



Spiritual Consumerism

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A major problem facing the 21st century Church is spiritual consumerism. Globalization seems to have produced a consumer mentality in many Christians, in terms of their relationship with the local churches. This attitude is putting unrealistic expectations on pastors and churches, and is hindering the proper discipleship of people as followers of Jesus Christ.

There was a time when the world was a very big place and the church was a local community of faith. Globalization has impacted all parts of the globe and has made the world a flat and tiny place. Through the compression of speed, travel and technology, the world has become a small village and commerce has become the foundation of most global relationships.

Commercialization focuses on profit, benefits and return on investment. These ideas are infiltrating the minds of people both in industrialized and developing nations, but are not limited to the secular market place. They are creeping into the Church. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) model of leadership is invading the churches, replacing the servant leader model taught by Jesus. The globalized world with its commercial emphasis is exerting its influence on the body of Christ.

I am not trying to discount the benefits of globalization or the good contributions the world of business provides the Church. Certainly the Church must do its earthly work in a business-like fashion. But when the church becomes just a business, something very important is lost, producing what I call the Wal-Mart concept

of church growth. Here the church is just a business, offering spiritual goods and services. Believers are consumers with their varying needs and tastes. The pastor as CEO and his associates make sure that the need-based goods and services are provided at a reasonable cost with superior level of customer service. A satisfied customer is the ultimate goal. The customer is always right and efficiency is the highest value.

I am not suggesting that seeker friendly worship and ministries that address people's real problems are unwarranted. I am saying that the Church must receive her organizational instructions from the word of God. Church leaders must be servants of God, the gospel and the Church. Servant leadership must be the dominant model. The Gospel must be preached. Members must not be treated as consumers; they are family - members of the household of faith. The congregation is not just an audience. It is the people of God gathered in the name of Jesus of Nazareth to worship God in Spirit and Truth.

Visitors must not be abused. Believers must be given avenues to grow as disciples of Jesus. Pastors must be more than CEO's; they must be shepherds who preach, teach, heal and lead. Christian life is not about spiritual goods and services; it is about transformation. The church is a place where transformation happens through the work of the ministry led by the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual consumerism may create satisfied customers, but the Church is commissioned to produce transformed lives. A church is a place where one can invest his/her time, talent and treasure to worship, learn, grow and minister. Return on investment in the Church is not about the next stock trading day, it is about eternity.

22nd Anniversary Issue

Discerning the Will of God

There are various ways that God speaks to us. Some will have extraordinary stories that entail hearing an audible voice, seeing a dream, hearing a prophetic word, or having a vision. However, for most of us, this is not a regular occurrence, if we indeed experience it at all. Still, we believe that knowing God's will is not supposed to be so elusive. God is pleased to guide His children; but is there a way to know God's will without having dramatic revelations? I believe so. Here are five ways we can have a framework to discern God's will.

1. Know God's Word.

If the Bible is primarily a book about God, and we would like to know His will, we would do well to immerse ourselves in Scripture. Scripture is there to train, correct, and equip us for every good work (2 Tim. 3:14-17). This is the revealed will of God; and we may be surprised to discover just how many of our questions are answered within its pages. Let me be clear. This is not to randomly flip open the Bible and hope that the first verse your eyes look upon will tell you what to do. No. I am talking about the daily discipline of allowing Scripture to transform and renew your thinking, so that when it is time to make a decision, you can clearly discern His will, since your mind has been saturated with knowledge of who God is, what He loves, and what He hates.

2. Know His Son, Jesus.

The Pharisees knew Scripture, but they did not know the God of the Scripture (John 5:39). It is not enough to have Bible knowledge. We have to get to know God Himself. Now, while the Bible is a book primarily about God, the greatest revelation of who God is can be found in the person of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-3). To know God is to know His Son (John 14:7). If you are wondering what God's will is for your life, pay attention to Jesus as you read Scripture. Discover His aims, pursuits, desires, intentions, motivations, and ambitions. Watch Jesus as He speaks to people. Watch Him as He deals with the poor. Listen to what He says about sin, salvation, hope, fear, money, ambition,

relationships, our treasure, and what we should seek. For this is indeed God's will for you, and it will always be His will for you – that you would be conformed into the image of His Son Jesus (Rom. 8:29)

3. Let Your Heart Be Renewed

Many people will tell us to listen to our hearts. However, we know that our hearts can be wicked and misleading (Jer. 17:9). That is why it is important to test our desires against the Word of God and our knowledge of Jesus Christ. For example, if you have a desire to start an orphanage, but are mostly excited about the recognition you are going to receive, then you can see that that desire does not reflect the intents and motives of Jesus (John 5:44). The truth is, as we look to Jesus, something supernatural begins to take place within us (2 Cor. 3:18). Our desires

begin to change. We begin to want what God wants. The only time we can have confidence to follow our heart is if our hearts are passionately looking to Jesus. Then as we delight in Him, and our desires reflect His, He will grant us the desires of our hearts (Ps. 37:4).

