



MATURITY MATURITY MATURITY MATURITY

Apostle Peter advises us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Apostle Paul** asks us to grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ

Attaining fullness, ripeness, becoming due, due date, reaching reproductive stage, fully developed etc. are the dictionary meanings of the word 'maturity'. Every organism has an in-built urge and need for growth and maturity that is natural. As far as a person is concerned, there are five stages in his/her development. They are infancy, childhood, teenage, adulthood and old age. These mainly relate to physical growth. Maturity means attaining higher levels of growth intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. Everyone likes a child but if it remains as a child only, no one will be happy. Some people grow physically without proportionate mental growth. Such people are called mentally retarded. Worldly people try their best to bring such people back to normal life with lot of efforts and various types of training. There is a saying that 'what you cannot cure, you have to endure'. In other words, maturity is to live in peace with what we cannot change, to have the courage to change what can be changed and to have the wisdom to differentiate between the two and act accordingly.



Thomas Nainan

Childhood adolescence is accepted by everyone, but not tolerated in a person when he reaches adulthood. Hence it must be our desire to reach the higher levels of growth, physically, mentally and spiritually. In the book of Hebrew we read: "though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God's words. You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness for he is a child. But solid food is for the matured, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil" (Heb. 5:11-14).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ said: "you therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect". Again in Eph. 4:15 we read: "we are to grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ". 1 Pet. 2:2 exhorts us to long for the pure spiritual milk that by it we may grow up to salvation. Whereas in 2 Pet. 3:18 the advice is to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. In short it is training and education. Education is a process by which the potentialities in an individual are drawn out and developed in knowledge, skill and character. The education package contains the learner, subject matter, learning and teaching methods and the teacher competence to effect changes in the learner. In the ministry of Jesus Christ, He used to teach more and preach less. In our community, teaching is rare, only a lot of preaching and shouting, just as in politics where crowds and rabble rousers are the order of the day. Hence the new generation does not grow to the level it is expected, hence our churches have a lopsided growth. It is necessary to understand the present situation and take corrective action and proceed. Take heed to teach diligently to your children and their children. Amen

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Bitterness & Resentment, Forgiveness & Reconciliation

*"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse"
(Romans 12: 14)*

Bitterness and Resentment

We live in a world filled with bitterness and resentment. It has been a part of our community for as long as we can remember.

At some time or another, we all feel as if we have been wronged by someone. At this time, we can choose to be either forgiving, or resentful. If we are resentful, bitterness will steal our inner peace and could cause physical illness. It could destroy our relationship with God and cause our closest human relationships to suffer.

Bitterness and resentment are seen as sins which have no place in a true believer's life. Jesus clearly says that those who refuse to forgive others will not be forgiven (Matt. 6:14,15). We should replace bitterness with love. Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 13 :5, "love does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong". In Rom. 12:14, Apostle Paul is presenting to the saints a fundamental, practical principle. To bless those who persecute you, you need to be a person of forgiveness. As A. Pope says, "to make mistakes is human, to forgive is divine". Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong". According to St. Augustine, forgiveness is the greatest charity. Henry Van Dyke says, "Forgive and forget if you can; but forgive anyway and pray heartily and kindly for all men, for thus only shall we be the children of our Father who makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." E. Herbert says, "He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every man has need to be forgiven". "Forgiveness is choosing to love". James G. T. Fairfield, author of 'When You Don't Agree', sees forgiveness as the first skill of self-giving love.

Forgiveness is a way of living. One needs to develop a readiness to forgive. Eph. 4:31&32 says, "Stop being mean, bad tempered and angry. Quarreling, harsh words, and dislike of others should have no place in your lives. Instead, be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you because you belong to Christ".

Resentment and bitterness are just like cancer attacking the body. If it is beyond the capability of ordinary treatment; you need to have an important surgery as soon as possible. If you keep on going

with resentment and bitterness, you will end up in failures and dead-ends. It will lead into unchristian life-styles.

It is often easy to hurt and offend someone, but it is hard to heal the wounds left in damaged hearts. Sometimes people feel good when others are hurt. But if you are a true Christian, you should forgive whole heartedly when you are hurt. The weak will never forgive, but the strong will have a willing heart to forgive. Forgiveness is a weapon of the strong. Bitterness and resentment are the weapons of the weak.

How to overcome bitterness and resentment

- * Be patient and wait on the Lord.
- * Be open to others.
- * Have the willingness to hear what others have to say.
- * Examine our own lives in the light of the word of God.
- * Let the Holy Spirit minister to us while we are hurt.
- * Provide a sense of belonging or fellowship.
- * Show an interest in and prayerful concern for others.
- * Accept suffering and stay strong for truth.
- * Be willing to be humble.

The body of Christ is to be a growing, maturing faith community. They need to grow together, fixing each others' mistakes and helping them to move on. We need to look for 'win-win' situations. A Christ-like character is the goal and aim of a true Christian. Bitterness and resentment are heavy weights that hold us back in our path of righteousness. To lead a victorious Christian life, we must forgive and forget.

