



DIVINITY

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We who are God's children after our born again experience are required to choose and follow His instructions. God bestows His wisdom on the humble and lowly in order to shame this world.



Thomas Nainan

There goes the saying, 'to err is human and to forgive is divine'. Man by birth is sinful or 'natural'. A natural man or man of flesh cannot please God. Hence he has to change or convert, that is why, in Acts of Apostles, Peter asks his hearers to repent and turn (Acts 3:19). What is born of flesh is only flesh and hence Jesus told Nicodemus to be born again in Spirit. When a person is born of Spirit he is a new creation, the old is all past and he becomes a child of God or a divine person. Taking a degree in divinity does not change the person. As an educational qualification or personal esteem it may help. But a divine person should have the quality of a God's child which Jesus has shown to us. Character formation should take place in the hearts and minds of such divine people. Love that is agape love is a very important factor which is expected from such a person. In Col. 3:14 we read "above all these, put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony". 'Above all these' refers to compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness (see Col. 3:12-13). So Love is the secret key that opens the door of heaven. Where there is love, there will be oneness. If there is oneness there is no fighting, quarrel and strife. If we give something and expect something in return, it is only a human love. Love should be unconditional just as Jesus showed on the cross, then only it will be divine. Giving something or doing some service should be spontaneous and no string attached to it. And it should be constant and unlimited.

Divine love illuminates us and in illumination we see total fulfillment - no possessiveness but only feeling of oneness. That is why early

Christians sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all according to their needs. They worked in favour with all the people and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (see Acts 2:45-47). So divine love must be convincing and effective.

We who are God's children after our born again experience are required to choose and follow His instructions. God bestows His wisdom on the humble and lowly in order to shame this world. God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of our life (1 Corinthians 1:27-30). He is still calling: 'Come and learn from me; for I am gentle and lonely in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light' (Matt. 11:28-30).

The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil; pride, arrogance, corruption and perverted speech are hated by God (Proverbs 1:7 & 8:13).

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"Filtered, Disciplined and Directed thoughts":

How Apostle Paul would restructure dysfunctional relationships: A Biblical Model!

Dysfunctions produce chaotic relationships in any unit including family. Individuals in dysfunctional families are poorly organized and the household is plagued with various problems. Parents become inconsistent and indecisive and their children are emotionally abandoned. A little bit of dysfunctional element is found in every family, even from the Biblical period. Some of the families in the Bible were more dysfunctional than the families of the present time.

In Adam's family, husband and wife blamed each other and children developed sibling rivalry resulting in the murder of the younger son. Dysfunctional moments are found in Abraham's family when he, for his self-protection, pretends that Sarah is his sister; and in Isaac's family where parents show favoritism to one child over the other (Isaac to Esau and Rebecca to Jacob). Isaac's family consisted of a "permissive father, a controlling mother, an errant older son, and a deceptive younger son". Nevertheless, we should remember that they were the main families God used to build His nation.

Marital or family dysfunction, generally, occur when the couples or parents develop irrational and unrealistic ideas about their relationships and introduce negative, often extreme, evaluations of self and others when problems arise. Frank M. Dattilio, a professor of Psychiatry, who introduced Cognitive Behavioral Therapy into Family Counseling, identifies eight common cognitive distortions that may cause dysfunctions and conflicts in families (Dattilio, 2001. pp 5-6). They are:

1. Arbitrary Inferences: A conclusion generated about an event without substantiating evidences. For instance, when a child comes home 5 minutes late the parents conclude that their children are engaged in delinquent behavior.

2. Selective abstraction: Taking things out of context, paying attention to distortion-supporting details, but ignoring other important information. For example, always quick to notice the mistakes done by spouse or child, but never appreciate accomplishments.

3. Overgeneralization: Generalizing from one or two incidents to assigning someone a consistent, ongoing attribute. For example, the spouse or child is declared completely unreliable

because s/he became late once or twice to pick up the individual from the work place or school

4. Magnification or Minimization: Making more or less out of a situation or event that is warranted by the facts. For example, if an adolescent child gets B for her Biology on the report card, the parents declare that their child will never get into a medical school. Later, when the child's grade improved, the parents lament that this one time improvement didn't really help the child much.

5. Personalization: A form of arbitrary inference that occurs when external events are attributed to oneself without sufficient evidence. For instance, when a comment about a neighbor's weight is made by the husband, the wife takes it to mean "he thinks I am fat".

6. Dichotomous Thinking: Classifying experiences as all or nothing, always or never, complete success or failure, totally good or totally bad, absolutely right or absolutely wrong. For example, when wife says "I wish you would have selected a yellow color saree, not the red," and the husband thinks, "Nothing ever I do is good enough".

7. Labeling and Mislabeling: Attaching trait labels to self or others for what is essentially a single or small set of incidents. For example, declaring oneself stupid when making a mistake, or declaring their child as lazy when s/he express desire to watch TV rather than practice violin.

8. Mind Reading: Belief that he or she knows what others are thinking. This happens when couples, parent, or children say they know what other people are going to say. It is a guess that is framed in the negative more often than not.

