (vv. 18, 26), indicating that at some point Priscilla took the lead in ministry, even in teaching Apollos.

Moreover, Paul himself accepted it as right that women prophesied (brought a message from God), provided they wore a head-covering (1 Cor. 11:5). Clearly that meant Paul accepted women preaching, and only prohibited it when cultural situations required it. It was not a universal rule. I felt confirmed in this conclusion after noting that when the Spirit of God comes both "sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17).

The usual excuse for cutting out women from the ordained ministry is to cite the fact that Jesus did not include any women among the Twelve Apostles. Neither were any

Gentiles included but that has not stopped anyone who is not a Jew from stepping forward to do ministry. The reason neither women nor Gentiles were included was that when Jesus began ministering He had to restrict Himself to fit Jewish culture. How could a young man of 30, starting out as a rabbi, have included women in his band of twelve? Later on, when the numbers of His followers grew, women did join Him and travelled around with Him (Lk. 8:2-3).

The Twelve were just the primary disciples. Yes, they were called "apostles" – one sent out. It was not a title, but a description of what they were tasked with. They were representatives of the Kingdom and the Lord. Hierarchy was not intrinsic to the word "apostle". The corresponding word of Latin origin is "missionary". Missionaries are not regarded as having any hierarchical position, but as the foot soldiers of the mission of Christ and there have been many women missionaries.

Though Jesus talked of building His Church (Matt. 16:18), He did not appoint the Twelve as priests and Peter as the High Priest. They were simply to be disciples (followers) and apostles (those who are sent).

Priests are needed if mediators are

needed between God and people. The apostolic affirmation is that there is only One Mediator between God and people – Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). The Lord Himself asserted that He was the only Way to the Father – that no one could reach the Father any other way (Jn. 14:6). Yes, there was and is absolutely no room for priests in the movement started by the Strange Man from Galilee.

When no one person is priest, then all are equally priests. All may approach God equally, personally and directly. The entire body of believers is a "Kingdom of priests" (Rev. 1:6), and therefore the affirmation of the "priesthood of all believers".

In the Old Testament era, women prophets served God. It is therefore inconceivable that in the New Testament order, where men and women are "in Christ" and have the Spirit of God, women would not have liberty to serve Christ and instead fall back to a worse position than their ancient sisters.

Indeed women in the New Testament period served Christ alongside men (Phil. 4:3). One of the apostles was the woman Junia (Rom. 16:7), and Nympha was an elder in whose house there was a church (Col. 4:15).

Women have continued to go as

pioneering missionaries to remote places and unreached tribes. Those denominations and churches that would deny women the right to minister on the home front have not hesitated to send out women as missionaries to distant and dangerous places. Isn't it strange that they would send women to the war front, but not allow them to work in the home office?



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

## **Opportunity for ministry: Evangelist and Pastor needed.**

Masihi Mandli (Christian Church) Dehradun, one of the oldest Pentecostal churches in North India is praying and looking for at least 2 experienced Ministers/Pastors aged between 25 to 40 years to work with its panel of ministers.