4. Seek Godly Counsel

The Bible says that better are wounds from a friend, than kisses from an enemy (Prov. 27:6). With many advisers, plans succeed (Prov. 15:22), but fools don't listen to advice (Prov. 12:15). If you have God-fearing friends or family, and you are trying to discern God's will, ask them to not only pray for you, but also advise you. Chances are, God may speak to you through their counsel. The community of believers that surround us can be a great gift that stops us from falling into sin and deception (Heb. 3:13). Many times, God will confirm His plan to us through the counsel of wise people who have travelled far ahead of us and can see with greater clarity than we can.



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LOVE

Your Enemies



Dr. George Samuel

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True love constantly yearns to do well with others. It helps us look after others with respect. May be we cannot always agree to what someone does, but still that person's action should not hold us back from loving him. God wants us to love even our enemies (Matt. 5:44).

Fully forgive and love

We know some people are obsessed with thoughts of destroying their enemies. They constantly see images of their enemies standing against them and are always anxious of confronting them. Assuming someone as their enemy and justifying the confrontations drawn against them would be their strategy to get support from others. Mostly these people might have been old friends turned enemies; fresh enemies too would have been added. For people with such obsession, the main

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What the enemies mean for evil can be made good since God can turn all things work together for the good of those who love Him.

element of thought can be the destruction of their enemies. The time they ought to have had invested in creative thinking is wasted away watching the moves of their imaginary enemies.

Even if such enemies existed, they may not be able to eliminate them physically. But still they keep on brooding upon thoughts of revenge, whereby nurturing grudge and bitterness in their hearts. Such evil thoughts weaken them emotionally,

spiritually and physically. There is a negative impact on the person who breeds bad thoughts by building walls of resentment, bitterness, hatred etc. inside. Such a person is not free inside. All such bitterness can be turned into forgiveness and one can become free.

The opposite of forgiving is being bitter. When making decisions in bitterness, its influence will cloud the rational thinking. Also a person's bitterness will destroy his own health.

"Discerning the Will of God" Continuation from previous page

5. Have Faith.

Realize that there is no way to escape the requirement of faith. Many times we are so afraid to make the wrong decision, we seek God's will in order to minimize the necessity of trust. We say, "Lord speak to me so dramatically, that it will require me no faith at all to make a decision." But it will never work. Faith will always be required. Even if a prophet speaks to you, you must believe it was from God, and not of their flesh (1 John 4:1). If you see a dream, you need faith to believe it isn't

your subconscious desires. Even if an angel visits you and tells you what to do, you must have the faith to believe that it is not the devil disguising himself

as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). So there is no way around it. But always remember, God has not given us a spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7), and will not use fear to lead us. Don't become a doctor because you are afraid God will not otherwise provide. That would be a decision led by fear. Become a doctor because you have faith that that is the way God will use you. That is a decision made by faith. And always remember the object of your faith – the faithfulness of God to lead you.

While discerning God's will may seem difficult at times, we can have a framework to understand if we would lend ourselves to the aforementioned ways. At the end of it all, if you are feeling overwhelmed, shift your focus from your ability to choose to God's ability to guide you. If you are focused upon your ability to choose, you will feel restless, since you know that you are prone to error. However, if you focus on God's ability to guide you as a loving Father, you will experience peace, since He will always be faithful to you.

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If there are people who seem to be our enemies, we have to see them in the right perspective purposing to love them, and respond properly. Even the worst that men do can be a mighty instrument to implement the plan of God. What the enemies mean for evil can be made good since God can turn all things work together for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

Reinstate enemies with love

Normally we judge people based on their actions. We do not help anyone by judging him publicly and trying to prove him wrong. On the other hand, it would be helpful if make him understand his stand in order to reinstate him. Nothing purposeful would come out of an evil man by declaring him so. It is much better to find methods to restore that person from evil, instead of branding him under it.

Many a time we judge one before finding out whether the rumors about him are correct. It is important at this point to decide our priority; are we taken up by the desire to change him for good or do we actually take pleasure in condemning him? It is unfortunate indeed, if we count our flaws negligible when compared to his weaknesses. If we feel complacent when we compare ourselves to him, it means we have the attitude of judgment. Then we want to punish him for what he has done. We are once again being judgmental if we are keen on spoiling his reputation. We are only trying to find further proof for being judgmental when we dig his past. If you are not able to forgive him for what he has done against you, your inner motivation is to judge and punish him.

We cannot totally ignore the possibility of changing a bad person through the influences and prayers of people. God wants him to change for good some day and does not want him destroyed. Our duty is to see in faith the good person he will become one day. Love is not merely a feeling; it is a decision. It recognizes the value and the worth of the other person. The best we can do is to choose to love this person and work for his well-being. Love of Christ prompts us to love the most difficult person. Love influences our whole person.

It does not give space for vengeance and has the power to transform our enemies for the good.

God's tools for our benefit

Many things good or bad happen to us, especially due to the actions of others. Some people may be working against us and trying to harm us. We are told to forgive one another (Eph. 4: 32). It will be difficult to forgive them, as long as we view them as our enemies. We need to see them as tools the Lord is using for our benefit. God uses various kinds of people whom He brings into our lives. We need to thank the Lord for all of the people He uses. We may have to ask why God has allowed certain people to work against us.