Most of the family conflicts are caused by these eight cognitive distortions. These distortions lead to automatic or irrational thoughts (schemas) that turn into pre-set, personal positions. These schemas generally lead individuals to look at self and others in a narrow and self-prescribed ways. These cognitive distortions narrow automatic thoughts in individuals in the family which in turn produce negative feelings that lead to distorted behavior. To facilitate change of dysfunctional families to functional, it is important to help the members to identify and correct faulty or disorderly thinking.



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Marital or family dysfunction, generally, occur when the couples or parents develop irrational and unrealistic ideas about their relationships and introduce negative, often extreme, evaluations of self and others when problems arise

Apostle Paul, in his teaching identifies certain steps that would help for cognitive restructuring. They are:

1. Filtering:

Using a filter for the thoughts is a major factor in Paul's view of cognitive restructuring. Paul states in Philippians 4:8, "finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things."

Bible everywhere states that we can restructure our thought pattern by filtering the thought life. It is a defeatist attitude to say that we simply cannot help it when our minds are filled with unwelcome thoughts. A successful family relationship is possible if the individual members of the family get rid of the evil thoughts and restructuring them to positive by meditating on more noble and positive thoughts. The present day psychologist and psychotherapist have come to agree with Apostle Paul in stressing the dangers of negative thinking.

Filtering the thoughts can be done by challenging the automatic thoughts using challenging questions or self-statements (2 Corinthians 10:5). The Cognitive Behavioral Family Therapists suggest that cognitive restructuring and development of new thought patterns that produce healthy relationships within the family are possible by weighing the evidence in the present situation, developing hypothesis about other possible conclusions, gathering more evidences, rating person's degree of belief in the revised cognition, and then, checking the emotional response to the alternative response.

2. Disciplining:

Filtering our thoughts helps the couples or parents, and children to skillfully judge and carefully regulate the automatic thoughts. Paul says, "Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). This is to judge all thoughts and speculations in the light of the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By bringing the thoughts into captivity, individuals keep in check all thoughts and regulate feelings facilitating changes about self and others. It provides skill, judgment and discipline needed to achieve a desired result in the relationship. Paul would

not condemn all automatic thoughts as distorted, but warn that we must not allow those thoughts and schemas to be exercised in defiance of the Lord and in disobedience to Him. Jesus said, "for from within, out of the heart of men, proceeds evil thoughts ...All these evil things comes from within and defile a man".

3. Directing.

Start thinking in the Direction of Change: Directing all thinking to make changes in terrible situation. According to Paul this is possible when our thoughts are renewed or rationalized in the spirit of our mind. "That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4: 22-24). The automatic thoughts taking place that causes negative feelings and emotions are challenged filtering them according to the standard of the teachings of Jesus Christ and direct them to righteousness and holiness. Renewing of the mind, according to Paul, facilitate changes in individuals and families. Paul states, "...be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God".

The FDD (Filtering, Disciplining and Directing) paradigm of Paul in cognitive restructuring is a biblical model that every individual of the families can practice in restoring a healthy relationship. It is normal to have a little bit of problems in every family, but the individuals have to take responsibility to keep it from going dysfunctional.

Mind set on the things above and controlled by the Holy Spirit helps to consider life and thoughts as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desires, greed, and distorted emotions. With the regenerated thought pattern we put away things like anger; wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from life (cf. Col. 3: 1-11). With the restructured cognitive pattern, which is the result of life controlled by the Spirit, individuals can lay aside the old self with its evil practices and put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created us. It provides a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience helping to bear with one another and forgive one another. Remember: An event produces a thought and thought produces a feeling that controls the behavior and action.

"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (things produced by your automatic thoughts that are not restructured) cf. Galatians 5:16-26. ■

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God's Book for Mankind:

- Part 3 -

In this article let's look at several important topics in connection with God's Book for mankind.

Inspiration

This word comes from the Greek word, "*theopneustos*" and literally means God-breathed or breathed out by God. Holy Scriptures are the product of the breath of God.

Human writers were directed and influenced by the spirit of God in such a way that they wrote what God wanted them to write without losing their personal style. God worked through this process supernaturally. God guided these writers to write what He wanted to communicate to mankind and He superintended the human writers so what they wrote is the Word of God.

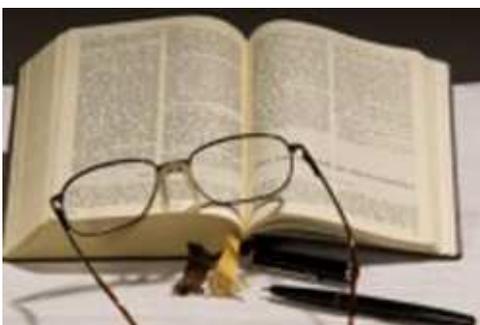
Inspiration of the Bible is verbal. It means that God caused the writers to use the very words they wrote but, God did not dictate the words to them. Inspiration is also plenary, meaning that every fact in the Bible is totally, fully and completely inspired. There is no other book like this and no other writers were inspired by God in such a way as the writers of the Bible. Inspiration does not mean that God approves of every statement to be true. For instance, what the serpent told Eve was a lie but the incident is recorded truthfully in Genesis. Inspiration has to do with the method of recording what God wanted to communicate to mankind.