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Reconciliation and Forgiveness

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (Matt. 5:23,24)



Jesus said:
“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins”

Reconciliation is the first step of forgiveness. Forgiveness is both an event and a process. In forgiveness, the wall that separates relationships is broken down. The process of forgiveness begins with **r e c o n c i l i a t i o n**. Reconciliation involves a change of attitude, change of approach, change of action, and change of behavior.

In reconciliation, one replaces hostility. The basis for true reconciliation is the cross of Christ. In Christ, God has reconciled with humanity. One of the greatest messages of Christian faith is reconciliation. In reconciliation, the hearts that were far draw nearer. We often ask ourselves this question, “How do we reconcile with those who aren’t willing to?” With prayer and faith, humility and love, and with the strength of the Holy Spirit, take the first step of reconciliation. Reconciliation requires a special, active effort of reaching an unwilling, stubborn heart with a Godly meekness. To achieve true reconciliation, we need to pay a price. God in Jesus Christ reconciled the world, giving His only Son as a price. Therefore, we need to reach the goal by paying a price.

Remember, Jesus commanded forgiveness

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25).

Even before offering a prayer, we need to have a clean heart. Prayer from an unforgiving heart will not be heard by God. Many times, our prayers are rejected and unanswered due to an unforgiving heart.

1. Forgiveness involves recognizing limits:

We as human beings are limited in our inner strength. For true forgiveness, we need to find our limitations. Once we find our limitations, we will look for the unlimited strength of God. With our limited ability, we try to solve our problems and issues. Many times, they remain unresolved issues. But when we recognize our limits, it gives us room to look for God’s help and the counsel of the Holy Spirit.

2. Repentance and forgiveness go together:

Repentance and forgiveness go very well together. A unrepentant heart will not be able to forgive. This is why many times forgiveness can not take place. Repentance reshapes and remoulds our heart. It breaks down the hardened areas of our life. For a lasting result in forgiveness, we need to have a truly repented life.

3. Forgiveness demands renouncing of sin:

Covering up and hiding sin are the stumbling blocks for forgiveness. Without renouncing sin, the act of forgiveness is not at all possible. Sin hinders forgiveness by being an obstacle which does not allow the heart to excuse the wrong done. Wherever sin is, the unforgiving spirit will follow that life.

4. Forgiveness rebuilds relationships:

True forgiveness is a sign of Christian growth. It is not moving away from each other, but the state of coming closer through reconciliation. Forgiveness is the foundation of rebuilding a relationship. The forgiver and forgiven will both grow in the Lord and the Word. They will support each other to grow in their Christian growth. If this does not take place, forgiveness has no meaning.

5. Forgiveness is not a secret agenda:

Forgiveness is not to gain or show anything. It has got no secret agenda to achieve. The only purpose or goal of forgiveness is to reconcile with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Secret agendas are not biblical and not of the Christian faith. Forgiveness is not to please someone. In forgiveness, there is no win and loss, but it’s a win-win situation. Whenever a secret agenda arises, the enemy takes over the entire process and the purpose of forgiveness is lost. Therefore, avoid all secret agendas in forgiving one another.

6. Forgiveness is unlimited:

Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (Matt. 18:22).

Jesus explained how many times one needs to forgive. He tells us that it’s unlimited. We should never limit the number of times we forgive. As long as you live on earth as a Christian, forgiveness is always available. We must live our lives with a forgiving heart. Jesus never limited his forgiveness towards us. No matter how many times we slip up, He is willing to forgive us. Therefore, we need to forgive our brothers and sisters as Christ forgave.

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The New Testament Church

(Concluding Part)

Bible Study

The previous study about the metaphors describing the Church has brought an extensive insight regarding our relationship with the body of Christ and our Lord. In this section we look into the characteristics of the church based on different perspectives. A great author named Richard Bewees has discovered six characteristics of the church.

1. Historical

Historically, the church of Jesus Christ was open to men and women from diverse groups and walks of life. This divine mystery was revealed into the human historical scene. The church is historical because God of history in the fullness of time manifested in human form, lived in history, crucified, buried and resurrected in historical and geographical setting. Similarly, the Lord of history, brought the church into history according to the divine calendar as the fulfillment of His prediction (Matt. 16:16-18) on the Day of Pentecost. Moreover, it is well promised that Jesus, the Lord of the church, will be in the midst of His people who gather in His glorious name; no matter how small or big is the group. This is historical fact.

2. Universal

Church is the fellowship of all believers who are born again worldwide. This is the Church of different eras, past present and future, together they form the church. It is the church of various cultures, found in nations scattered over the earth, but united by common Lord. This ONENESS is the core concept of the church. All local bodies are integral part of the ONE BODY, the universal BODY of Jesus Christ.

3. Spiritual

The Church is spiritual community or house of saints in the secular world. It cannot be considered as secular – social group. The church, having been united into the body through the spirit is more important than different groups or denominations.

If the Holy Spirit does not unite its members it cannot truly exhibit oneness and spirituality. The church is spirit-filled, spirit-empowered, spirit-united, spirit-controlled and spirit-renewed. The church members exhibit family likeness in the body of Christ (Eph. 5:14-15).

