

From the *Editor's Desk*



Speaking evil of one another? Stop it!!

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matt. 7:1-2)

"Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it" (James 4:11)

"The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably it is the least understood, and certainly it is the least obeyed". Apostle James takes the words of Jesus and explains them in his epistle and tells us not to speak evil of one another



**Johnson
K. Samuel**

Even non-Christians like the Sermon on the Mount. We, Christians, have heard many sermons on it, but still find parts of it hard to understand - and hard to apply in our lives. John Stott puts it this way: "The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably it is the least understood, and certainly it is the least obeyed"

Apostle James takes the words of Jesus and explains them in his epistle and tells us not to speak evil of one another - because by speaking evil of one another - we judge one another.

Why you and I should not judge others?

First of all, it is unchristian. We are talking about our brothers. We are part of the same family. We are relatives. We have the same Father - "Our Father who is in heaven". We have the same Savior - Jesus Christ our Lord. We have the same Holy Spirit living and dwelling in us. We have been saved by the same blood - the blood of Christ. In fact, it is the devil's business to speak against God and His family. In the book of Revelation, the 'job description' of the devil is given as "accuser of the brothers".

Secondly, we are human - not God. God is the 'Law giver' and only He has the right to judge. As human beings we cannot judge impartially as we are not in possession of all the facts of the situation. We are not perfect people. We have made mistakes in one or the other matter. When I point a finger at my brother, at least three other fingers are pointing at me! As Jesus said, we will be judged in the same way as we judge others.

It does not mean that ministers of the gospel should not speak out against sin. They need to call evil as evil. They need to call sin as sin. No sugar coating it - no hiding it! Whenever someone has sinned, Bible gives us instructions to deal with the person - not with a judgmental spirit, but with gentleness and love to restore him and build him up..We always need to remember that all of us have sinned and come short of God's glory.

I read a poem recently which I am reproducing below:

"The Wrecking Crew"

*I stood on the street of a BUSY town,
Watching men tearing a building down.*

*With a ho heave ho and a lusty yell,
They swung a beam and a side wall fell.*

*I asked the foreman of the crew,
"Are those men as skilled in all they do?"*

*"Oh, no, no indeed." The foreman said.
"That's just Bob and that's just Fred."*

*"Just common laborers are all I need.
To tear down a building - is a simple deed.*

*They can tear it down in a day or two.
What took a skilled man a year to build - new.*

*No skill is involved - no skill do they need,
You see - tearing things down is a simple deed."*

*And then I thought as I went my way,
Just which of these two roles am I trying to play?*

*Have I walked life's road with care,
Measuring each deed with a rule and square?*

*Or am I one of those who roam the town,
Content with the labor of tearing things down?*

Are we going around as a wrecking crew,
tearing others down instead of building them up? Are we going around judging others?

Stop it!

Transparency in Christian Life!

True Christianity is not like other religions which are normally a complex combination of many mysterious ideologies and dogmas. An ordinary man cannot reach out and touch the real essence of, especially, many eastern religions. This is obviously the distinctiveness of Christianity. The life and philosophies of Jesus were very much visible and audible to the world. His life was like an open book to the people. This is what definitely He expects from His

followers. However, the idea of transparency is almost at the verge of falling down into the deep!

The word 'transparency' shows the state or quality of being easy to see through or an honest way of doing things that allows other people to know exactly what you are doing. We are now slowly losing this quality in life and ministry. Many are hiding their personal and secret agendas in their aims, ministry, financial dealings and personal relationship. Hence our life and sermons are not becoming attractive to the world. The big words and spiritual claims are echoing only on the stages. They are never reflecting in the life afterwards. Many are merely Sunday Christians and preachers are just people of the platform. We are today handicapped in expressing spiritual values in our life style of what we believe and preach and so, the light of the Lord is not seen by others .

The life of Jesus Christ in the world was very much transparent. He had nothing to hide. He was not a mysterious person like religious gurus of today with all kinds of secret agenda. The political and religious

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This also shows that Christ had no secret tactical intentions in life and actions. He had spiritual and ethical confidence and courage to speak to the authorities and told them to ask those who saw, heard and witnessed Him.

investigations could not find out any wrong in the life of Christ. He lived among the people and, of course, under the eagle eyes of His enemies. But they pathetically failed to point

out even a single crime.