Infallibility and inerrancy

This means that there is no false information in the Bible. Whatever is written in the Bible, in the original, is true and correct without error. Even though the Bible does not use the words infallibility and inerrancy, the idea is clearly evident. The Bible is unique, fully reliable and without error.

Revelation

The word revelation comes from the Greek word "*apokalupsis*" meaning uncover, unveil or reveal. God showed, or made known, to the writers of the scriptures, what they needed to know and write. The Holy Bible is the only written special revelation given to mankind by God. We would have never known so much of the nature, attributes, character, plan for mankind, plan for the future and works of God except for God showing it to the writers through the special revelation. Jesus



Christ is also the unique revelation of God in the flesh – "the word became flesh". Revelation has to do with the content of the subject matter.

Apart from Jesus Christ, and the written word of God, there is the natural or general revelation of God in creation or nature and in human conscience.

Illumination

The word *photizo* (Greek) means to enlighten. Illumination is a ministry of the Holy Spirit to help the believer understand and comprehend the word of God which is written by the Spirit of God. Illumination brings out the meaning of the written word of God to the believer. The work of the Holy Spirit impacts the human heart, mind and will.

Interpretation

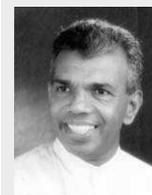
The study of the principals of interpretation is called "*hermeneutics*". Correct interpretation is of great importance for proper understanding and application of the word of God. One must especially consider the immediate context of the passage being studied. Each passage must be taken in light of the total content of the Bible. Bible students should ask questions such as: What is the main message of a passage? To whom was it originally written? How does it apply to the readers today? Is it a command, a promise, a parable or a narrative? What is the normal plain meaning of the word/words? Is it a figure of speech, a prophecy or a promise? Interpret contextually, grammatically and plainly. Interpret scripture in the light of other scriptures.

Remember that the entire Bible was originally not given to man at the same time as mentioned in a previous article. God revealed Himself progressively. So much of what God required during the Old Testament, under the old covenant is no longer applicable in the New Testament, under the new covenant.

Application

Spiritual principles, teachings and moral commandments of God are applicable to the people of all generations, past, present and future.

Bible Study



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Here is the third part of the Bible Study series on the Books of the Bible by Dr. Varghese

Spiritual principles, teachings and moral commandments of God are applicable to the people of all generations, past, present and future.

It is BETTER to TRUST in God – *no matter WHAT HAPPENS*



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"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him. He also shall be my salvation..." (Job 13:15-16)

As Job processed his current pitiful situation, he made a very important decision that would go a long way in providing him fortitude for his arduous journey ahead. He purposed to put himself in God's hands despite his ignorance of God's purposes for him. He could not save himself after all (Job 13:13–14), so no matter what God did to him - even to the point of taking his life - he would trust God completely (vs. 15–16). By thus submitting himself to God, Job was not conceding that his friends' accusations about him were justified. Indeed, he maintained that his defense before them was indisputable (vs. 17–19).



was scaring him who was like a leaf tossed in the wind, and (5) why God was going after him whose life had turned to dry wood (vs. 22–25). To Job it seemed that God had put him in the impossible situation of holding him accountable for misdeeds that He refused to disclose to him (vs. 26–28). Job then concluded that human

beings by nature and birth were hopelessly fragile and impaired. Their existence is temporal (Job 14:1–2), and their days were predetermined by God (vs. 3–5). It was therefore better to trust in God – no matter what happens!

Job is a good example to emu-late – he resolved to trust God even though life had turned sour for him. Even though darkness was on every side, Job decided to look up to the 'light of the world' for guidance and comfort.

During times of intense trouble, let us also resolve to trust in God and wait on Him to act on our behalf. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. (Prov. 3:5-7)*

Job then turned to the Lord with two requests and five questions. He begged for

God (a) to take away His hand of wrath and (b) to deliver him from fear (vs. 20–21). He asked God (1) to reveal the gravity of his sins, (2) why God was hiding from him, (3) why God was treating him as an enemy, (4) why God

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"God's Book for mankind" Continuation from previous page

The ceremonial requirements of the Old Testament law were for the people who lived under the law of Moses. The spiritual meaning and application of the Old Testament teachings are given in the New Testament. Circumcision is one example. It was physical and external in the Old Testament, but it is

spiritual and internal in the heart in the New Testament.

Communication

Every believer is to communicate the word of God by the way we live in obedience to the word of God. So our lives become living letters (epistles) to

others around us. It is called "walking in obedience to the Spirit of God". We should also share the word of God with as many people as possible so that many may walk in the light of the word of God. God's word is a "lamp unto the feet and a light unto the path" of everyone who wishes to follow it.

Meet a God who exceeds our expectations!

(Part II)

Now let us look at the second part of what this story teaches us, that is, what does this say about how God in Jesus works.