4. Scriptural

The authority of the church is established in the unchanging word of sovereign God. Its scriptural revelation becomes the basis of the church's stability and belief. Moreover the church has been commissioned to defend and preserve this revelation and ordained to proclaim in the world. Church is called submit to the authority of this revelation. This vital and priceless role must not be neglected in any case. Although God Almighty in the author of this revelation, church is reckoned as the custodian of it so that no fake belief or heresies can overtake the position of believers. Besides, it is important to understand that the Church has been founded on a supreme revelation of the Master of the church, that is Jesus Christ. Peter declared with conviction: "You are the Christ (Messiah-anointed), the son of the Living God". This unalterable, incomparable and unique truth certainly became the foundation of the church (Matt. 16:12-20).

5. Missiological

The primary and noble purpose of the church's call is to fulfill the final command, that is to carry the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ to the utmost parts of the world. Church is the missionary of God. Church is sent by Lord Jesus and empowered through the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit. A missionary church alone can be alive. The church is first Christo-centric and then mission-centric. However, today unfortunately, most of the churches are entangled in many programmes and projects, instead of prayer and proclamation. Most of the projects are self-centred and for monetary purpose. We forget the primary purpose and nature. The divine task is evangelism, for which the church is endowed with the high voltage of the Holy Spirit. Our aim is not to Christianize the world but to evangelize the people.

6. Eternal

The Church of Jesus Christ has a bright and glorious future ahead. Her destiny is eternity. The church is living between two historical and biblical facts; the first is the life and work of Jesus, including His incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension. Second is the glorious return of Christ



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concludes the study of the New Testament Church discussing its characteristics based on different perspectives: historical, universal, spiritual, scriptural, missiological and eternal.

CONTENTMENT



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Our nation saw a hippie culture in the seventies. It spread from the Western countries. One of the press reporters came across a hippie girl in Mumbai and realized that her father was a billionaire in the United States. They asked her the reason for adopting the culture. She replied: "My father gave me so much to live with, but nothing to live for." What are the things we should have to be content? Contentment provides the feeling that we have whatever we should have to lead a happy life.

Contentment and happiness influence our actions. Surely, we have needs and plenty of desires. We need food to satisfy hunger, water for thirst, strength in fatigue and health in sickness. They come in the list of basic needs. Apart from these, we have an array of other needs: security in the middle of crisis, protection when threats arise, peace amidst anxiety, and courage in fear. Again isolation is not the sign of healthy living. So, we need people around us to boost our self-worth. In social life, we need acceptance in the face of rejection; forgiveness to kill guilt; victory after defeat; and achievements when there is low self-esteem. We also have needs pertaining to self-realization: encouragement in the middle of disappointment; fullness instead of emptiness; sense of purpose in the middle of stagnation.

All the above said factors may give fulfillment. In spite of the fulfilling of all these needs, some of us may remain discontented. We can never be

fully contented as long as desires rule us. We have to rule our desires; otherwise, they will enslave us. Moreover, contentment always looms out before us, like mirage, demanding satisfaction.

We run after so many things for the contentment and fulfillment of our desires. Everyone understands after a while that it is a mere rat race. It is as futile as digging dried up wells that cannot spring out water (Jer. 2:13). Some think that wealth brings contentment. They are people who struggle to draw from an empty well. More wealth brings greed, not contentment. Some try to find contentment in fame and popularity. Can power and authority grant contentment? Not at all, power gives only a feeling of conquering, an illusion of success and contentment which actually brings insecurity.

Fear of losing our position and anxiety over our enemies haunt us day in and day out. There might be many playing the role of puppets before us when we are in power. Nevertheless, as soon as the authority vanishes, such people would ignore us. I heard the story of a judge whose pet dog died one day. Many people came to attend the burial. But the attendance was very poor at the judge's funeral, comprised of only his family members. Power compels us to protect it and if we become unsuccessful in playing the game, we become hopeless.

Some people end up in despair after trying their hands on one thing after the other in search

"The New Testament Church" Continuation from previous page

in the near future. On a certain Day, known only to sovereign God, the trumpet with sound in the clouds, the Master will appear with glorious crown on His bruised head and the church will be taken up into eternal glory to live eternally with her ever loving bridegroom!! Hallelujah!

Conclusion:

We have seen through this series of short studies, the biblical picture of the church. We have tried to bring out a clear understanding about the plan of God regarding the new community. This study helps us to maintain the right relationship with Christ and His church. The church of Christ is the whole company of redeemed people, where -in Christ is present and active. This proper understanding would enable us to set our priorities in worship and mission. These are the twin – truths we need to always store up in our minds. Also, the study will enable us to defend and declare the most holy faith that is entrusted upon the saints and highlight the prerequisite of holy living in the world as dynamic witnesses of our Lord. Let us take up the responsibility of presenting everyone perfect in Jesus Christ, so that we may appear before His glorious throne holy and without any blemish to receive our honor and rewards. Let us continue to serve the Lord and the people, with love and joy. Praise the Lord. ●

of contentment until they realize that it was an effort in vain. There is absolutely no need to adopt unethical ways to fulfill all desires put down on our list, for they inevitably result in hopelessness and despair.