Sometimes it will be for the purpose of shaping us and sometimes it is for us to shape them. We can see the offender as our benefactor by believing that the wrong he did to us might turn out eventually for our benefit. Such attitudes help to

develop virtuous personality traits in us.

Forgiveness mellows us to behave kindly to those who have wronged us. They are no more our enemies. They can be seen as our friends who bring blessing to us. We can then praise God for each one of them, and enjoy peace over the matter. We need not have to wait till they stop doing evil against us. Even if they continue to work against us, still we can have victory over it.

What we must do is to be sensitive and be prepared to listen to God and try to see God's hand in each situation. Some people are no longer sensitive to God's dealings as they are self-centered and are lacking in love. So they later suffer the consequences of their wrong responses of fighting, justifying themselves, or maintaining grudge against enemies. Here the ante-dote is to love the enemies with the love that the Holy Spirit has poured into our heart (Rom. 5:5).

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TACKLING our PROBLEMS with a different PERSPECTIVE



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"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." (Job 19:25-27)

In the earlier discourses of Job, he had mentioned death (Job 16:18), God (Job 12:13, 16, 18; 13:15-18) and hope in immortality (Job 14:13-17) as possible avenues of redemption from the present tragic reality. While responding to the harsh criticism of Bildad who listed the horrible fate of sinners, it seemed that Job would again respond with despair and self-pity. Job wished first that there could be a present but permanent record testifying to his innocence before God (Job 19:23-24).

However, Job then had a wonderful revelation that boosted his confidence as a ray of hope once more penetrated his gloom. Job became convinced that God was his Redeemer (v. 25) whom he would see some day in the future. In one of the grandest resurrection texts of the Old Testament, Job affirmed that he would survive death and not just in some disembodied form. From within his body he would see God and with literal, physical eyes (vv. 26-27). This passage may be a prophetic reference to the doctrine of bodily resurrection seen in 1 Corinthians 15.

What we can understand here is that Job feels that he will be vindicated after death through a bodily resurrection. We know that this truth was made possible into reality when our Lord Jesus

Job feels that he will be vindicated after death through a bodily resurrection. We know that this truth was made possible into reality when our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead.



Christ rose from the dead. Resurrection, then, is necessary not only to ensure unending life but also to certify the fact that our God is just. If there is no resolution of moral inequities in this life, there must be one in the life to

come. Otherwise, God is not fair, which is an unthinkable conclusion.

Like Job, let us tackle our problems with a different perspective. Let us pay close attention to what Apostle Paul speaks about this matter:

* "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the

revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:18-21)

* "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor 4:16-18)

* But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (1 Cor 2:7-10). ■

Conquer by Love

Introduction:

As statistics show, Christians form the largest religious group in the world. When the resurrected Jesus Christ established the Church through the outpouring of Holy Spirit about two thousand years ago, many scribes and lawyers predicted that the expansion of the Kingdom would be jeopardized and the movement would perish. Yet, day by day the Kingdom spread all over the world, conquering the hearts of people. They were not won by guns and bombs, but through the love of Lord Jesus Christ, working in the minds of His disciples. Christians released people from the slavery of sins; wherever they went and preached the gospel, Christ was born in the hearts of people by the power of the Holy Spirit and the word of God. Jesus Himself stated His mission: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance". Therefore it will be quite interesting to go through the paradigm of love to prove my point that no one will ever fail, if his weapon of fight is true love.

Love

What is love? The Oxford dictionary defines love as "deep affection or fondness". Bertrand Russell describes love as a condition of "absolute value" as opposed to relative value. Aristotle defines love as "to will the good of another". No doubt, it is the cosmic love

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which binds human beings of the world together, creating an interpersonal relationship among diverse kinds of people. As the Scriptures say "God is love", it falls beyond the scope of any definition, because the Almighty stands beyond everybody's guessing and



Sebastian P. Joseph
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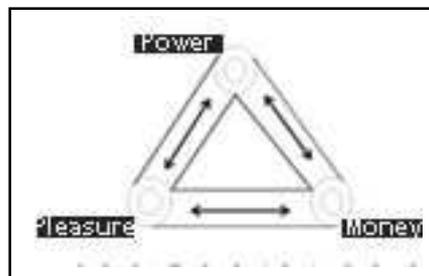
understanding. Therefore, to fall in true love one needs faith and spiritual perception.

Kinds of Love:

The term, love, refers to passion in diverse contexts. It can be interpreted in various ways as interpersonal, impersonal, philosophical, political, religious, cultural and so on. Whatever kind it may be, no doubt, there must be a bridge of love to connect people or living creatures. Based on the substance and strength of the bridge, let us briefly classify love into mortal love and eternal love.

Mortal Love:

Mortal love is universally seen in every human being and also in animals as a function of wealth, health and sex. If you are healthy, wealthy and sexy, you are loved anywhere in the world. Such types are sold and bought. Each time one buys it, he eyes it for selling at a profit. Here



profit and pleasure are the characteristics governing the bonding and furtherance of love. Most importantly, it must be pleasurable. The love is lost

when the lover dies. This love works in a triangular channel of pleasure, money and power. It can blossom only when the traffic takes place in the triangular channel. Hatred is imbibed in this worldly love and it has an inverse proportion to love. A neutral path is followed by the so called sadhus, politicians and socio-charitable workers. They have a love level balanced with hatred.