What Jesus can offer a sick man

Jesus approaches this man, who has very little chance of being healed by the Bethesda miracle and asks him whether he would like to be healed. Then asks him to get up, pick up his mattress and walk. Jesus heals this man on a Sabbath when no Jew is allowed to work. For this he invites opposition from the Jews. "So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him" (John 5:16) and they even plotted to kill him. Why did Jesus break the Sabbath, and invite the wrath of the Jews in order to heal this man. Waiting for one more day may not mean anything for a man who has been suffering 38 years!

Jesus' priority is human need

The first thing we learn from this is that for Jesus the priority always has been the human need. Cultural practices came second for Jesus, but he gave preference to deal with the pain people went through. Jesus did not disregard the Jewish practices. He showed that it is not the letter of the law that matters but compassion to his creation. Don't imagine that Jesus was doing this to make Jews angry. He was not doing this to show that Sabbath can be violated.

Jesus kept the Sabbath

Jesus observed Sabbath. The Bible makes it very clear that Jesus did not disregard Jewish practices. He said once, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17). Jesus did not want to break the Sabbath; as a Jew He observed the Sabbath. Jesus always went to the Synagogue on Sabbath day to worship and sometimes to preach. He never encouraged anyone to break Sabbath. Luke 4:16 says that it was Jesus custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read" (Luke 4:16).

Jesus disregarded the Sabbath to alleviate human pain

However, there are six instances where Jesus broke the strict restrictions of the Sabbath. In five of these instances it was to heal people who had been suffering for long years. The sixth one was to let his starving disciples have some food. That is to say that whenever Jesus violated the Sabbath, it was to alleviate human pain.

Let us look at each of these: Matt. 12:1-13: we read the story of the disciples plucking the heads of grain while passing through the grainfields. Though it was on a Sabbath, and Jewish law interpreted plucking corn as harvesting and thus work, Jesus did not stop them doing that. For Jesus what mattered is not the strict observance of the Jewish laws but the hunger of his disciples. He did not want his disciples to go hungry on a Sabbath day. In the same chapter of Matthew, and also in Mark 3 we read about Jesus healing a man with a withered hand on a Sabbath day. This man had been suffering with a withered hand and Jesus felt the urgency of his need and decided that he cannot wait till Sabbath is over. So again he broke the Sabbath so that he may alleviate the pain of a sick man. Another instance of Jesus breaking the Sabbath is found in Luke 13:10-17 where Jesus healed a woman crippled for eighteen years. This woman has suffered for eighteen years. Jesus decides that she doesn't have to wait another day for her healing. The next case is the passage we are now looking at John 5 where Jesus breaks Sabbath in order to heal a man who was invalid for 38 years. In John 9 we find Jesus again breaking the Sabbath laws. This again was to heal a sick person. In this case, it is a man who was born blind. He has never seen light in his life. Jesus decides that he doesn't have to wait another day; he heals him on the Sabbath day. The last case is found in John 14 where Jesus heals a man with dropsy. The man with dropsy had suffered enough, but Jesus will not wait for the Sabbath to be over to heal him. We learn a important lesson from these. For Jesus what matters is not the laws and restrictions. He cannot wait when a person suffers. Any suffering demands immediate attention of Jesus. Our God exceeds the limits of man made laws. He has

What the world could offer

(Discussed in Part I)

1. Your healing depends on your efforts.
 2. Your healing depends on your luck.
 3. Your healing is controlled by legalism.
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less regards to the human cultural limits and he is an iconoclast.

**God works overtime
to show compassion**

A second important lesson is that our God is one who works overtime to show compassion. Jesus' answer to the Jews when they asked him why he is working on Sabbath is interesting. He said, "Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working'" (5:17). The Bible says that God rested on the seventh day of creation; they believed that it is the reason for the observance of Sabbath. From this the Jews at least some Jews in the days of Jews deducted that God is a God who takes a weekly rest! That is not how the Bible portrays God. The psalmist sang about God as, "He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber; Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4-5).

Jesus corrects a wrong popular notion. Sabbath is not God's holiday.

- God is always awake
- God is always active
- God is always powerful
- God is always willing

Let us draw new strength and confidence from this fact. Our God gives our pain the highest priority. Our God is a God who works overtime to show his compassion to his people. He never takes a break! God is much beyond what we think of him. Our God is a God who exceeds the notions of God that our world has taught us. He is beyond the pious notions that we were brought up with.

Our response to God's initiative

The next question is how do we respond to such a God. The first thing that we note is that most often, we fail to understand God's intentions for us.

1. Unable to understand His intentions

The invalid man in this story stands up for all of us. His answer to Jesus question reveals many things; the first being his inability to understand Jesus' intentions for him. Jesus approached this man and asked, (verse 6), "Do you want to get well?" The answer ought to be simple and direct one: Either "Yes" or "No". His answer we find in verse 7. He said, "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me". He answered that he has no one to take him to the water. In other words, he was saying that he want to be healed, but what he need is a person who can take him to the water beating others. This is typical of the 'inside the box' thinking. This man is not able to think of a possibility of being healed without dashing into the water first. He has been so used to the system

of Bethesda that he can only think of Jesus to help him take most of Bethesda. He cannot think out of the Bethesda box! We do the same! We try to understand God's actions in human terms. We cannot think of a God who exceeds human abilities. We try to limit God within a human framework. Most of the time we think God is another human being. We always try to understand God's plans for us through the man-made frameworks. What we need is grace to know God's intentions for us. His intentions for us exceeds even our expectations.