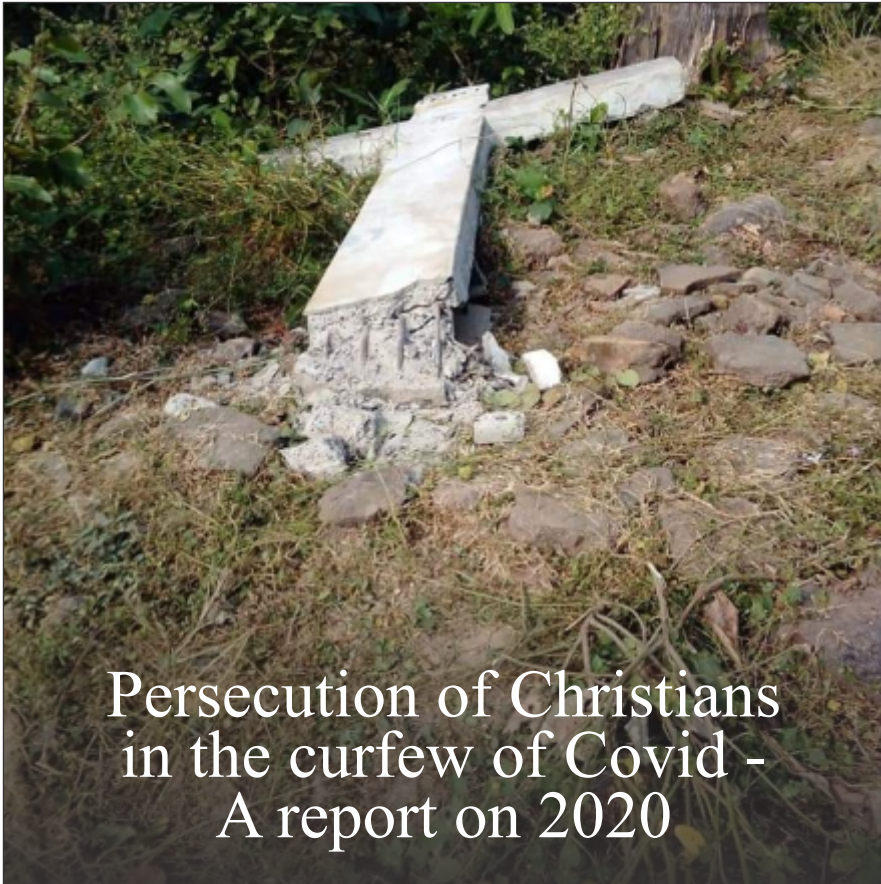
**Essential Qualifications:** a minimum BTh or B.D Degree (Theology) under ATA/Senate recognition and having guidance to serve God, through church.

**Desirable Qualifications:** A person who plays musical instrument and is a worship leader.

Persons with relevant qualifications can send their application and CV on the email given below. The shortlisted candidates will be intimated.

<[masihimandlidehradun1939@gmail.com](mailto:masihimandlidehradun1939@gmail.com)>





## Persecution of Christians in the curfew of Covid - A report on 2020

The Corona-19 virus pandemic impacted India as much as it did the world, leaving, till December end 2020, more than 10.5 million Indian hospitalised, and 151,000 dead.

The Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, in a national telecast announced a nation-wide total lockdown on March 24. With all industrial, business and tertiary economic activity at a standstill,

more than 400 million workers would be poverty stricken, as per estimates by the International Labour Organisation. Though the government has not released figures, the Chief Labour Commissioner's office, in June 2020, counted over 26 Lakh migrant workers stranded across the country, of which 10% were said to be in relief camps or shelter homes, while 43% were in situ at workplaces and 46% in other

clusters. This was said to be an extreme underestimation, going by the other assessments made by Central and State governments, including Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's estimate of 8 crore stranded migrants used to determine extra ration provisions in the Atmanirbhar package. Tens of thousands were still on the road home even when these estimates came in. The scenes of an infant snuggling up to a mother who had died on railway platforms, and others dying on the road as they walk hundreds of kilometres, shook the conscience of the citizens.

The national [federal] government and states governed by Mr Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, were accused of using the environment of fear of the virus and of police action, to curb freedom of expression, and protest. Several state governments and senior members of the ruling party were named for fomenting targeted hate that often led to violence against religious minorities.

While Muslims were the main targets, Christians, especially pastors in rural areas of several states across the country, were victims of violence, their congregational prayers disturbed, and places of worship attacked. Political

excitation, police impunity, and vigilante groups on their trail, marked the experience of many Christian communities in several parts of the country at the height of the COVID-19 spread.

The EFI Religious Liberty Commission and other Christian agencies including a national Helpline co-founded by the EFI five years ago, documented 327 cases, in which at least five people lost their lives, at least six Churches were burnt or demolished, and 26 incidents of social boycott were recorded. This is by no means an exhaustive list of incidents, many of which remain mostly unreported and unrecorded even in normal years because of the fear of victims of further atrocities if they stand up to their tormentors, and the victims in the rural settings, in particular, are hesitant or outright refuse to register cases of religious persecution because of fear.

The religious freedom situation has to be seen in the context of an unbridled push for a majoritarian political framework in the country with laws tweaked against minorities in various ways.

The most alarming development has been the expansion and scope of the

notorious Freedom of Religion Acts, which are popularly known as the anti-conversion laws, earlier enforced in 7 states, to many more states ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party. Once targeting only Christians, they are now armed also against Muslims in the guise of curbing 'Love Jihad'. This is an Islamophobic term coined some years ago to demonise marriages between Muslim men and non-Muslim women, particularly those belonging to the Hindu upper castes. The laws ostensibly punish forced or fraudulent religious conversions. But in practice, they are used to criminalise all conversions, especially in non-urban settings.