Some of us buy as many things as possible to accomplish contentment. We covet our neighbour's possessions thinking that if only we had them we would be contented. Many of us are lured by the television advertisements. Commercials try to deceive us into believing that their products are essential for us. If we do not see through this trick, we fool ourselves into splurging money on unwanted items. Consequently, one would be tempted to amass wealth by underhand means to satiate such needs. The moment we corrupt ourselves to make more money, we start an obsessive journey that triggers only further dissatisfaction.

The Word of God is clear about living a fulfilled life in the middle of unfulfilled desires (Phil. 4: 11,12). Christ made it possible for us to live a contented life. The term "unfulfilled desires" does not mean you have to sacrifice all your possessions to lead a lowly life, incapable of fulfilling your duties and responsibilities.

Unwarranted sacrifice does not result in contentment, nor does it help if we pretend humility to be in the good books of peers.

God has created man to aim at great things. Some people find it difficult to understand noble visions because they had the nurturing in the wrong circumstances, unfortunately. Thus, they value that which is low and mean. Can a pig be ever tempted with rose buds to keep it out of the sty? No, it has been with such an environment of muck and dirt that the pig had never thought of anything better. However, human nature is different and our creation was not destined to live in slime. Though there may be exceptions of people with base nature, human design is not, originally, to find contentment in the mean things of life. We may be after many cheap desires but it is possible to identify noble from ignoble by the application of the principles of God's Word (2 Tim. 3: 16,17).

Christ made it possible to find contentment even in the middle of persistent crisis (Acts. 27: 22-24). When a crisis strikes unexpectedly, we should not despair but tackle it boldly. This requires a character quality that will sustain us in the midst of anything that comes. We are, in fact, foreordained to develop this quality (Rom. 8:29) of Jesus. It includes a levelheaded and clear perception on the reality of misfortunes in life and a goal perception concerning life. Acceptance of reality is the starting point of a strategy to face challenges in life. The best outcome of a crisis is that it polishes us in character and behaviour. If our problems turned out to be means to achieve greater things, we could definitely find contentment in them.

It gives us a lot of contentment to see a meaning and purpose in life. All our efforts have a purpose ahead of us. Once we have a clear purpose, no amount of hindrance can deter us from accomplishing our target. Purpose is derived from our beliefs. Therefore, what we believe is very important. While we derive contentment by accomplishing important goal in life, contentment comes also out of doing someone else some good. The younger



Apostle Paul in ship wreck (Acts 27)

generation should be nurtured in biblical faith in order for them to have meaning and purpose in life. We read in Proverbs 22: 6 "to train up the child in the way he should go..." We should think also of the grown up generation or those who train them 'to walk themselves that way' as well. The grown up generation should be role models in this matter.

"Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. --- and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you'. So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me" (Acts 27: 23-25)

St. Paul: "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:11-13)

Remember the "SUVARTHA" ministry in your prayers

"Be strong and courageous ...

Do not be afraid"

(Joshua 1:1-9)

Joshua the servant

Joshua was born as a slave in Egypt. He was the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim (1 Chronicles 7:20,27). Originally named Hoshea (Numbers 13:8), meaning salvation, Moses renamed him Joshua, meaning The Lord is Salvation (Numbers 13:16). Joshua was an active participant in the Exodus, and was Moses' military commander when the Israelites defeated the Amalekites in Rephidim about 2 months later (Exodus 17:8-16). Joshua was between 60 - 85 yrs old when he became a leader and he died at the age of 110. The book of Joshua, thus, spans about 25-40 years after entry into the Promised Land. He was buried in Timnath-serah (Joshua 24:28-30). Joshua was one of the twelve men sent by Moses to explore the land (Numbers 13:16-17), but only Joshua and Caleb gave an encouraging report. Joshua was a close aide / minister to Moses (servant) and was Moses' military commander (Exo. 24:13). Before Moses' death, the leadership of Israel was formally transferred to Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:23). The people were encamped at Shittim when he assumed the command (Joshua 1:1, 2:1).

He who would lead well must first learn how to serve well (Another example: Elisha's ministry to Elijah - 1 Kings 19:21)

Joshua the successor

God had specific assignments for Joshua (Joshua 1:2-4)

* Go over Jordan (with all the people)

* Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, I have given unto you, so go and take it. (From the wilderness - the area on the south and east of Canaan - to Lebanon on the north upto river



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Euphrates on the northeast upto the great sea, Mediterranean, on the West - all the land of Hittites, meaning the regions of Canaan and Syria occupied by one of the large ethnic groups and a traditional power, a buffer state between two great powers Assyrians and Egyptians).

* Divide and allot the land

* Observe to do according to all the law, turn not to the right or to the left,

meditate day and night.