2. Self-pity

The second aspect of our response to God's initiative in our life is that we always respond in self-pity. Note the man's answer again. The first thing he says is that, "I have no one". That is, I have no one to help me.

Self-pity is a an attitude that looks only at your weaknesses while ignoring your own God given strength. Self pity happens when you focus on what you can not do, or what you are not and ignore what you are and what God can do through you.

How people use self-pity

Most often people use self-pity in order to avoid taking up God-given tasks. People often point to their problems and ask God to let them go. In the Bible, there was a man who later became a leader who used this as an excuse. It is none other than the Moses, the founder of Judaism. When God called him and asked him to go to Egypt and deliver his people Moses used an excuse highlighting his weakness. In Exod. 4:10, we read that Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue" (Exod. 4:10). If we look back at Moses life, we see a different person. Though he grew up in the palace of the Pharaoh, he always wanted to help his people. When he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, he killed the Egyptian. On another occasion when he saw two Hebrew fighting with each other he tried to intervene. He did not think of his weaknesses then. But when God calls him to a task, he would highlight his weakness. Self-pity is most often used to avoid God. When God makes an offer, he is not asking you to make a list of your weaknesses. He only wants you to say Yes/No to his simple question.

3. Blame

The third aspect of our response to God's initiative is blame. He said, "Someone gets in the water before me". If self-pity focuses on one's weakness, blame is a attempt to take the focus of us and leave it at someone else's door! This comes from our unwillingness to own up our own mistakes. According to the Bible, this blame game started in the garden of Eden. There were three culprits in the garden of Eden. The Serpent who deceived the woman to eat the forbidden fruit. The woman who knowingly disobeyed God's

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**Our response
to God's
initiative**

1. Unable to understand His intentions
 2. Self pity
 3. Blame
-

Delay is never a denial

We must have been discouraged and perhaps puzzled as to why some times our prayers go unanswered. This true story can help us solve the puzzle! This happened during the war in Iraq. The US soldiers were doing their best and were advancing ahead but there came a point when they could not move ahead because there was sand storm and torrential rain hindering their crossing of the Euphrates river. Kevin, one of the members of the troop, was a believer and he called his Pastor and asked the church to pray so that they can advance forward. Even though the church prayed earnestly, the rain grew more intense and continued for many days hindering their plan. As the church kept on praying the rain became more and more intense. Kevin was much puzzled and disheartened. When the rain finally did stop he was shocked to see that the wind and the rain had eroded much of the river's banks exposing hundreds of round, metal discs above the sand. Those were land mines that the enemy had set up in order to destroy them in the areas where the US troops planned to advance. As the rain was really heavy for days, the sand that covered the land mines were washed away and the troops



Anoop Chacko, U.K.

were able to see and avoid them. So they realized that the Lord loved them and His plans were different from what their minds could plan.

Dear friends, we too like Kevin and his troops have to face situations when we feel our God is not answering our prayers. We become so eager and anxious to complete our task, that we never realize God's task and His plan. We ask God to act on our task and when we see a delay we think it is a denial from God. This leads us to disappointments and mental agony. But realization of God's plan would give us peace as well as lead our lives to perfection. God who destines His plans for us has a greater and better plan

because His thoughts are always above ours as it says in Isaiah 55: 9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith 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".

*Friends, we serve a Living God;
Who is beyond our imagination
Whose ways are beyond our expectation,
Whose love is also beyond our imagination.*

Man always starts his work with an elaborate plan and a huge publicity. But God's starting point is always intrinsic. Man's beginning usually ends in only a small percentage of lasting value. God's beginning always ends in perfection. God's beginnings may seem so small, they appear so little that we may not notice it, but be assured God is silently working.

Both God and men have thoughts which are natural and essential to both but then the thoughts of men are finite and limited, whereas the thoughts of the Lord are infinite and boundless.

Dear friends, when your prayers go unanswered, thank God because He has a perfect plan for you. ●

"Meet a God who exceeds our expectations" Continuation from previous page

command by eating the fruit. The Man who ate the fruit without questioning. When God came to the garden He did not question the serpent first. He questions the Man, though he is at the end of the chain of actions. However, Adam first blamed Eve. In Genesis 3:12, we read the what Adam told God. The man said, "The woman you put here with me - she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." He tries to escape blaming his wife. However, when God turned to the Woman, he tried to pass the buck on to the snake. She said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Gen. 3:13). The snake has no one to blame. But when God punished the offenders, he did not waste time tracking the origin of the sin, but punished every offender. The reason is simple: everyone is responsible for his actions. God won't let us off the hook by blaming others. Blaming is useless: How hard you try to blame another person, it is not going to change you. It is

a waste of time. Blaming, can only help to take the focus off you for a while; the onus for our actions rest on us. By blaming you may succeed in making another person feel guilty but it may not change you nor the circumstances that makes you unhappy.