Eternal Love:

Though love is an abstract quality, it is revealed by outcomes of one's work. Eternal love has no beginning and end. It accommodates everything in it, and never seeks one's own advantage at the cost of another's. In Saint Paul's words, "Love is patient, Love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Jesus said, "greater love has no one than this, he lay down his life for

The word *Agape* is used to denote the vertical love filled in the human beings because of trust in God. It originates from the throne of Christ in heaven.

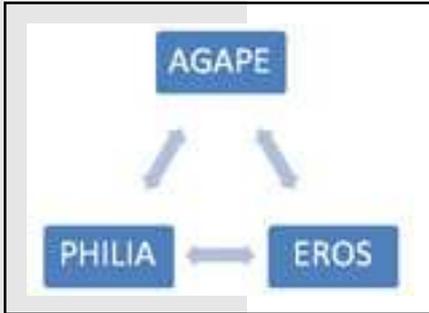
his friends" (John 15:13).

H. Van Oyen explains this love which is the foundation for Christian ethics, in three domains of Greek philosophy. The Greek words he uses for these are *Agape*, *Philia* and *Eros*.

The word *Agape* is used to denote the vertical love filled in the human beings because of trust in God. It originates from the throne of Christ in heaven. When a person receives the stream of love through faith and gets filled with it, it spills over from him to his fellow being in the form of *philia*-love. Such people in whom the love overflows start ministering to

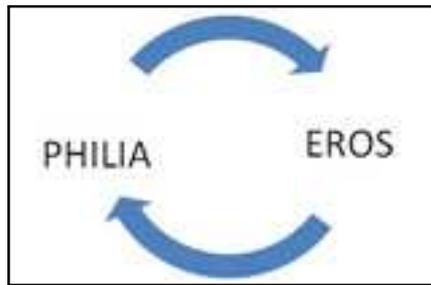
people around them with as much passion as Christ and His apostles had. They never repay evil for evil, instead they overcome evil with good. They become community leaders by serving all who are in diverse needs.

The people who get transformed by this *philia-love* through canals connecting the *Agape-love* become lively and enter into family life. As husband and wife. they lead a marvellous life of



oneness in truthfulness, understanding and faithfulness to each other and produce off springs to carry this *Eros-love* back to the *Agape-love*. This paradise of love on earth can be depicted as an isosceles triangle of which the apex is fixed in the *Agape-Love* as shown below:

Without knowing the love of Christ



(*Agape*), majority of people in the world do not have the enlightenment of love and live in a dual pole - traffic of life with no escape root for salvation.

They ferry between *philia* and *eros* and get carried away into the miseries of chaos of distrust and sentimentality. They are easily provoked and destructive. Saint Paul brings out the state of life of such people in 2 Tim. 3:2-5: "People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God having a form of godliness but denying its power". Such people undertake many social work and charitable work, but all such works are disguises for their diverse

kinds of self-seeking and sensual pleasures. If you dig into their activities and services then, you will discover their intrinsic motives. The world epics, cinemas and romances are all about this sensual love.

Rajanesh Osho had a great following around the world. He set up many ashrams and dug out broken cisterns of love in nude humans. He misguided thousands of people into the filthy love *eros*, hoping to find solace in it. But all those attempts were proved futile and ended up in the *philia-eros* vicious circle portrayed above.

Conclusion:

What could we perceive from all these? The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather serve one another in love" (Gal. 5). All types of love and commandments could be summed up in Jesus' own words, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your mind. And love your neighbour as yourselves" (Matt. 22:37-39). If we can practice these words of Jesus in our life, we can surely conquer people and nations as Christ's disciples did and proved.

Book Review

"Divinity of the Bible"

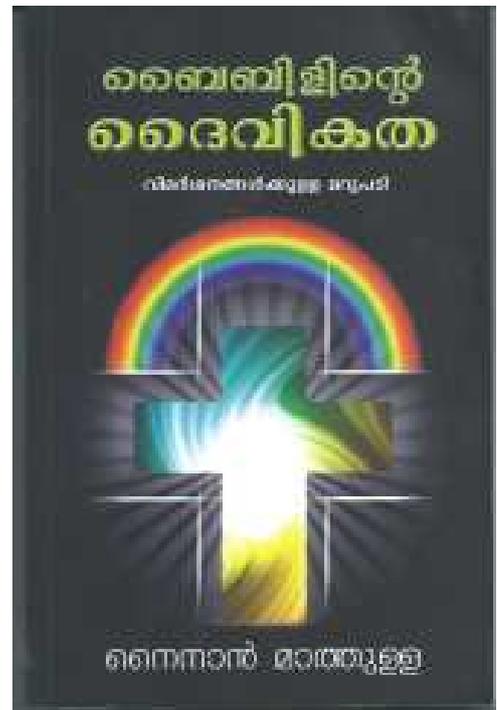
(In Malayalam)

A commendable attempt has been made by author Ninan Mathulla to clear doubts arising in the hearts of many people about the divinity of the Bible. Many questions raised by critics have also been answered. It is very rewarding and highly informative to read through the book. While answering critics, the author points the reader towards the way of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Author: **Ninan Mathulla**

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Caution:

Intrusion detected! (Part II)

You might ask me, well then, how will we decide who is going to lead us?! Well, as I said before, God is the owner of Church and He knows how to take care of it. You don't have to worry about that. Look at how our Church fathers took decisions on matters like this. They allowed the Holy Spirit to take such decisions.