Even the soldiers who came to arrest Him were fascinated by His presence and gracious words and left to report to their authorities and declared that no one ever spoke the way this man did (John 7:45-46). When the disciples of John the Baptist came one day to

Jesus and asked where He is living. To them, Jesus replied: "come and see" (John 1:38-40). Christ was having a real conviction that His life is not for Himself but for others. Therefore without any secret agendas He lead a priceless life among the people. Doubtlessly He lived in the world not as God but like a man. Despite all kinds of temptations, tiredness, promise of throne and lure of worldly pleasures, He presented a life of blamelessness and sanctity before the disciples.

Even at the time of His trials, His words were so precious. He replied to the authorities who questioned Him: "I said nothing in secret ...ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said" (John 18:20-21). This is virtually an excellent expression of the transparency of the life of the Son of Man. This also shows that Christ had no secret tactical intentions in life

and actions. He had spiritual and ethical confidence and courage to speak to the authorities and told them to ask those who saw, heard and witnessed Him. In a similar way, are we able to speak courageously to



**Pastor
Shibu Joseph**
Navi Mumbai

The life and philosophies of Jesus were very much visible and audible to the world. His life was like an open book to the people. This is what definitely He expects from His followers. However, the idea of transparency is almost at the verge of falling down into the deep!

Paul did not give even a single spot of doubt for others to gossip and point a finger at. He lived among the people and showed the integrity and honesty in his ministry and life by standing in the way of truth.

We are called not only to just do what He did but also to follow Him and live like Him. Our character is more important than popularity.

others to ask those who know, relate and deal with us? Is our life so transparent in our personal relations, financial matters and in the various services? Do we have an assurance that our call is intended for others and not for ourselves? Transparent life is today becoming like a grandma story in our hurry to reach higher expectations of our selfish desires and personal advantages. We tactfully make a kind of secret and hidden world for our own to achieve certain advantages. Many so called leaders keep a distance from the common people and live in their own shelter. They are really afraid of people because they do not want others to see them closely. But Jesus was always among the crowd. Spirituality is not keeping away from the flock but living among the people. They have no courage to say: "come and see". Many are today wearing a mask of spirituality and going forward with selfish agenda and hidden projects. It is truly giving a pathetic picture .

Our popularity and reputation are not being known by the position and power but through our call and character. It is always better to know that we are the disciples of Jesus Christ than the pastor of a mega church or a director of an organization. We must be known as His disciples. But to this, we need to bear with the suffering of the cross-bearing. We need to face losing many things for the sake of discipleship. It is really impossible to get into the minds which always dream of achievements and profits. The personal references of apostle Paul are truly giving the beautiful picture of transparency in the life (2 Cor. 2:15-16; 4:2; 6:11-13). One of his statements is remarkably

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thoughtful, "---- by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God". He did not give even a single spot of doubt for others to gossip and point a finger at. He lived among the people and showed the integrity and honesty in his ministry and life by standing in the way of truth. He walked courageously before every men with clear conscience without having any hidden plans and tactical targets - a man who was not like today's so called leaders and people. He never used any of the crafty methods to gain monetary benefits or to get the applause of the crowd! He was approachable and friendly to his followers and believers. People were just tearful at the time of his farewell in Ephesus. We see the colorful canvas of his personality in the words, "imitate me". It was his spiritual courage and moral confidence. Like his Master he was open to others - no hide and seek games in his life and ministry!

Today this should be mark of our life. We have to become the blueprint of our Master's life and show ourselves as a true lamp stand to others. We need to offer an earnest prayer to the Lord to make us the replica of our Master so that, amidst all kinds of craftiness and deceptive ways, we may able to elevate the excellency of Christian life and ministry to the world. We are called not only to just do what He did but also to follow Him and live like Him. Our character is more important than popularity. Let us not play cheap games to get the attention of the crowd, but fulfill our task by standing in the way of truth and honesty. MARANATHA!

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Do NOT make any plans without GOD!

"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that". But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" (James 4:13-16)



Dr. Shibu Cherian
D.Min., Ph.D.

It is a common trend to make 'New Year Resolutions' that will list our plans for the New Year. Usually in churches, believers will get an occasion to say their testimonies during the 'Watch Night Service' on



December 31st night, and barring few exceptions, believers will publicly declare what they plan to do during the New Year. All of us have hopes, dreams and plans and the Bible never discourages us from looking to the future with bright expectation!