The laws also take away all agency from Hindu women, rejecting or controlling their free will, and leaving them at the mercy of the patriarchy, further strengthened by political patronage and encouragement. Rulings by High Courts that adult men and women have the freedom to choose their partners have had no impact.

On 31 October, Yogi Adityanath, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh announced that a law to curb 'Love Jihad' would be passed by his government. With no legislative discussion, it became law by an

ordinance passed by the state Governor, Mrs Anandiben Patel.

With the passing of the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, Uttar Pradesh has become the eighth state in India to enforce an anti-conversion law. Similar laws are in force in the states of Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. The states of Arunachal Pradesh and Rajasthan have passed anti-conversion laws that are not in force for various reasons, and Tamil Nadu has passed and repealed its anti-conversion law.

In December, Madhya Pradesh approved an anti-conversion bill like the Uttar Pradesh one. Madhya Pradesh already has an anti-conversion law. By end of 2020, BJP-ruled states, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Karnataka have designed to prevent "forcible conversions" through marriage. Punishment can be as long as ten years in prison.

Christian activists fear that the expanding footprint of the anti-conversion laws bring a step closer the BJP's manifesto promising a nation-wide law to check evangelisation by "missionaries", a

term designed to impute western conspiracy to Christianise Dalits, Tribals and others in rural areas, small towns and urban slums. This, together with the accusation of Islamic population explosion because of the high birth rate, feeds the orchestrated rhetoric that the Hindu population will become a minority which underpins electoral propaganda in India.

As a result of the anti-conversion laws, religious minorities can now be targeted by just about anyone, especially vigilante groups many of whom are complicit in the mob violence of earlier years in campaigns against beef and the slaughter of cows. Moreover, this law places the burden of proof on the person who has been accused of conversion.

This report of the Religious Liberty Commission of EFI illuminates the hate and targeted violence against the Christian community in 2020. It is again important to remember that the numbers of cases recorded by RLC or any other agency are only indicative, and the actual numbers may be much larger. The Christian community wherever it is in small numbers, remains fearful. Legal literacy is grossly inadequate, the police almost as a rule do not want to

register cases. Even if a case is registered by the police, the assailants seldom face prosecution in a court of law. On the other hand, the complainant runs the risk of retributive action.

The incidents in this document are first recorded by volunteers who pass on information to the RLC. The RLC verifies it with the victim or witnesses. Effort is made to contact the local police station in each instance to reconfirm the details of the incident.

Uttar Pradesh once again heads the list of regions where the Christian minority has been targeted the most. RLC registered 95 incidents against the Christian community in the state in 2020.

It is followed by Chhattisgarh with 55 incidents, most taking place in the tribal region of Bastar, now saturated by volunteers from Hindu right-wing organizations posted to "counter Christian influence. In fact, there is a well-planned political campaign by these groups to 'Hindutvaize' tribal society. In Chhattisgarh, as in contiguous tribal regions, these groups face almost no political challenge. The Church has been present in the state and in the region for the last 200 years.

The push of the Hindu Right wing in Jharkhand is ominously similar to that of Chhattisgarh and has resulted in violence and social boycott of the Christians. Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh registered 28 and 25 incidents, respectively.

In Madhya Pradesh, all the incidents took place from the months of March till December and no incidents were recorded in the first two months. Incidentally, it was in March that the BJP wrested power from the Congress in the state. Majority of the incidents in the state happened in the last four months of the year.

Tamil Nadu in south India had 23 incidents. The state had the second largest number of cases in 2019, registering 60 incidents of some sort of violent action against the Christian community. It is the fifth highest in 2020.

The months of March and October saw the highest number of incidents recorded in the country against Christians, with 39 and 37 incidents, respectively. May was the lowest with only 12 incidents. This was perhaps due to the lockdown in the entire country.

EFIRLC appeals to the Government of India and the respective State Governments of the States named in the report to ensure the rule of law and the security of religious minorities in India.

We especially appeal to the State Governments of Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh to deal stringently with the various right-wing organizations operating in these states whose primary agenda is to create an atmosphere of fear among the Christian community and other religious minorities.