God's promise: "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Joshua 1:5) - Till date God has not failed or forsook them, unless they have disobeyed. Even if they did, God has not forgotten His promise / covenant to Abraham and Moses for a promised land - The land flowing with milk and honey, best fertile soil, and everything in abundance - a kind of paradise. So God reassures Joshua again and again to be strong and courageous and not to fear (Joshua 1: 6,7, 9 - repeated from Deut. 31:6,7,23).

Joshua's personal capabilities

As a military commander, Israel could perform only when Moses' hand was lifted up to heaven (Exodus 17:8-16). When there was sin of Achan, Joshua lost his strength, courage and he feared (Joshua 7: 7-8)

What does it mean to 'Be Strong, Courageous and Fearless'?

Strong: Physical strength and also mental strength - Unwavering, resolute, (opposite of being weak)

* Moses' song: The Lord is my strength and song and my salvation (Exo. 15:2)

* Hannah's song: He will keep the feet of his saints for by strength of shall no man prevail (1 Sam. 2:9)

* David's song: The Lord is my rock and fortress and my deliverer and my strength in whom i will trust (Psa. 18: 2)

* Apostle Paul: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13)

Where does your strength come from? Are you strong today? Are you Unwavering, resolute or are you weak and succumbing?

Courageous: The quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face difficulty, danger, pain - BRAVE

Courage in this context is bravery in battle and heroic courage



Moses blessing Joshua

How then I shall?

Meditation

"The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths; ... shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife?" (2 Samuel 11 :11)



Saju John Mathew

Reading passage:
2 Samuel 11: 1-17

It was wartime. Kings were expected to be in the battleground! King David, nevertheless, decided to take rest and, that culminated in his moral fall. Lazy people fall in to sin. Had David gone to the war front, he would never have seen Bathsheba bathing and fallen in to adultery with her. (At least he could have prayed for the soldiers ... After all, it was evening, his prayer time! (Psa. 55: 17) Satan speaks more to idle people. Better be busy with Godly matters.

Stumbling on a steep path does not end up in one single fall. We fall and roll! This is what happened to David. To cover up his one sin, he committed many more sins! Crookedly he asked his soldier Uriah, the Hittite, husband of Bathsheba, to go home and spend the night with his wife; Remember, he was a Hittite, not pure Israelite. Nevertheless, he said ... "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing" (2 Samuel 11:11).

Look how loyal he was towards his mission! He could think of nothing, but war! His personal pleasures did not touch him ...

Here, is an underlying question to David ... King David, how could you eat, drink and indulge in lustful pleasures when your people are camping in the open field to capture terrains for you? You even went for illegitimate pleasures, while Uriah chose to deny normal things like eating and drinking at home and sleeping with his wife ...

We see a pleasure loving society around us. Even people like David, mighty men of the Lord, men "after Gods own heart" are after personal pleasures! "What is wrong with enjoying life?" they ask. The answer is ... the battle of the Lord is undone ... How can we?

Prayer: Lord, I know that I cannot indulge in worldly pleasures as the battle of the Lord is yet unfinished. Help me to be busy with Godly affairs. Amen.

For further reading: 2 Samuel 23:13-17; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

"Be strong and courageous" Continuation from previous page

Fear: A distressing emotion aroused by danger etc... Fear in this context is fear of consequences and fear due to doubts After Jesus chose the twelve disciples He gave them their mission, warning and instructions and added:

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28)

"Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matt 10:31).

Joshua the winner

Preparation of conquest:

• The crossing of the Jordan River involved a miracle, The Lord stopped the flow of water so that the Israelites, led by the Levites carrying the The Ark Of The Covenant, could cross on dry ground (Joshua 3:15-17)

• Once across the Jordan, the Israelites camped at Gilgal where they observed the Passover (Joshua 5:10). The next day, when they began eating from the produce of the Promised Land, the Manna stopped being supplied to them as it had been through their Wilderness Journey (Joshua 5:11-12).

• Canaan itself became politically divided into several small states that were often at war with one another. God had arranged the details of history in such a way that conditions would be just right for the Israelites conquest of canaan

Program of conquest:

• After the taking of Jericho (The Fall Of Jericho), Joshua led the Israelites on their campaign to take the land that God commanded them to live in - 6 nations and 31 kings fell to them (Joshua 11:18-23, 12:24).

• After the Promised Land came under the effective control of Israel, Joshua divided the land among the tribes, according to God's instructions, with Timnath-serah in Mount Ephraim given to Joshua as his own.

Conclusion

The book of Joshua is a record of God's faithfulness and it is a call for the believer to be obedient if he would appropriate all that God has designed for him and a testimony of the might and grace of a sovereign and holy God.

Finally, be strong and courageous and do not fear because our strength comes from our Lord and He has promised to be with us always!

Children's

TOC



God uses a little girl to build His church



A little girl stood sobbing near a small church because she couldn't go to Sunday school. The Sunday school was too crowded as there were so many children and the church was very small. Even though the little girl was from a poor family she decided to do something so that all the children will be able to attend the Sunday school.