However, in the above passage Apostle James specifically exhorts us that we should not make any plans apart from God and boast about them. Since we have absolutely no control over our lives or over the events that may happen in our lives, we should never boast about our short-range and long-range plans without God in the equation. Let us not forget the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21) who boasted about his future business plans not knowing that he would die that same night and would see none of his grandiose plans getting fulfilled. Let us never boast about our future as we read in Proverbs 27:1 as follows: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth".

Our lives and our future are in God's control. His thoughts and ways are much higher than our thoughts and ways as God Himself tells us: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts,

nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). So, even if we make any plans for our

future, let us ensure that they are written using a chalk or pencil asking ourselves the following question: "What if?" and let God have the eraser!

Let us always remember that God should be consulted in all our plans and they should be made according to His will and based on His Word. We should live and speak in the realization that our destinies are in His control. We should say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that". Omitting God from our future plans is not merely bad planning; it is sin. We should only make plans in conscious dependence on God, recognizing His sovereign control over our lives. Let all our future plans be only according to God's will and purposes. We can be confident that God has only good thoughts and plans about us and our future!

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11)

Let us always remember that God should be consulted in all our plans and they should be made according to His will and based on His Word.

is an ordained Minister with the Church of God and serves as President of United in the WORD Ministries, Inc. He is a certified Clinical Chaplain, a Bible Teacher and a Premarital Counselor. Visit his ministry website @ <http://www.unitedintheword.com>

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God's Book for Mankind:

- Part 12 -

Attitude towards Bible Study



Dr. C.P. Varghese

is the Founder & President of *Peniel Bible Seminary, Peniel Children's Home & Peniel Academy, Keezhillam, Kerala.*

Oh, how we need to ask God's help for the same because the word of God, written by the Spirit of God, is to be understood spiritually. Carnal man cannot understand it

Let us consider the right attitude every one ought to have towards Bible study. According to the dictionary, a person's attitude is the way that person thinks about someone or something. It is the point-of-view, outlook or frame of mind concerning that matter.

1. Attitude of Prayer

Thank God in prayer for giving us His holy word. Thank Him for the Holy Spirit. The word is written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and we need the Holy Spirit to teach and illuminate our understanding. Ask God to help us to concentrate and focus and keep our mind from wandering. James encourages us to ask God for wisdom, James 1:5. David prayed to God to open his eyes so that he may see wonderful things in God's word. Psalm 119: 18. Paul prayed for the believers that God may give the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. And, also for the eyes of the believers' heart may be enlightened so that we would know the hope of God's calling and the riches of the glory of his inheritance. Ephesians 1:17-18

2. Childlike Faith and Trust

Jesus himself emphasizes the importance of childlike faith and trust in God's Word (Luke 10:21). Apostle Paul compliments the believers in Thessalonica for, when they received the word of God through the apostles, they did not receive it as men's words but as the word of God. This is an excellent example for every believer (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

3. Desire to Receive the Word

"--- like newborn babies, long for the pure milk



of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Peter 2:1-2). Just like a baby desires milk, God's children should desire the pure milk for the soul and spirit which is the word of God. The word, translated "desire" in the King James version means "to crave", "to long for", "to yearn". When a healthy baby is hungry and craves for milk,

that baby lets the whole household know about it any time, day or night, no matter what. Peter writes by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that, every child of God should crave for the word of God, just like a baby. Many health organizations such as World Health Organization (WHO) recommends mother's milk is the best for babies, as studies have proven that it has all the nutrients the baby needs. It is the perfect, balanced diet for a baby for growth, health, protection against many diseases, infections and allergies. It builds a strong bond between mother and child. Similarly, the word of God does all of that to God's children in the spiritual realm as we desire and receive the pure milk of the word. The Psalmist in Psalms 119:34a prays to God to give him understanding of the word. Oh, how we need to ask God's help for the same because the word of God, written by the Spirit of God, is to be understood spiritually. Carnal man cannot understand it (1 Corinthians 2:14 and 2 Corinthians 4:4, Acts 2:40; 10:33).