I know that we cannot change the whole system all of a sudden, but of course we can start the spark. Get rid of democracy in your local church. When it comes to selecting people for carrying out various responsibilities, do it the way that apostles did it. Let spirit filled men take these responsibilities. It will make a big difference. Let church committees organize the external affairs and never stand in the way when it comes to spiritual decisions. Let the local pastor have the final word and the church committees support him rather than drive him. He is responsible for the flock he takes care of.

Bible says, *"Obey your leaders, and accept their authority. They take care of you because they are responsible for you. Obey them so that they may do this work joyfully and not complain about you. (Causing them to complain would not be to your advantage)"* (Hebrews 13:17).

That is the way God wants it to be. It makes things easier for God, when there is one person accountable for the state of the herd. So allow the pastor to get along with his responsibility and let him have the full authority to enforce what he is being told to do. It will leave them fully responsible for everything that happens in the church thereafter.

Dear pastors, teach this in your church. You deserve that authority over your church, only then you can exercise God's will in your congregation. But you have to remember that, this authority leaves you with higher responsibility and you will be



Lijo P. Johnson, U.K., discussed the way in which Satan has attempted to corrupt the doctrine and introduce strategies that deflects the growth of Church from growing into Christ's image into the image of world. The writer dwelt upon "The way of Baalam" in the first part. Here is the second part of the article.

held responsible to each and every soul within your boundaries. Take decisions prayerfully. Be impartial. Pastoral office is a highly rewarding one, if done faithfully. But at the same time it is utterly dangerous otherwise because one day you will have to stand before God who values a single human soul far higher than the entire creation. Another thing is about deacons or Bishops. When you appoint Deacons or Bishops, eradicate voting system in the process. Turn to the word of God and rely on the Holy Spirit.

We have to stand together to accomplish the great mission and exterminate the evil that has crept into our boundaries. We can bring back the fire of Pentecost and the days of revival. But you need to respond.

There are some important guidelines of the desirable qualities to be present in a Deacon as well as a pastor of a church. Ensure it is strictly followed. Entry of worldly minded people who are not lead by the Holy spirit, into the leadership hierarchy of the Church is very dangerous. We need spirit filled, gospel minded people who has a serving attitude to lead us.

We are here to bring Glory to God in this generation. We have a mission. This is the mission:

"When Jesus came near, he spoke to them. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So wherever you go, make disciples of all nations: Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do everything I have commanded you. And remember that I am always with you until the end of time" (Matthew 28:18-20).

We have to stand together to accomplish the great mission and exterminate the evil that has crept into our boundaries. We can bring back the fire of Pentecost and the days of revival. But you need to respond. The spirit of God invites each and every person who reads this article to join the cause and start the movement.

2. Nicolaitans' teaching.

There has been lot of theological arguments of what this actually means. The word "Nico" means "conquer" in Greek and "laitan" means "lay people", so the word NICOLAITAN means "conquer over people" or "rule people". Again, Satan's another treacherous trick is to inject legalism into the Church. He dragged a huge majority of Christians from following the Spirit down to strict adherence to rules and practices enforced by "rulers" termed as "church leaders". He blinded the eyes of the vast majority of Church off their spiritual freedom. He also blinded the leaders with

an earnest desire for the glory of positions and popularity and a celebrity status. He made them do anything for popularity, even if it means twisting the doctrine. Pastors, teachers and worship leaders went after popularity and celebrity status as if what they do is out of their exclusive talents. We even fought against others in gentile courts, which is totally against the Word of God (1 Cor. 6:1-8). What for? What motivates us to indict each other for whatever reason? Is it not our selfish desire for money and position, our evil desire to rule each other? We need to understand the fact that unlike the worldly system, leadership within true Christianity is not meant for someone who desires to be dictator or a celebrity. It is for someone who is ready to "serve" not "rule". Previously, I had discussed about spiritual authority that a spiritual leader has. But remember that spiritual authority is not an enslaving one. It is an enriching one and it enables you to serve and enrich your congregation. Let us see what Jesus has to say about it:

"Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. Jesus told them, "Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant" (Luke 22:25-27)

"Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, --- And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow" (John 13:3-5, 12-16).