For further information, please write to [mail@efirlc.org](mailto:mail@efirlc.org)

Released by:



**Rev. Vijayesh Lal**  
*National Director – EFIRLC*  
*General Secretary – EFI*



# To God be the glory

## A brief report on EFI in 2020

### **Introduction**

We praise God for EFI and its ministry to mobilize and empower evangelical churches, institutions and individuals to effectively witness the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed and thus transforming the nation.

Below we present to you snippets of how God has used EFI and its various wings in the year 2020 to reach out and to serve. Due to space constraints we are unable to highlight all that God helped EFI to do this year but we hope and pray that you are blessed and challenged as you read this. Your prayers and support are of utmost importance for the Evangelical movement in India.

### **Response to the Covid Pandemic**

2020 has been a year of disruption

and heartache. The world perhaps will never be the same because of the changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Being the central network of Evangelicals in India, EFI not only recognized the threat of the pandemic but also took steps so that Evangelicals could respond to the same effectively through various initiatives. We believe that God has called the Church to be super spreaders of hope and to be a community that radiates hope especially in these times when the world is reeling under the COVID-19 pandemic.

EFI responded to the challenge of COVID-19 through

- Mobilizing prayer,
- Mobilizing help, and
- Fostering community.

## Mobilizing Prayer



EFI along with various Christian bodies in India has been mobilizing prayer. Our first nationwide collaborative prayer effort was on 29th March 2020 as the Church in India was called for a corporate day of prayer and fasting. Thousands of Churches across India joined in the “United Christian Day of Prayer and Fasting for India and the Nations”. The National Council of Churches (NCCI) in India and the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) endorsed the event and joined in.

On Pentecost Sunday, 31st May 2020, the entire Church in India joined together in the “One Sound, One Hope” event, praying and interceding for our nation and the world. EFI was part of the Advisory

Forum and one of the bodies promoting this prayer event.

Since 2016, EFI has been calling for the National Day of Prayer on the Sunday closest to the Independence Day of India. This year the National Day of Prayer on 16th August 2020 was a joint effort by the NCCI and EFI with the CBCI endorsing it.

2020 – 2030 has been declared as the Decade of Prayer and Revival. It is a call given by EFI, EFICC and India Missions Association. Every month many prayer events are taking place under this campaign with the prayer of a revival across our land.

## Mobilizing Help

God has called His people not only to pray for our world during this COVID-19 pandemic but also to act in generous ways so that the poor, needy and marginalized would be cared for. Even though EFI is not a relief agency, yet the need was so huge that we had to pitch in alongside our relief arm, EFICOR (Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief).



Since the launch of our relief efforts, EFI has been able to help over 30000 individuals with dry ration kits and

direct cash transfers with which they were able to sustain themselves for close to a month. Our dry ration kit contained all necessary food items that a family of five needs to keep it going for a month. We reached out in over 16 states of India during this time to some of the poorest and needy families who were not on the radar of the government or other relief agencies.

During this pandemic, India saw a huge exodus of migrant workers from the cities. As employment was no more and money dried up, millions of migrants made their way back home on foot, since public transportation was no longer available. We reached out to migrant workers during this time and served them through the distribution of provisions for their journey.

We also provided hygiene kits consisting of sanitizers, masks and other necessary items at this time. Along with others, we also distributed this help to police departments, relief workers, and volunteers helping the government at this time.

### **Mobilizing help through the network**

We are so thankful to God that we have seen our member Churches, Organizations and Individuals respond to the needs of our fellow citizens in a tremendous manner during this pandemic. If one were to gather data from all our members

who are engaged in relief activity and in spreading hope, the figure would cross millions.

EFICOR, our relief arm, is a specialized agency for relief and rehabilitation and they reached out to over 3 Lakh beneficiaries through the distribution of relief kits, cash transfers, and awareness messages. Emmanuel Hospital Association, one of our member associations, is part of the Christian Coalition for health. Together they offered up to the government more than 1000 hospitals to meet the present challenge. The Evangelical Church of India is serving the nation through its 12 dioceses across India to help the poor and vulnerable. The North Bank Baptist Association has provided relief to people in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh and has catered to literally thousands of people in the area. There are many such examples in the constituency of EFI.

Spontaneous networks have come up during this time comprising of members and friends of EFI that have been helping migrants as they make their way home. One such network was reported by the national media as well. Just one initiative in Varanasi was able to cater to more than 70000 Migrants. Another network was busy helping migrants by putting them on buses and trains for their journey home, helping as much as 10000 a day. We praise God for all such initiatives and hope that



these would continue reaching out in love and compassion.