4. Reverence towards the Word of God

"Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at His word ---" (Isaiah 66:5). Reverence is an attitude of profound veneration, adoration, honor and respect. "Familiarity breeds contempt" is a well-known saying. Sometimes familiarity with the word of God can create a casual attitude towards it and we should guard against that. God is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice. God reveals his will, through his written word, as what is best for mankind. There is nothing equal to the holy word of God. God's word is not

just another book. It should not be handled casually. It is very dangerous to tamper with the word of God. (Deuteronomy 12:32, Revelations 22:18-19). Each and every time one studies the word remember to handle it with reverence and respect. (Nehemiah 8:1-8, Isaiah 57:15, Hebrews 12:28).

5. Readiness of Mind to Search the Scriptures

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so (Acts 17:11). It is extremely important to be ready to look into the holy word of God because, unfortunately, there are so many false, self-appointed preachers, pastors, prophets or whatever title one might hold. This is not a new phenomenon. There were false prophets during Old Testament and New Testament times. Holy men of God of the Old Testament, such as Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others warned against them. (See Duet. 13:1-4, 18-20, Isaiah 56:11, Jeremiah 5:30-31, 21-26, Ezekiel 13:6). In the New Testament Jesus and New Testament writers who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, such as John, Paul, Peter and others also warned against them. (Matthew 7:15, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, 2 Peter 2:1, 1 John 4:1-6).

So, please, do not believe every spirit and every preacher. Before saying, "Amen", search it out in the light of the written holy word of God, "if it is so". During the time of the book of Acts they did not have the New Testament, they only had the Old Testament and the Holy Spirit commends the people at Berea for making good use of it. As we have seen, in a previous article, throughout the centuries, many godly men and women have paid an extremely high price for the preservation, translation and publication of the word of God into the hundreds of languages of the world.

6. Expect God to Speak to You Through His Word

God speaks to us through his written word so expect to hear Him teach, correct, discipline and instruct you. Col. 1:27 – 29, 2 Timothy 3:16. Expect the word of God to convict, change and challenge you. Expect the word to mold, make and move you closer to and more into the likeness of His son, Jesus Christ. Expect the word of God not only to work in you but also



through you. Expect the word of God to transform, encourage and empower you. Romans 12:1-2. Expect pain and Godly pleasure in your soul and spirit. Psalm 119:24, Jeremiah 15:16. Expect God to fulfill his promises in you. Duet. 7:9, Proverbs 3:5-6. Expect God to fulfill his purpose in His time for His glory. 1 Cor. 1:9, 10:13, 2 Thess. 3:3. Father of modern mission, William Carey, said, "expect great things from God and attempt great things for God".

7. Willingness to Submit and Obey

Bible study is not meant to be simply an academic exercise or to satisfy curiosity. Apostle James compares the word of God to a mirror. In James 1:21-25 we may call the word of God the mirror of God. James writes about two kinds of people. One kind simply glances at the mirror in a hurry and goes his way without doing anything about what was seen in the mirror. This person looks, goes away and forgets. He forgets and fails to apply the word and deceives himself. The Bible speaks plenty about forgetting and not remembering what should be remembered. God tells his people to be careful not to forget the Lord and his benefits. Duet. 6:12, 8:2, Psalms 103:2. God asks us to remember His ways in our lives. This person not only forgets but, in doing, he deceives himself. Self-deception is fooling one's self and not anybody else. It is so sad so many people get very upset when somebody else deceives them but are very comfortable when they deceive themselves. So nothing good happens in their life in the light of God's word.

Then James writes about another person. He doesn't just look at or glance at the mirror, which is the word of God, but he looks into the word of God and keeps on looking. He reads, meditates, studies, applies or obeys the word. The closer we get to the mirror, the better we can see ourselves as God sees us. Then, we should allow the word of God to cleanse and remove all that should be removed so that we become more and more like the image of Jesus Christ and we become useful for God and for His purposes.

Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams (1 Samuel 15:22).

So I humbly request you, as a Bible student and teacher of God's eternal word, to study the word of God with the right attitude. We will look at several Bible study methods in the next article. ■

It is extremely important to be ready to look into the holy word of God because, unfortunately, there are so many false, self-appointed preachers, pastors, prophets or whatever title one might hold.

The closer we get to the mirror of the Word of God, the better we can see ourselves as God sees us. Then, we should allow the word of God to cleanse and remove all that should be removed so that we become more and more like the image of Jesus Christ and we become useful for God and for His purposes.

The THRILL of soaring - begins with the fear of falling!!