If we have a closer look at the above passage, Jesus knew about the authority that is being given to him and that he is about to return to the divine glory and we see Jesus washing His disciples' feet. Jesus was demonstrating that a divine revelation or anointing will make

you humble and not proud, it will instill in you a passion to serve and not to be served. We are the household of God and in this household, despite its highly rewarding future, stepping into a leadership position is not a stepping up, it is rather a stepping down into servant

Jesus was demonstrating that a divine revelation or anointing will make you humble and not proud, it will instill in you a passion to serve and not to be served. We are the household of God and in this household, stepping into a leadership position is a stepping down into servant hood to serve and nurture the other members of the family.

hood to serve and nurture the other members of the family as well as be more dedicated in the proclamation of gospel. That was the attitude Paul had. In his letter to Corinthian church he says, "we preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5). It is comparable to an elder kid in a family caring for his / her younger siblings. Growth in maturity level leaves him / her with more responsibility regarding their siblings who are less matured, because less maturity makes a person more vulnerable. They can hardly grasp any laws or customs which means there is absolutely no point in trying to rule over them, but what they

Are we willing to have this same attitude as Christ Jesus, our Lord? Are you ready to serve selflessly? Holy Spirit needs you for reviving this generation. Your service might not be appreciated ...

need is love and care, that is how they acquire knowledge. The more spiritual maturity you acquire the more humility you need to have. Listen to what Paul testifies about Jesus:

"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the

humble position of a slave (Phi. 2:3-5)

Are we willing to have this same attitude as Christ Jesus, our Lord? Are you ready to serve selflessly? Holy Spirit needs you for reviving this generation. Your service might not be appreciated, same as in the case of Jesus where He came to His own people but they rejected Him. If you decide to serve as Jesus and His apostles did, you will be criticized and even persecuted sometimes from people within the Christian world. Paul says, "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never

abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8,9). These days Christian ministers might not have to face physical persecution but the moment you take the cross, the rejection that you face from within the church boundaries itself is a persecution.

Dear brothers and sisters, we serve a Master who took the form of a slave to save us from the eternal wrath. Instead of taking birth in a stable, He could have had taken birth in a royal palace or even descended directly from heaven with all His glory, the whole earth would have trembled at His arrival. But instead He took such a humble birth and bore the most humiliating death before ascending to the eternal glory. He is the one whom we serve. It is not all about self-gain or celebrity status, but it is all about serving as He did, as you follow Him to that overwhelming glory. Let us try not to strive for heaping up the appreciation of the crowd but take His cross. God is just, nothing that you do for Him will be left

unrewarded. But all your activities will undergo a fire testing. Only genuine service will survive the test, all that you have done for your own glory will burn away (1 Cor. 3:12-15). So, let us wake up, drive out the devil's ideas, take the cross and change the world. Revival will start in a person and will spread out to nations. The question is, **ARE YOU WILLING TO BE THAT PERSON?**

22 years of Christian literature ministry

Lessons from the 'Ant'

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest" (Proverbs 6:6-8)

If we look into the life of the ants carefully, we can learn many spiritual lessons.

1. Ants stay united:

Ants are small and unnoticeable creatures but they work together as one unit. With their unity, they can kill large



grasshoppers, spiders, crabs, scorpions which are much bigger and lethal. If we believers work together as one unit for the Lord, then we can crush any strong attack of the devil. The ants work together for the benefit of all, regardless of young or old generation.

2. They are hardworking:

Ants work hard to collect food and protect the anthill. They rarely stop to rest. They fight zealously to protect their kingdom and are ready to die for it.

This was also the practice of early Christians who worked zealously for the expansion of God's kingdom. They fought to defend their faith and many of them became martyrs. This is what is expected from every Christian.

3. They have only one goal:

Ants are never much concerned about themselves. They have a single goal, that of serving the kingdom. Similarly, as Christians, we should have a single goal of serving our Master.

4. They are disciplined:

Though they don't have anyone to whip them to work, they are self-motivated to do their service. Likewise we as Christians must also diligently and regularly serve our Master.



Jaison Varghese

5. They carry big burdens:

Ants can carry huge burdens, even upto 3 times its own weight. When God asked us to learn from the ants, did He mean to do hard work to make huge wealth, estates and large bungalows for ourselves, or to accomplish great things for the evangelization of the Land? The great missionary William Carey once



said, *"Expect great things from God and Attempt great things for God"*.

6. They are weak but wise:

Very often we are reluctant to take up God's work, thinking we aren't talented enough to do it. We are not rich, strong, powerful, beautiful or smart enough.

Ants are not beautiful like butterflies or strong like beetles. They can't jump heights like grasshoppers. But God has given them the instinct to store up grain for the winter. On the other hand, the grasshoppers and butterflies don't store up food and so die during winter. Ants do not grumble that they are not big or

strong or beautiful like the other insects. They use their God-given resources.

Someone has rightly observed: *"God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called"*.

7. They work with foresight:

The ants are tiny and weak creatures. But they store up food for the winter. They do not while away their time during summer days when food is plenty. They have foresight and so prepare themselves for the chilling winter days ahead. God wants us to store the treasure of the Word of God in our heart and store treasures in heaven instead of wealth and lands on this earth.

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He responded by saying, "It is written... It is also written.... And it is also written". The scriptures stored in His heart enabled Him not to listen to what His senses told Him to do. If Jesus, our Lord was tempted by Satan, surely we too will have to face temptations. When we as young people face temptations in this world, the scriptures, stored in our hearts and minds will help us to live according to His Word

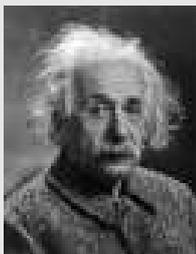
Let us understand this from a slightly different perspective. Youth age is like our summer. Old age is like our winter. As a youth we have more time, less troubles and cares, so it is the best time for building a personal relationship with God. The winter times of old age will soon come. Sorrows, sickness, pain, ill health, death and judgement will arrive. Those who are wise among the youth, like the ants, will prepare themselves early for the future by living according to His Word, working for the extension of God's kingdom, finding God's purpose in their life and building a strong faith in Him.