But sadly some years later, this child died and the parents called for the pastor for the final arrangements. As the little girl's body was being moved, a purse was found below her pillow inside which was 57 cents and a note scribbled in childish handwriting which read, "This is to help build the little church bigger so more children can go to Sunday

school". When the pastor read that note, his eyes were filled with tears.

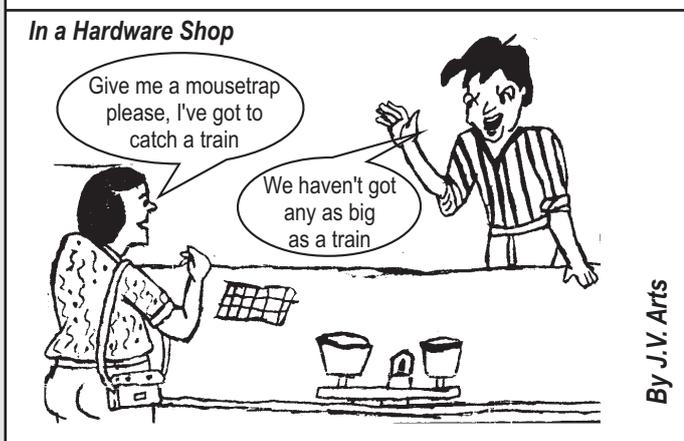
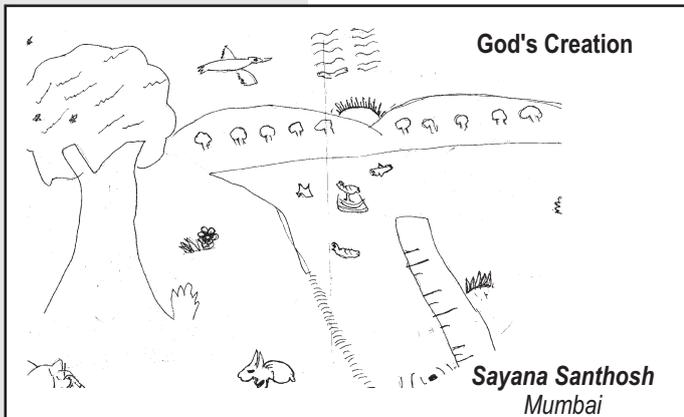
The pastor made an announcement in the Church the next Sunday about the incident and this touched the hearts of all the church members. The church members made large donations. Checks and donations also came from far and wide. Within five years the little girl's

gift had increased to a huge sum. This is the history of Baptist Church in the city of Philadelphia which has a seating arrangement of 3,300 members today and it also runs a hospital and a university!

Moral: This true story shows WHAT GOD CAN DO WITH 57 cents. Just like the little lad who gave away five loaves and two fishes to Jesus which then became a blessing to so many, God also wants us to give our talents, ability and time in God's hands so that we can be a blessing to many people. Let our lives be a blessing to others.



Juby Varghese



Reader's response

Can a Pastor be prepared on-line?

Pastor Thomas Mathai, New York



The article with the above title published in Suvatha (January 2012 issue) has brought to my attention the present day Gospel outreach programs followed by its leaders.

The author of the article has brought to light methods which can be used for the propagation of the gospel through modern technologies such as on-line education, etc. The needs of perishing souls, young or old, past or present, are the same in the entire world. Let us turn to the departing words of our Lord Jesus Christ and His commission to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every one; those who believe, baptize them in the name

of Father, Son and Holy Spirit". Those who believed and baptized were added to the Body of Christ. They assembled together in one accord for breaking of bread, prayer and fellowship. In order to have these fellowship, worship, prayer and Bible study, they had servants of God called by God and anointed by Holy Spirit as Pastors, evangelists, prophets, etc. God prospered the church and the gospel spread throughout the world. It came to our motherland, India also in AD 52 according to tradition.

Modern technologies help in many ways to spread the gospel message in many form, no doubt, but will they fully give fellowship and fulfill the Lord's

commission? My personal opinion is that brothers and sisters should have ties and fellowship so that they are enriched by their association and personal experiences and strengthened in a better way than on-line ministry in seclusion.

However, let me ask our co-workers and believers to research from the Word of God and the history of the church whether a pastor, fully educated on-line can be as effective in preaching, teaching, healing and leading as one who is trained on a real campus. Hope this will be a real challenge for modern Pentecostals, especially pastors and ministers of the gospel.

Dr. Thomson K. Mathew writes:

Dear Pastor Thomas Mathai:

Thank you for taking the time to write a response to the article on training pastors by online courses. I believe it is an important issue. Certainly, technology can help in the education of ministers, but I am not in agreement that pastors should be trained fully on line. I cannot imagine Jesus training his disciples from a distance. Formation happens in real communities.

A community of faith and learning is needed. I am not convinced that a virtual community is a full replacement for a real community of disciples. Hope this conversation continues in India among our people.



Once again, thank you for writing.

Blessings!

*Dr. Thomson K. Mathew, Dean, ORU College of Theology and Ministry
Professor of Pastoral Care*

Short Story

There is a legend of an African boy named Emmanuel who keeps on asking lots of questions. One day he asked his friends and relatives: "What is the language of God?" Everyone started giving answers one by one. But he couldn't get a proper answer. Some said God doesn't speak, some said Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek etc.