He (The Lord) shielded him (Israel) and cared for him; He guarded him as the apple of His eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft" (Deut. 32:10,11)

A few days back I was watching a documentary of an eagle. As I was reflecting on it I was prompted to take a deeper look into the life of an eagle that made me realize the beauty and majesty of this bird. God himself uses eagle as metaphors and analogies to give us a better understanding of spiritual things. Throughout the Bible, eagle is mentioned around 32 times. Some of these verses illustrate God's qualities like protecting, feeding and training His children. Eagle's quality of nurturing and training fascinated me the most. This also helped to understand the verse quoted above about the protection and care that God gave to His people, Israel: *"like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft"*.

Preparing and planning ahead

Eagle is known to have a unique way of building its nest. The male eagle puts together thorns and sharp twigs as the outer layer and completes the nest with soft grass and feathers in the inner layer. The outer layer is made rugged and coarse in order to protect the eaglets from potential enemies. The inner soft layer gives the eaglet a cozy home for the time being. Eaglet is thus born into a comfortable and well designed home. Likewise God created the world and also incorporated Jesus Christ for our redemption before the creation of the world. In 2 Peter 1:3 it says, *His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue.* Not only our eternity but also our life in this world was planned by God before we were born as it says in Psalm 139:16: *"Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be"*. Therefore God had



Juby Anoop, UK

a special design and plan for the universe and also humankind. God even has a special plan for each one of us.

God is a strict teacher

Eagle as a trainer has a very strong character. When eagle feels that the eaglets are ready, it trains them to fly by shaking the nest and breaking the twigs, so that it starts to poke and prick the eaglet. The eaglet becomes uncomfortable in the nest. Eagle spreads her wings and forcefully pushes her young out of the nest. The eaglet has no choice but to jump off from its cozy nest. The eaglet might question this unfair and cruel behaviour of its mother each time the eaglet is pushed down but these questions will remain unanswered until the day it learns to fly. In the same manner God puts us through troubles, hardships and situations that will seem cruel and harsh. He makes our comfortable and cozy life an uncomfortable one. In the Bible, Joseph had been through various struggles and harsh situation but each situation only helped Joseph to be stronger and prepared him for the post of the ruler of Egypt! Hence each troubled and difficult time that we face is planned by God to teach us new lessons and to prepare us for eternity.

Protection even during testing times

The eaglet is coaxed and pushed from its nest numerous times so as to be an expert in flying. This will definitely be a threatening experience to the eaglet who until now has only known its parents to be loving and caring. Eaglet would feel unsafe and vulnerable as the one who had been its protector has now turned against it. Eaglet may jump off its cozy home only because it finds no other way of escape. Just like the eagle, God sometimes pushes us off into unfamiliar or difficult situations. We may face unpleasant and drastic changes in our lives just when we are enjoying a comfortable and beautiful life. The drastic change could be shifting to a new place, loss of our dear ones, issues with our health, etc. We may even feel rejected by our God whom we considered as the source of everything. The unanswered question of God bringing suffering will disturb our minds. The eagle's life teaches us some really amazing truths. Even though eagle pushes the eaglet out of the nest, the eagle flies underneath the eaglet. It will not let the eaglet out of its sight during the whole training. As the eaglet falls helplessly down the cliff the eagle swoops down to catch before it crashes on to the rock. The eagle then carries the frightened young one on its wings back to the nest and again begin to push the eaglet down. This goes on until the eaglet learns to fly. Moreover, throughout the training the eagle watches over its young and is all equipped to carry it on its wings before any harm happens. Eaglet falls off the cliff and is unaware that its mother is watching its every move. Each time the eaglet is pushed out of the nest it falls down with fear and uncertainty but slowly the fall prompts the eaglet to flap its

Some thoughts on "Christ-likeness"

What does Christ-likeness mean? Basically, "Christ-likeness" means 'being like Jesus Christ'. It is the final result of a growing process. The Bible says: "As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him and reflect His glory even more" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We cannot produce the character of Jesus on our own strength. Trying to keep New Year's Resolutions, maintaining will power for self-control and having good intentions are not good enough! Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make real changes that God wants in our lives. In Philippians 2:13, Apostle Paul says, "God is working in you, giving you the desire and power to do what pleases Him". When we hear about the power of the Holy Spirit, we think of just the miraculous demonstrations of the Holy Spirit. But honestly, most of the time the Holy Spirit's power is released in our life in quiet and unassuming ways. Holy Spirit works in our lives and empowers us to produce the 'Fruit of the Spirit' which is the character of Jesus Christ. Christ-likeness is not produced by imitation, but rather by inhabitation. What does that mean? That means we have to allow Christ to live through us. "This is the secret: Christ lives in you" (Colossians 1:27).