All that we need to do in order to take the offer of God who exceeds our expectations is to come to him in humble faith. Not to pity ourselves, nor to blame others, but to trust in the unlimited wisdom and power of our God. Because God exceeds our expectations.

Application:

What God has to offer always exceeds what the world can offer.

What God can do for you is not limited by your strength, your circumstances, nor the strength of the people around you. ■

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Restore us to Yourself, *Oh Lord!*

'But you are a chosen people, a royal priest hood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (1 Pet. 2:9).

God our heavenly Father brought us into Pentecostal experience in order to live with Him and enjoy heavenly experience even as we are on this earth. It is God's plan that we are redeemed and are to work for the perishing ones around us. Our God paid a heavy price for us in order to deliver us from the clutches of the devil. He gave us His own son Jesus Christ to die on Calvary. He is abiding in us in His Spirit. He wants us to enjoy this Pentecostal experience and to be strong witnesses for Him. He wants us not to be satisfied with the position of "mere believers". Lord Jesus wants us to be His 'disciples' who are able to make all the nations His disciples.

But Alas ! What have we made of ourselves? We came out of traditional churches or gentile background to be a separated holy nation. Instead of continuing our constant walk with our Lord, our eyes are constantly fixed on the worldly people, their rich life style, their dress code, financial status, health and wealth.

Our prayers are motivated by greed for more and more possession on this earth. Our prayers are full of worry and tension. Somehow we, who claim to be New Israel, have developed a tendency to be in this rat race. A good palatial house, vehicles, good health, very good education for our children and thereafter settlement in Gulf, U.K. U.S. or Australia, very good food, a fat bank balance, comfortable life without any sickness, visit to holy lands where our Lord Jesus lived as a man, pleasure trips for enjoying sceneries and waterfalls etc., attending the church on a regular basis, generous donations to the church and to its various activities, securing a high position in the parish meetings - local and central – our wish list is endless. When all the dreams (above mentioned) are fulfilled, a big 'Thank you Lord for blessing me so much' will be our refrain.

**Mary Mathew
Mulund, Mumbai.**

We have time and energy to go to States or any other well known territories but we find less time or no time to wipe the tears of the needy and the miserable ones around us. Early morning Bible Study and meditation time is conveniently replaced by "morning walk" ('Doctor has advised brisk walk for 1 km in the morning').

"A little exercise is useful for our body'. With this assurance from the Word and the world, we move on. Paul says, "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promises for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

**Be a disciple, make
others disciples by
disciplining our life day by
day till we attain that ever-
lasting life which is mas-
ter-planned by our
Almighty God**

Our cupboards are filled with the latest fashionable designer clothes. So 'my God has blessed me' – has crept into our mind. We have developed a mentality to shine in front of others. Our wish to show the world: "see how my God has honoured me because I have

honoured him' – we quote the WORD conveniently.

Where are my tears? What is my present attitude toward the people around me? Do I find time to pray for my brethren? When I enjoy the blessings in my life, do I really feel grateful to my Lord? Do I have concern for the forsaken, miserable and persecuted Christian brothers and sisters of the family of God which is scattered all over the world?

We are not called for competing with the temporal people. We are here for an exclusive work. Let us, therefore, be all the more eager to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). God's loving mind to us is explicit in the following words: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me. If you utter worthy, not worth less words you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you but you must not turn to them" (Jer. 15:19).

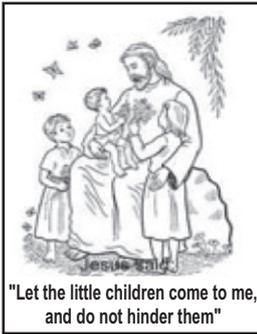
Is there any other assurance or sign of love like this? Our Lord is patiently waiting to see how we lift up His name in front of unbelievers we need to have a personal encounter with our Lord.

You and I are called for fulfilling the great dream of our Master who was, who is, who will always be the main planner and builder of our body, mind and spirit. Let us not forget to fulfil our great master's commandment.

Be a disciple, make others disciples by disciplining our life day by day, week after week till we attain that everlasting life which is master planned by our Almighty Father God with His Son Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit.

Let us ask Him to forgive because we tried to follow easy Christianity.

Oh Lord, forgive us for living only for ourselves. Enable us to live for others. Teach us to shed tears for the needy ones and to work whole heartedly for Thy Kingdom. Make us pure and holy for Thee. Amen



Honesty pays

A school teacher decided to put a small test. She announced in her class: "I am going to give each one of you a seed today. You should plant the seed and come back after two months. I will then see the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the best student of the year".

One student, named Eric, received a seed just like the others. He went home and planted the seed. Every day, Eric would water it and watch to see if it had grown but to his disappointment nothing ever grew. By now, his friends were talking about their plants, but Eric didn't have a plant and he felt like a failure. Finally the day arrived when all the students had to bring their plants for inspection.