Emmanuel went to different places in his village to get a proper answer. But he couldn't. He was so eager in getting the answer that he went to different countries of Africa. But he couldn't get a satisfactory answer.

One day he sailed to other countries outside Africa. He traveled to many countries asking the same question. And

The language of God

at last he reached a village called Bethlehem. He thought that this town people will also not answer his question. But he thought of taking a last chance. It was night time. There was no room in the inn to lay his head. So he went to the outskirts of the village and reached a cave. There also he couldn't find a place since it was occupied by a young woman who asked him: "Where are you going Emmanuel?" As he heard the young woman, he was amazed as she called him by his name. He was further more amazed when she told him that he was traveling to different places and countries to find answer of his question". She told him: "Your journey ends here. Tonight you shall see with your own eyes

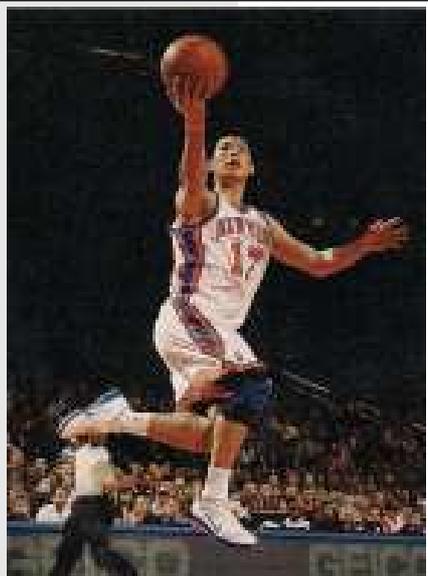
the language of God. The language of God is love with mercy, understanding and total acceptance". By hearing that answer, he fell down on his knees and started crying, giving thanks to God for revealing his question's proper answer.

The moral of the story: God loved us and gave understanding to men to know who God is through Jesus Christ. Just as Emmanuel discovered the language of God, the prodigal son discovered the love and acceptance of God. Let's stand for God and pray to Him that His Spirit may reveal His love more and more to our hearts.



Jeremy Lin, another Christian rising star

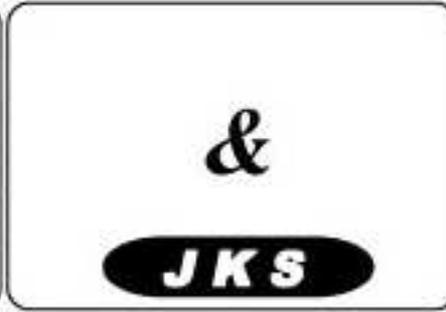
In the March issue of Suvatha, a Christian football star, Tim Tebow, was featured in these columns. Tebow is famous for his act of kneeling in the playing field and praying before every game.



Jeremy Lin

Here we present another Evangelical Christian, Jeremy Lin, who has shot up into lime light as a top class basket ball player. He is a Harvard graduate. His father, Gie Ming Lin, a Taiwanese, is a computer engineer in California where Jeremy grew up. The Lin family attends the Mountain View Church in California. Their Pastor Stephen Chen says that Jeremy considers his calling is to be a Pastor. He wants people to be able to know his Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Lin is living in the midst of a scornful and unbelieving society. Let us hope and pray that he remains steadfast in his faith and be a standard bearer for the Lord.



Britain's future as a Christian country

Daily Mail of London reports that Britain may no longer be a Christian country by 2030 as the number of non-believers is set to overtake the number of Christians. Christianity is losing more than half a million believers every year. Research by the House of Commons Library finds that while Christianity has declined, other religions have seen sharp increases. A group of MPs - 'Christians in Parliament' - claimed that public policy was promoting "unacceptable" discrimination against Christians. The group's chairman, Gary Streeter warned that believers were having their faith "steamrollered" by a "secular and hostile state". It has been estimated that there were around 41.1 million Christians in Britain in 2010 - down 7.6 percent over the past six years and there were around 13.4 million non-believers, up 49 percent over the same period.

It is, indeed, sad to see that Britain which has produced great revivalists, preachers and missionaries has come to this sorry state. Let us pray for a great awakening among the British people before the Lord's return.

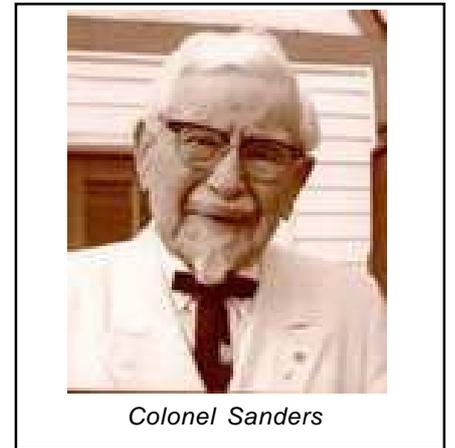
Colonel Sanders of KFC, a modern Caleb

Colonel Sanders' Kentucky Fried Chicken is now served daily across the United States as well as in more than eighty other countries. It is one of the largest fast food corporations in the world. One of the most amazing aspects of his life is the fact that when he reached the age of sixty-five, after running a restaurant for several years, Harland Sanders found himself penniless. He was a devout Christian. He testified that it was his faith in the Lord that provided him with the motivation to succeed even when he was



already 65 years old.