Most of you are probably wondering that if it is so easy, why aren't we already Christ-like? But the truth is, becoming Christ-like is a difficult and a life long



Michelle Cherian
Houston, USA

process. We tend to fall short and fall into sin and give up. But God is always there to pick us up and give us enduring

Christ-likeness reminds me of a diamond. A diamond is often found in the Earth's mantle, and scientists say, it has become a diamond after undergoing tremendous pressure and high heat for millions of years inside the earth.

hope. As mentioned earlier, Christ-likeness is an on-going process and a life long process of growth. Our goal should be to become more Christ-like day-by-day.

I found this quote online that says, "To be like Jesus is not just to stop committing a few obvious sins such as lying, cheating, gossiping, and thinking

impure thoughts. To be like Jesus is to always seek to do the will of the Father. It is to come to the place where we delight to do the will of God however critical or unpleasant that may seem to us at the time, simply because it is His will". To meditate on the Word of God and pray to God to enable us to continually apply its teachings to our lives is the way to become more Christ-like. When I was younger, I considered praying as somewhat of a burden, but as I grew older I realized that praying is bringing me closer to God and strengthening my relationship with Him.

Christ-likeness reminds me of a diamond. A diamond is often found in the Earth's mantle, and scientists say, it has become a diamond after undergoing tremendous pressure and high heat for millions of years inside the earth. Likewise, a believer's salvation experience is similar to a diamond. We are born with a sinful nature, but when we accept Christ, we start becoming a diamond, going through the pressures such as hardships and troubles and pressures of temptations by the enemy until finally entering the gates of Heaven.

Let it be our goal to continue displaying Christ-like nature against all pressures and grow into full Christ-likeness. Let us pray and seek the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to achieve our goal.

"The Thrill of soaring " (Continuation from previous page)

wings and that is when it learns to fly

Similarly, all the time God brings us trials or suffering we need not be worried as He is there watching over us. He will never let us be harmed. Bible says that our God does not sleep nor slumber but he watches over us. God will not stop until he completes His work in us. He will keep training us until we reach spiritual maturity.

Dear friends, if we continue to stay in the comfort zone of our lives we may be happy and content but we will never be able to gain spiritual maturity. Therefore God sometimes has to prick and coax us out of the nest of familiarity and comfort so that we will soar in our faith. During all these hard times we as Christians should not forsake our faith or be disturbed but cling on with total trust

in God because He is always beside us. God will never leave us nor forsake us and that is God's promise. All the promises of God are for us to take hold of and to exercise our faith.

As someone rightly said, *'the thrill of soaring begins with the fear of falling'*. So whenever you fear that you are about to fall just remember that you are soon going to soar in the sky!

"Lord, if it's YOU, tell me to come to you on the water" (Matthew 14:28)

Here is a little ship in the midst of a storm at sea. Twelve men are manning the oars, battling with the tempest, fighting with the storm - whipped sea through the long hours of the night, wrestling with death and yet getting nowhere. Suddenly they see their Master walking on the water towards them across the sea. But He is not recognized - they take Him for a ghost and they cry out in fear.

This is not an altogether unique experience. Many times Jesus comes to us in a way that makes us rather dread than welcome His approach. Sometimes He comes with demands for the giving up of certain sins or certain pleasures that we do not wish to give up. Sometimes He asks us for services that we do not wish to render. Sometimes He comes to us in the guise of a great disappointment. The Bible seems to have been written in large measure just to still the fears of our timid hearts - again and again Bible says, "Feat not".

As soon as Peter recognized Jesus he ceased to fear and began to hope. Peter was gripped by a firm conviction that now that Jesus had come, He will transform impossibilities into possibilities.

"Lord bid me come", said Peter and what was the reply of Jesus? Did He say, Peter I am surprised by your request? Why do you want to do this foolishness. Don't you know that the storm is against you? Don't you know that the law of gravitation is against you? When did you ever see anybody walk on the waves? Why do you request then to do for the impossible thing? Jesus did not say that. All things are possible to him that believeth.