Eric decided to be honest and went to

school with his empty pot. As Eric entered the class he was amazed to see the variety of plants grown by his classmates. Seeing Eric's empty pot his classmates began to mock and laugh at him. After some time the teacher entered the class and students began to proudly display their plants. When Eric's turn came, he got to the front and showed his empty pot.

Much to Eric's surprise the teacher announced: "Here is the best student of

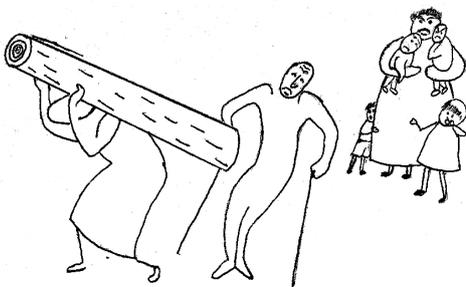
the year". She said, "The seed which I gave all of you were boiled seeds; and so would not grow. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Eric was the only honest student to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the best student of the year!"

Dear friends, God wants us to be honest in all areas of our lives. God asks us to keep our tongue from evil and our lips from telling lies. Bible says in Proverbs 12:22 the Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy. Let's like David ask God: "Save me, LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues".



Juby Susan Anoop

Jesus is our best carrier of our heavy loads.



Sheba Mary Roymon
Bahrain



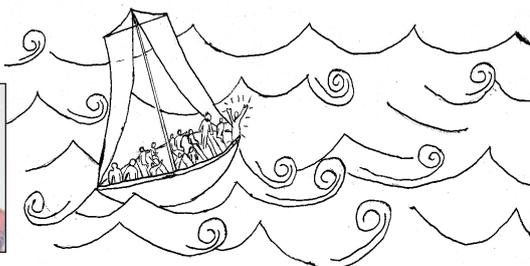
Pheba Susan Sam
Kerala

When you feel the need of help there you call Jesus.

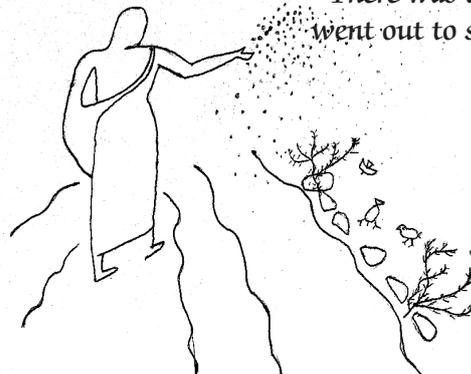
Pray to God when you are in great distress.



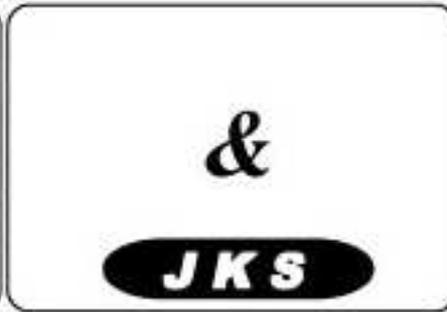
Rufos Roymon
Bahrain



There was a man who went out to sow the seed



Jeff Sam Scariah
Kerala



George Beverly Shea passes away at the age of 104



"America's beloved Gospel Singer" and long-time Billy Graham associate **George Beverly Shea** died on April 16, 2013 at the age of 104. The soloist of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Mr. Shea ministered with Billy Graham at nearly every Crusade for more than half a century. Through music and the proclamation of the Word, Shea and Graham shared the saving faith of Jesus Christ to millions in every continent.

Born in Ontario, Canada on February 1, 1909, where his father was a Wesleyan Methodist minister, Mr. Shea's first public singing was in the choir of his father's church. He started singing for Billy Graham in 1944 and became the musical mainstay in his crusades. He sang in hundreds of concerts and recorded more than 70 albums of sacred music. He was a noteworthy composer, and the songs he wrote incorporated the message of the saving power of Jesus Christ.

Rev. Billy Graham said: "George Beverly Shea was one of my closest friends for nearly seventy years. He was one of the first members of our evangelistic team. Beginning in Chicago, we traveled the world together, with our close friend and comrade Cliff Barrows. I've been listening to Bev Shea sing for more than 70 years, and I would still rather hear him sing than anyone else I know. Bev was one of the most humble and greatest Christians I have ever known. He has set an example and has been a role model of what a Christian ought to be. His contribution to my ministry cannot be measured in human terms. I have lost one of the best friends I have ever had, but he and I look forward to seeing each other in Heaven relatively soon".

Religion is no longer a poison for atheist China

Mao described religion as 'poison', outdoing his guru, Karl Marx, who had called it just the 'opium of the masses'. Now the Communist Party is trying to build bridges with religious groups instead of discouraging them. Party leaders are telling religious groups that there are more similarities and few

conflicts between socialism and spiritualism. The Buddhist Association of China, which is affiliated to the Communist Party condemned the anti-government movement by Tibetans, who are committing self-immolations. Yu Zhengsheng, a member of the powerful standing committee of the political bureau of the Communist Party of China, said: "Among our people, it remains secondary whether they choose

to believe or not to believe in religion, or which religion they choose to believe in. The common goal of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is primary". Yu went round visiting the headquarters of associations run by different religious groups like Buddhists, Taoists, Muslims and Catholics over two days. He canvassed the idea of using religion's "positive role" for nation building. The party's different units have been asked to "support religious groups and help them solve practical problems".