May God Almighty help us stand for Him with more unity, more discipline, more burden for His work and more insight for the future. May God add His blessings to our efforts.



A Bible signed by Albert Einstein sold in auction

A Bible signed by physicist Albert Einstein and his wife Elsa was sold in an auction for \$68,500 in New York. The Bible was gifted to their American friend in 1932. The inscription in German by Einstein says that the Bible is an inexhaustible source of wisdom and consolation and should be read frequently. Einstein didn't identify with organized religion as an adult, so the inscription gives an insight into his sentiments in the early 1930s.



Einstein called himself an agnostic, while disassociating himself from the label 'atheist'. He wrote: "My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God".

Atheists' monument is a bench

A group of atheists unveiled a monument to sit alongside a granite slab

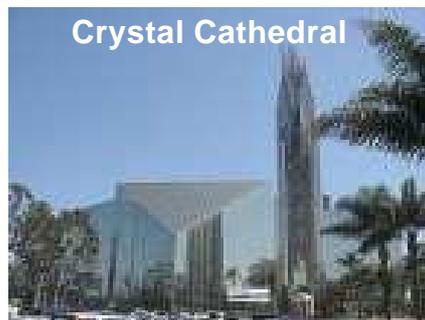


that lists the Ten Commandments in front of a courthouse. They celebrated what they believe is the first atheist monument allowed on government property in the United States. David Silverman, president of American Atheists, said that this monument is in the form of a bench because they want it to have some usefulness for the general public. They sued to get the Ten Commandments slab removed from the court house lawns. But on mediation they agreed to have their own monument side by side.

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God". So shall we rename the monument as "Monument of foolishness"?

"Crystal Cathedral" sold to Roman Catholics

Crystal Cathedral Ministries, a congregation of the Reformed Church in California, USA, founded in 1955 by Robert H. Schuller was worshipping in the famous Crystal Cathedral from 1981. The building seats 2,736 people and houses one of the largest organs in the world. The Ministries filed for bankruptcy



sold the building and its adjacent campus in February 2012 to the Roman Catholic Diocese. It will be renovated for use as a Roman Catholic cathedral and named as Christ Cathedral. The building is a unique facility with walls constructed using over 10,000 rectangular panes of glass and was built at a cost of \$18

million. Their last worship in the Cathedral building was held on June 30, 2013.



Schuller's ministry became a hit among people as he developed a new gospel which was a mixture of positive thinking resembling Norman Vincent Peale's philosophy

and Bible verses related to prosperity and grace. Schuller focused on what he believed were the positive aspects of Christian faith and he deliberately avoided condemning people for sin. Schuller encouraged Christians (and non-Christians) to achieve great things through God and to believe in their dreams. He wrote, "If you can dream it, you can do it!"

Schuller led the church and his TV program till 1966 and then handed over the ministry to his son Robert A. Schuller. However, father expelled son after two years. It is alleged that the founder's daughters and their husbands forced Schuller to remove his son from the office. Sibling rivalry led to the shattering of the ministry.

Schuller was propagating prosperity theology rather than the pure gospel. A commentator writes: "It's a lot easier to build a big mega-church and ride the prosperity gospel into a mega-mansion and drive a mega-car and go on mega-vacations than it is to build the church on the solid rock foundation of Jesus Christ. It's much easier to put on your silk robe and climb into your pulpit and spout forth a humanistic gospel that offends no one and promises everyone who is present a place in the kingdom if they will only write a check to the church".

Family run ministries which amass wealth and do self-indulgence are not showing the way of Christ. They are

IMAGINE

A letter to the newly wed daughter from her mother:

My dear Elsa,

How are you? This is your mom's first letter to you since there was no need for the same as you were always with me.

You are now in a new path of life. Marriage is such an institution where you cannot live it alone as family life is a united effort of both husband and wife. I hope you have got adjusted to the new environment. Being a city bred girl, it would be little tough to get adjusted in those rural areas. But I am sure my daughter will take strength from the Lord and move.

Remember that hence forth your duties and responsibilities increase in this new phase of your life. Your cousin Stella doesn't want to marry as she is afraid of handling the different house hold chores. She does not want to be submissive too. She wants freedom. You uncle and aunt are worried about her. Do pray for Stella too.

Let me advise you now, my child, get up in time. With your parents you could be free in that matter. Involve yourself with the duties and jobs in the new house you have reached now. Consider your hubby's parents as your own. I would ask you to love them more than your parents. As a Christian wife, obey your hubby, dear. Study his nature. Do not forget to pray for



Mary Mathew,
IPC Kanjurmarg, Mumbai

him, his sister, his brother and his parents. From now, they are your mom and dad. Ask politely and lovingly about your duties, Murmuring and grumbling will only bring confusion. Ask the Lord to give you enough wisdom to handle each and every situation well.