## Fostering Community



### *Webinars on Creative Church Online*

The lockdown restricted the local Church as people could not gather anymore and many Churches especially in rural and semi-urban areas were struggling on how to take their services online. In this circumstance, EFI teamed up with CV Global and offered insight, knowhow and help.

Special trainings were organized which helped hundreds of Churches especially in small towns and rural areas to go online using simple tools. We are grateful that we could come alongside and help Churches in reaching out during this critical time.

### **Digital National Leaders Conference**

A National Leaders Conference was



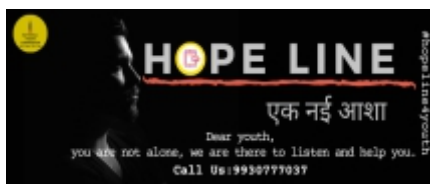
organized in early April 2020 and more than 600 leaders signed up for the same from all parts of the country. The theme was: “Being the Church during COVID-19”. National leaders like Dr. Ajai Lall, Bishop P K Samantroy, Pastor D Mohan, Canon Dr. Vinay Samuel, Rev. C B Samuel, Dr. Akheto Sema and Dr. Prabhu Singh addressed the participants among others.

Some of the topics that were addressed were: Making sense of God in this Pandemic, Mission and Witness during COVID-19, Leadership Challenges during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Digital Missions in the present context etc. There was also a panel discussion wherein questions were taken from the participants by the panel.

### **Helpline on Mental Health for Youth**

The pandemic also resulted in a major emotional health crisis as people did not know how to deal with the sickness or the lockdown.

A mental health helpline for young people was launched by the EFI



National Youth Commission in partnership with the YMCA in Mumbai. They received scores of calls each day as the lines were open to all and trained counsellors were able to help many navigate through their challenges. The campaigns can be accessed on our Facebook page.

Advisories and Awareness on COVID-19 through website and social media

EFI came up with the first advisory on COI+VID-19 on March 14th, 2020 and the latest advisory was concerning the re-opening of Churches after the lifting of the lockdown which is slowly taking place. You may read the advisory on the EFI website.

The EFI website also features an entire COVID-19 section where advisories, articles and other resources could be found that have helped many people thrive even during this challenging time.

Having briefly looked at the response to the pandemic, let us also look at what some of EFI's commissions, networks and departments are doing below.

### Theological Commission

Testing and painful times raise

pertinent and sometimes difficult questions and Covid-19 especially triggered a lot of them.



Theological reflection, conversation, articulation and response about how the Church can faithfully respond to this global challenge was a necessity and the EFI Theological Commission rose to the occasion, aided by some of the best minds in India.

The Commission conducted a series of five webinars on COVID and the Theological Response to it. Canon Dr. Vinay Samuel, Dr. Ken Gnanakan, Dr. Leela Manasseh, Dr. Takatemjen Ao and Rev. Dr. Finny Philip presented papers on the theme and invited questions as well.

The webinars were very well received and according to feedback

from Church leaders, have been a blessing. Now the commission is preparing for a second series and is engaging with young theologians in the process.

### **Webinars**

Since the mode of training was largely online, EFI has been conducting many webinars online. A few examples are:

- A series on Statutory Compliances that was held with wide participation from many. The webinars were helpful not only for Churches and organizations but for the nonprofit sector in general in the light of the new regulations.
- A special webinar on FCRA amendment act was held with over 500 people from all over India in attendance.
- A webinar on UN and the Church was held with international experts as resource persons.
- In addition to the above the Religious Liberty Commission, National Center for Urban Transformation and other initiatives of EFI have been holding many webinars for the benefit of the Church in India and the nation.

### **Religious Liberty Commission**

The RLC has been working to provide aid (practical and legal) and is engaged in advocacy efforts at all levels. Our yearly and half yearly reports are credible documents from India that have been quoted and used

by national and international groups. The RLC is engaging with various government voices to strengthen religious freedom for all in the nation.

We have also been able to provide support and timely help to hundreds of victims of persecution all over the nation. Both practical and legal help have been extended through our dedicated volunteers on the ground without whom it would be impossible to reach out.

The RLC, through its panel of advocates and activists has also been providing training to leaders both at the grassroots and at the state and national level so that the movement for religious freedom for all can be strengthened.