This is a far cry from the stand taken by Mao and friends. But the Communists have realized finally that the divine spark in man cannot be extinguished!

A science teacher goes on trial

John Freshwater, a science teacher for 20 years, was dismissed from service in Ohio, USA for talking openly with students about his Christian faith and theories of intelligent design during discussions on evolution and homosexuality. The school board also accused him of insubordination because he refused to remove a Bible from his classroom. He was fired in 2009 and two lower courts ruled in the board's favor. Now the state Supreme Court has agreed to hear his case. His attorneys argue that the school board violated the teacher's constitutional rights "for challenging his students to think outside the box - the right to debate and express ideas contrary to established views".

Charles Darwin published some of his ideas as a theory with no supporting evidence. Satan has used the ideas and successfully created doubts in minds of people about the existence of an Almighty Creator! The divine design of a super-human intelligence can easily be seen in every part of creation. But "the fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'!"

Revival among the Latino Christians

'Time' magazine reports that a big revival is taking place among the Spanish speaking Americans who have migrated from different countries of South America. Born again, Bible believing Latino Protestants represent one of the fastest growing segments among America's church going millions. According to Pew Forum, more than two-thirds of the 52 million Latinos in US are Catholic. But by 2030, the percentage is likely to be reduced to half. Many are joining evangelical congregations. El Calvario, a Washington D.C. church had 400 members 18 months ago. Now more than 800 people attend in each of the many services on Sunday. Many Latino congregations start as basement prayer meetings. Latinos who convert from Catholics say they want to know God personally, without a Priest as a middleman. People are looking for a real experience with God. Pastor Peredes says that experience comes largely from exploring the Bible. He adds: "We do the best to preach with the Bible open. When they read the Bible, they find a lot of things they did not know before. They may have had religion, but they did not have an experience".

Revival is sweeping different parts of the world among many people groups!

Evangelicals give more to Charity!

A new study by the Barna Group has concluded that Evangelical Christians tend to give more to charity than other Christians. The study finds that 79 percent of evangelical Christians gave money to a church or charity last year. Evangelicals are least likely to give to a nonprofit organization (28 percent), while about two-thirds of evangelicals (66 percent) who made charitable contributions gave to a church. Conversely, 82 percent of atheist and agnostic donors gave to a nonprofit organization. The study concludes: "A person's religious identification has a lot to do with whether or not they donate to causes they believe in".

The Word of God encourages charitable giving. The often quoted words of Apostle Paul say: "God loves a cheerful giver". Hence the Bible based Evangelicals are bound to follow Biblical principles!

Americans love the Bible, but don't read it much!

According to a survey conducted by the Barna Group for American Bible

Society, 88 percent of respondents said they own a Bible, 80 percent think the Bible is sacred, 61 percent wish they read the Bible more, and the average household has 4.4 Bibles. More than three-quarters of Americans (77 percent) think the nation's morality is headed downhill.

If the Bible is so commonplace in America, wouldn't its moral teachings counteract the downward trend? Doug Birdsall, president of American Bible Society, said: "I see the problem as analogous to obesity in America. We have an awful lot of people who realize they are overweight, but they do not follow a diet. People realize the Bible has values that would help us in our spiritual health, but they just don't read it". Among those who read the Bible, the majority (57 percent) only read their Bibles four times a year or less. Only 26 percent of Americans said they read their Bible on a regular basis (four or more times a week).

The Word of God which should provide illumination and guidance is hidden under bushels. Evangelists like Billy Graham are not coming up. Most of the visible (TV) preachers do not preach the Word, but propagate social theories and prosperity gospel. Can there be an escape from this downward trend? ●

"Prayer Quotes"

Prof. Zacharias Tanee Fomum, Scientist from Cameroon

Unless the prayer life of an individual is revived and kept vigorous, all that may be happening in his spiritual life may be just activities of the soul life, which are bound to be short-lived before man and of no consequence at all before God.



- ** One praying man can change a life, family, city, nation, and continent.
- ** Men are powerless against the prayers of holy, consecrated people.
 - ** All things are possible to the one who prays.
- ** Praying saints know nothing that is impossible with God.
 - ** Prayer is more important than preaching.
 - ** Prayer is more important than writing books.
- ** Prayer is more important than every other thing in the Christian life.
 - ** Prayer is the one thing that Satan dreads.
- ** The most important preoccupation of Satan is stopping the saints from praying.
 - ** Character is more easily changed by prayer than by all else.
- ** World peace will be accomplished faster by prayer than by human peace efforts.
- ** The unity of the church is maintained more by prayer than by talking, boards, and resolutions.
 - ** The prayer chamber is the place of victory.
 - ** Praying leads to total deliverance from worldliness.



- Contributed ●