Jaison Varghese
Mumbai

He never ever attacks men at the point of their impossibilities. Instead of rebuking Peter He approved him, He encouraged him. His fellow Thomas would have said "Hey Peter are you

**Confess like Peter confessed,
pray like Peter prayed and
believe like Peter believed**



mad? Nobody ever walked on the water before". But Peter said "By the help of Jesus, I will".

At last he has dared in the presence of Christ to undertake what others were afraid to undertake. On what was Peter trusting? He was trusting upon the sure word of God. When he stepped on to the water he did not drop in to the sea. He dropped in to the arms of God who holds the waters of every sea in the palm of His hand. Peter walked on the water towards Jesus. It was humanly impossible but he could not walk for a long time because he looked at the boisterous wind - it means that Peter ceased giving his attention and his confidence to Jesus. He flexed upon the difficulties. Peter believed in Jesus but he feared more in weakness and death. This gives us a great lesson that anything that diverts our attention from Jesus spells disaster. But even in his failure Peter has a message for us.

When Peter realized that he was sinking he did not try to conceal the matter. He did not say "I will fight it out with my own strength". He threw himself at once on the infinite strength of Jesus. He prayed a short prayer, "Lord, save me". That prayer was a confession, it was a confession of failure, a confession of defeat, it was also a confession of need. Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him. Peter who had walked on water and sunk, rose and walked again on water with Jesus!

Dear friends, for a victorious Christian life, all we need to do is confess like Peter confessed, pray like Peter prayed and believe like Peter believed.

Children's

CORNER



Be faithful before God !



Atul lived with his parents in a village. His father was slightly handicapped hence he had to help his father in the field. He went to school in the morning and the afternoons were spent working with his father in the field. At times he did not like it so much, but when he thought of his loving father, he was eager to help him. He learned all the nitty gritty of farming and harvesting. After graduating a course in engineering he sought for a job. He got selected in a firm which had many projects. He was sent to a project that dealt in farming and harvesting. To his great surprise, he found out that his childhood experience in the field with his father was helpful. He brushed up with the latest trends needed in that area. He could guide the project with much ease. His dedication and expertise in the work quickly added to

his promotion as the leading person of that project. Now he is a satisfied man settled in life. His childhood days seemed tedious. But since, even as a child, he was faithful and hard working in the place that God placed him, God blessed his future.

Dear children, we need to be faithful in our life. As a student you need to be faithful to study well and be obedient to your parents and elders And we need to be faithful to God by living our life in complete obedience to His word. Atul could have neglected to help his father. Or he could have neglected his studies,

blaming the work he had to do in the field. But he worked hard at studies as well as he helped his father. Wherever or whatever circumstance we are placed by God, we need to be faithful before God, then we will be blessed. There is no use blaming our circumstances or persons for our problems in life. If we are faithful and hard working, trusting in God, then He will bless us. In Mat. 25:14-30 we see that the person with the one talent was lazy and hence he is punished. While the others with five and two talents used their talent for the masters benefit, they are called good and faithful. They are blessed with more talents. Let us be faithful before God in whatever circumstances we are placed. God bless you.



Shiny Aunty

Noah's Ark

Abel John
Mumbai

She gave all she had

Joel Pathre
Khadakwasla, Pune

Good Samaritan

Jeff Sam Scariah
Kerala

Jesus heals the paralytic

Rufos Roymon
Bahrain



Cowboy pastor's evangelism technique

Former professional bull-rider Pastor Lawrence Bishop II has built a ring inside Solid Rock Church in Ohio, USA and hopes to attract people to his church! His unusual evangelism technique is to ride



Bull Ring inside Church

a bull inside the church and afterwards share the gospel to those who assemble in the church. He told a TV interviewer: "You know, the Bible said to compel them to come in, and so that's what we're doing. It didn't say how to compel them. It just said compel them to come in, so this is a tool". In one Wednesday night service, Bishop rode a bull for about three seconds before being thrown off and trampled by the raging animal. He managed to get out of the arena, however, and delivered an impassioned sermon to his congregation after which some 300 responded to the altar call. He told the interviewer: "I don't have very many talents other than this riding stuff and playing music". So I've used both to spread the gospel and try to bring people to Jesus".

His mother Darlene, who started Solid Rock with his late father, said she thought her son was "crazy" when he suggested bull riding in church. She added: "But it seems to be working. People love to come to church. It's an exciting place!"