The RLC was also able to present a statement on India at the UN Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva in partnership with WEA office in Geneva.

### **National Center for Urban Transformation (EFI-NCUT)**

NCUT is an initiative of EFI that caters to the pressing need of responding to the urban realities in India by preparing urban leadership to respond to the existing and emerging urban challenges and opportunities to pave way for holistic transformation of Indian cities.

Due to the current scenario, most of

the programs in 2020 were conducted online. However, NCUT was able to conduct the Western Zone Transformation Conference which was attended by leaders from Punjab, Rajasthan, Western Maharashtra and Gujarat states. The Special Interest Groups (SIG) workshops were a major attraction during this event with several national experts sharing during the same.

NCUT was also able to reach out via Zoom Conferences in Bihar & Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand. There is a special push for equipping North India leadership with urban resources and the response has been overwhelming.

The sessions on Biblical Perspectives on Cities and their Relevance for Urban Ministry in India; Ways of doing effective Urban Ministry in Cities of North India and Utilizing Urban Youth Potential to Enhance the Ministry were especially helpful for the participants according to the feedback received. Sessions on sustainability for ministry were also introduced keeping in mind that urban leaders that are serving in a small set up have been facing financial set back due to Covid related issues.

NCUT also continues to develop urban ministry resources for the Church at large in India in both

English and Hindi through its Research, Writing and Publication wing. Apart from two major manuscripts that are in the pipeline, there are six booklets that we hope to publish for the benefit of equipping urban leadership in India.

A centre for urban youth studies, as part of NCUT-Urban Youth Ministry wing, is also in the pipeline, which will be first of its kind in India.

### **EFI Children at Risk (EFIC@R)**

EFIC@R is engaged in safeguarding the lives of the vulnerable through Prevention, Prosecution and Protection programs. In 2020 this manifested in the following:



Capacity building of Churches and Civil Society through trainings that strengthened their involvement in promoting and securing the rights of children from Tribal and Dalit communities.

**Advocacy programs** that created awareness of the extent of the negligence, exploitation and discrimination towards children in India. This was carried out through various awareness campaigns,



speaking tours, interventions with schools, colleges, panchayats and communities, forming vigilant committees, peace building efforts and building child advocates.

**Rescue & Rehabilitation:**



EFIC@R conducts regular rescue operations along with rehabilitation and legal aid services for the victims, in partnership with various NGOs and the local authorities.

**Networking with churches,** government officials and like-minded organizations were conducted in order to reach out and



sensitize the people on human trafficking, as well as to develop effective and innovative programs and projects.

**Education Programs** by EFIC@R provided strategic interventions through the opening of children clubs, children literacy centres, adult literacy centres etc. to transform and develop the lives of children and adults. EFIC@R’s adult literacy centre is helping the women to develop their reading and learning skill which is also helping them to start self-help groups.



**Prosecution:** EFIC@R provided pro-bono legal aid to victims of trafficking. Many traffickers who have been caught red-handed while trafficking young boys and girls often get bailed easily and they go back to their old trade without any fear of punishment. EFIC@R

continues to work towards ensuring such traffickers are kept behind bars for the safety of the children. EFIC@R is also dealing with cases that includes false implication especially in the Christian community.

**Healthcare initiatives:**



To respond and invest in the health and well-being of the poor, the needy and the marginalized victims, EFIC@R conducted regular medical camps providing free medical aid to people in target areas.

EFIC@R helped build resilient communities by empowering them



with a means of livelihood and equipping the church leaders to mobilize the community on

addressing issues of poverty alleviation which will facilitate to stop trafficking and peace building.

**Looking Ahead**

AICOCIM: The Sixth All India Congress on Church in Mission (AICOCIM) was scheduled to be held on November 2020; however, we have had to postpone it due to the pandemic. We hope to organize it in the month of November 2021. We seek your prayers for the same. The All India Congress on Church in Mission (AICOCIM) is a decennial event organized by EFI to set the direction for the Evangelical movement in India.

Christian Education Department of EFI (CEEFI) is working on a new curriculum for Sunday School, that we plan to bring to the Indian Church. The pandemic has delayed the process a little, but we hope to inaugurate the curriculum soon.

We request your continuous prayers and support for EFI as we press ahead to fulfill the vision of seeing ‘Evangelical Churches, institutions and individuals effectively witnessing the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed and transforming nation.’