When his restaurant business crashed he could be like many of his aged friends, who had retired and lived off the government retirement benefits. He had a special recipe to prepare fried chicken in a pressure cooker and believed that the special recipe would be his next key to success. He took his



Colonel Sanders

recipe and pressure cooker and traveled around the United States looking for restaurants that were willing to buy his franchise. In the 1950s, this idea sounded as crazy as it sounds today. It was said that not less than 1009 restaurant owners turned him down before he was able to make his first sale. By 1964, Colonel Sanders had signed up more than 600 franchisees and later sold his business for a huge sum of money.

There are some principles to be learned from the Sanders story when we think about church growth:

1. The Colonel believed in what he had and his potential. Belief is a powerful motivation. The church in the Book of Acts was a believing church. It went through dark time of persecutions and attacks but triumphed because the apostles and the early Christians

believed in what they had. Do we believe that we, the Church today, have a unique and powerful message to share with the world? We believe that God has raised us for more than being a ministry to our community but also to the rest of the world.

2. The Colonel acted on his belief. Many years ago, Nehemiah believed that the wall of Jerusalem should be built and set out doing it. In spite of tremendous opposition from the enemies, Israel believed and stood with their leadership. And the wall was built!

3. The Colonel refused to be disheartened by his limitations. For him, age was never a barrier but an asset. Caleb was one of the old Israelite generals who refused to surrender to the limitation of his age. Instead, he believed that the Lord would bless him even at that ripe old age of 80 (Joshua 14:7-14).

NASA scientist claims he was harassed for his beliefs

David Coppedge, former high-level computer systems administrator at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), California, says he was harassed and demoted by supervisors after expressing his belief in intelligent design (Biblical interpretation of creation) to coworkers. He filed a religious discrimination lawsuit in April 2010 and he was fired nine months later in retaliation for bringing the suit. His crime was that he loaned some DVDs about intelligent design to interested coworkers. The

case is being heard in the Superior Court of Los Angeles. Coppedge's lawyer, William Becker, argues his client was treated differently because of his religious views and that JPL's actions infringed on his religious freedom.

It is a horrifying situation even in a free country like USA that the powers of darkness can stand against the spread of the gospel. But certainly they cannot prevail against the power of the gospel!

Tennessee admits there are weaknesses in 'Evolution theory'

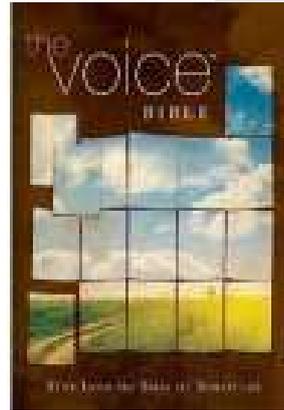
Baptist Press reports that a bill that will allow Tennessee public school teachers to present the "weaknesses" of scientific theories such as evolution has been approved by the state legislature. Teachers can help students understand, analyze and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and weaknesses of existing scientific theories including "biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, global warming and human cloning" since a major purpose of scientific education is "to help students develop critical thinking skills". The law would protect teachers around the country who are "harassed, intimidated and sometimes fired" for presenting arguments against evolution.

Even Darwin would not have expected his theory to be accepted as a scientific truth! A theory remains a theory until it is proved. Evolution still remains in the realm of speculation! Many scientists believe in the creation story in Genesis.

New English Bible translation omits words like 'Christ,' 'Apostle', etc!

Thomas Nelson Publishing has released a new Bible translation 'The Voice' which replaces "Jesus Christ" with terms such as "Jesus the Anointed One", "Apostle" with "emissary", etc. They say that the purpose of The Voice was to make the Bible easier to understand for modern audiences. The name, 'Voice' comes as a translation of the Greek word

'logos' in John 1:1. Other English Bibles translate 'logos' as "Word". John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," is translated in



The Voice as "Before time itself was measured, the Voice was speaking. The Voice was and is God".

The Voice has raised controversy among Christians. Many Christians say that The Voice blatantly distorts God's Word in order to support a peculiar and aberrant theological agenda!"

GET TOGETHER OF FORMER MEMBERS OF CHEMBUR IPC

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Our former **Pastors Mathew Samuel, Thomas V. Koshy and K.M. Varghese** and many former members of Chembur IPC are current residents of North America and bearing witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in various places and in various capacities. They all certainly cherish the memories of the days that they spent in fellowship of the Chembur church at different periods of time during the last 56 years.

Won't it be a joyous occasion if we all could have a get-together in a separate session to refresh our memories when we assemble in Orlando, Florida for the 11th IPC Family Conference from July 26-29, 2012?

For comments and suggestions, please contact the following Chembur friends:

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