As long as he uses the technique to communicate the message of the gospel to his audience, we cannot find any fault with him. We have the story of one of our

own Malayalee Pastors who used to go to public places and stand on his head and show do some other circus acts before sharing the gospel with those who assembled out of their curiosity!

Confidence in heaven takes away the sting of death!

An interesting observation was recorded by the journalist, Bill Tinsley in an article in a newspaper. He visited a cemetery in old Boston where there are tombstones dating back to the early settlers of USA. He discovered an interesting pattern. The graves erected before 1730, bore pictures of skulls and cross bones. They were the pictures of death and despair. The graves erected after 1740 bore the images of angels and cherubims and inscriptions of Bible verses. The only event that could have made such a difference is the Great Awakening that swept the early settlers in the 1730s and 1740s. (This revival was brought by the preaching of British evangelist, George Whiteman). Benjamin Franklin wrote of the Awakening that there was a wonderful change in the manners of the inhabitants so that one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street. He continues: Grief as a believer in Jesus Christ is deep and real, but it is not a grief without hope. Even grieved when he stood outside the tomb of his friend Lazarus. When Jesus wept, He demonstrated to us that God not only knows our grief he feels it. Jesus said: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God and believe also in Me. -- If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also".

It is good to recall the words of Apostle Paul: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13). It is quite obvious that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and His promise of coming back soon have taken the sting out of death for a believer! Praise God.

Ten years for illustrating and handwriting the Bible

Dino Mazzoli took ten years to copy the Bible and illustrate it by hand. The 78 year old Mazzoli, a devout Christian, undertook the job as he wanted to do something unique to express his faith.



A page from the handwritten Bible

He drew scenes from the Bible using parker pens and watercolours and copied the text on A4 paper. The completed work has 1500 pages with 5000 illustrations. His work was so unique that he even received a letter from the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury, praising him for his efforts. He wants to donate all the proceeds of the sale of his book to charities. The book is now available on iTunes. "I will keep painting. I do pictures for friends and love painting my family. I can't go out any more because of my health, but I still have my painting and I am thankful for that," he said.

Nice, commendable labour of love!

Victim prays for the robber - Robber returns his wallet

According to a report in Christian News Network, 21 year old Hairston of Ohio was walking from the bus stop to his home when an armed robber followed him and demanded all his money. When he told the robber that he has very little money with him, the robber hit him with his gun. Hairston gave the mugger his wallet and cell phone and began praying aloud for the gunman and his family. The robber then handed the stolen items back, apologizing and explaining that this was his first robbery; he had done it because he was unemployed. Hairston invited the man to church and offered to help him in any way he could. The men shook hands before the robber left.

Hairston told his friends after the incident that he prayed for the robber because even if that man killed him that night, he wanted to go with the knowledge that God was on his side and he would be with Him when he woke up on the other side!

We salute Hairston for his unwavering faith and courage in a very difficult situation.

Kindness of a 5-year old boy!

Seeing a homeless man inside the

fast food restaurant, 5-year old Josiah Duncan became curious about homeless people in the country. His mother explained to the boy that these people do not have a home of their own and sleep outside on road sides. They are very poor to buy even some food to eat. So Josiah urged his mother to buy the man a meal. Josiah noticed that nobody was attending on the poor man. Josiah jumped up and went to the man and asked what he would like to eat and told him that he can order anything he wants. The man ordered a burger and



Josiah talking to the homeless man

when the food came, Josiah said he will pray for the food. Hearing the boy's prayer, everyone in the restaurant who were watching the whole incident cried. Josiah's mother said: "Watching my son touch the 11 people in that restaurant will be forever one of the greatest accomplishments as a parent I'll ever get to witness".

The photo of the boy talking to the man at his table has been widely shared on social media around the world. Such a kind of Christian love and kindness can be learned by children only from their parents.

Just for a laugh!

The little six-year-old girl had been so naughty that her mother decided to punish her. She told her she couldn't go to the Sunday School Picnic on Saturday.

When the day came, her mother changed her mind. When she told the little girl she could go to the picnic, the child's reaction was one of gloom.

"What's the matter? I thought you'd be glad to go to the picnic," her mother said.

"It's too late!" the little girl said. "I've already prayed for rain!"

Quotable quotes from C.S. Lewis

"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream"

There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way'

"It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad"

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else"

"A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word, 'darkness' on the walls of his cell"

"Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil"

We all want progress, but if you're on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive. ■



C.S. Lewis