Respectfully Submitted by

**Rev. Vijayesh Lal**  
*General Secretary*  
*Evangelical Fellowship of India*

Intercessory  
*Prayer*  
Points



FEBRUARY 2021

**1 MONDAY** Thank God for bringing us to the second month of the year. May God enable us to spend the days well and work productively for his kingdom.

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

**3 WEDNESDAY** Continue to pray for the persecuted. Pray that their suffering would produce Christlike characters that would glorify God.

**4 THURSDAY** World Cancer Day. Pray for strength, endurance and healing for those going through medical treatment for Cancer. Pray also for the families who have lost their loved ones to this disease.

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

**6 SATURDAY** Let us pray for children who are preparing to write their final exams. Pray that God would enable them to bear their heavy burden and help them as they study. Pray also for uninterrupted internet service and ability to use technical facilities well.

**7 SUNDAY** Let us pray for ourselves today. Pray that our relationship with the Lord would grow deeper than ever. Also pray that we may love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds and strength.

**8 MONDAY** Pray for EFI new Group Member Adonai Ministries in Karnataka. Pray that God would

bless their initiatives and also bless our partnership.

**9 TUESDAY** Pray for peace and prosperity in our nation. Pray that God would give us good god-fearing leaders. Pray also for safety and protection at the borders.

**10 WEDNESDAY** Pray for EFI new Group Member Nagaland Bible College in Mokochung, Nagaland. Pray that they would be able to effectively teach and train leaders who would serve God's kingdom wholeheartedly and in God's way.

**11 THURSDAY** Continue to pray for the ministry of EFI. Pray for all the staff in different parts of the country to be used by God as they carry out their responsibilities. Pray also for the finances of EFI. Pray that God would bring good tenants for the properties that are available for rental.

**12 FRIDAY** Pray for increased readership for EFI AIM magazine. Pray also that the existing subscribers would draw strength and encouragement from the magazine for their Christian life.

**13 SATURDAY** World Radio Day. Pray for ministries who are spreading the Gospel through Social Media, including Radio transmitter.

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

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

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

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

**17 WEDNESDAY** Pray for EFI new Group Member Berachah Prophetic Ministries in Tamil Nadu. Pray that God would use the ministry to be an instrument for Biblical prophecies in such a time as this.

**18 THURSDAY** Pray for the youth of our nation that they would one day encounter the Living God like Jacob did and their lives would be changed. Pray that God would bless them with



wisdom and discernment to choose the right path in life.

**19 FRIDAY** Continue to pray for those affected by Covid19. Pray for healing for the body, mind and soul. May their experiences lead them to meet God and to a deeper relationship with God our Heavenly loving Father. Thank God that the cases have decreased as of now.

**20 SATURDAY** World Day of Social Justice. Pray that everyone would enjoy equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Pray for workers who are involved to make this possible.

**21 SUNDAY** Pray for Christian parents to actively and diligently train and teach their children. Pray that they would be able to pass on Christian beliefs and values to their children.

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

**23 TUESDAY** Pray for Religious freedom in our country. Pray that every individual would be able to

freely practice and propagate their choice of religion.

**24 WEDNESDAY** Pray for the problem of unemployment in our country. Pray that the youth would not lose hope and determination. Pray that the government would find means and ways to create job opportunities.

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

**26 FRIDAY** Pray for single parents today. Pray that they would lean on God and draw strength from Him. Pray also that they would excel and would not be lacking in any areas of their parenting.

**27 SATURDAY** Pray for all the leaders and elders of the church that they become a source of blessing to their congregations. Pray that the God will give them spiritual wisdom and understanding as they lead others to Christ.

**28 SUNDAY** Thank God for the fruitful month that has just gone by. Pray that we would not be forgetful of His goodness and kindness to us.



# Trans World Radio India

*A Christian Media Organization*

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**Eligibility Criteria:**

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- Good interpersonal skills, ability to collaborate well with people at all levels in a cross-cultural environment to achieve desired corporate outcomes.

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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

### Support EFI with your gift

Contribution can be sent to:  
Evangelical Fellowship of India  
Saving Bank Account No. 909844182  
Bank Name and Address: Indian Bank, 47-48, Pragati House, Nehru Place, New Delhi- 110019  
IFSC Code: IDIB000N044  
Please send a copy of your PAN for gift more than Rs. 5000 to mail@efionline.org

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