Remember how our neighbor Sunita used to complain about her in-laws for every little trifle issues to her parents. Any time she would run to her house under one or the other pretext.

Proverbs 31 describes a woman who because of her wise and prudent nature, devotion and hardwork, becomes a super woman. [As your mom – I am not yet a superwoman]

No one is perfect but trying to be perfect is always admirable.

Here we are all doing well by the grace of God. We miss you and your presence very much. But we uphold you in our prayers. Papa and I want you to shine in your new surrounding and bear a good testimony. There may be some teething problems initially as two persons from different circumstances and upbringing come together. Never mind. Be attentive to every need of that house.

Adjustment is what you require now. I believe that my kid won't disappoint her parents. I know that you pray but grasping the word of God is more necessary. Once again let me give you a few tips of advice.

No grumbling – no frowning – no boasting – but put on Jesus in your actions. Unless we produce the fruit of the spirit, our talents carry only zero mark. I know the areas where you need more improvement. Gain speed in all the household chores. Be a prudent wife. Keep up stability and try to get maximum marks from our Lord.

Give our love and regards to your new Papa, Mama, Sunu and children. God bless our new couple "Elsa and Jose". Be happy, we are praying for you. Be on your knees.

Let me stop now for the time being. With lots of love and prayers.

Your Mom & Papa

"News & Views" ----- Continuation from previous page

bound to perish soon! It is a sad thing to see the fall of Crystal Cathedral into the hands of Roman Catholics. Many people comment this would be the end of family owned mega churches!

Religious people verses atheists

A new review of studies has discovered that religious people are less intelligent than non-believers! The study has found that intelligent people are more likely to be married, and more likely to be successful in life - and this may mean they "need" religion less. Researchers have concluded that although intelligent children grasp religious concepts earlier, they are also the first to doubt the truth of religion.

These findings are no surprises to us. Apostle Paul discussed God's plan of salvation for man when he wrote his epistle to believers in Corinth: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. -- Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? -- For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:18-24)

A Book the Size of a bug

The University of Iowa library contains more than 4,000 miniature books. The smallest among them is a little red bug

of a book measuring 0.138 inches square and 0.04 inches thick. The book was recently opened carefully and put under a microscope to see its contents. Lo! The text was Chapter 1 of Genesis (King James Version).

People love to make a book so tiny even though it can't properly function as a book to read. Probably it was made to be attached to a key chain - a little piece of your faith to always have by your side. This was, after all, long before the age of smart phones and Bible apps!

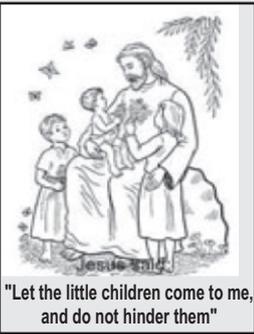


Children's

CORNER



Your God knows best !



Once upon a time, a well-known painter was standing on top of a hill and painting the beautiful scenery on a big canvas. It was an incredibly beautiful painting.

After he completed his painting the painter was so excited with his own work that he unconsciously took a few steps backward to admire it. He didn't look back when he walked backward. He kept on walking backward until it was a step away from the edge of the hill. Just one more step backward and he would fall down the cliff and die.

A man saw what the painter was doing and was about to shout at him to warn him but then he realized that his shout might startle the painter and moreover he may step further back and die. Suddenly the man thought of an idea and went towards the painting, took

a bottle of paint and splashed it on the beautiful painting, totally damaging it.

Upon realizing what happened to his painting the painter got very angry and moved forward to hit the man. However, some other people who were in the vicinity held him and showed him his last position which almost made him fall.

This story clearly shows us that many times in our lives we keep basking in the glory of our success and

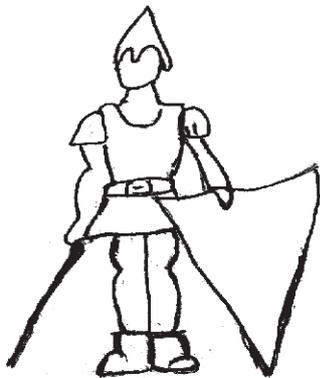
achievements

. Being proud and thinking high of oneself can lead us to a big fall in life. God foresees the fall and prevents it by destroying our success, position, post or any other object of importance. So whenever you lose your favourite position, post or anything which is of a very high value remember God knows what is best for your life and He will take care to see that you don't fall in this Christian race. Whenever you feel that God is destroying your beautiful painting just be calm because He knows what danger lies ahead of you.

Always keep in mind God provides only the best for us, His children, as we read in the Bible: "The LORD will fulfil His purpose for me. LORD, Your love is eternal" (Psalms 138:8).



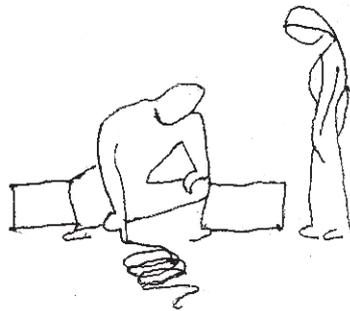
Juby Anoop



The whole Armour of God



Jeff Sam Scariah
Kerala

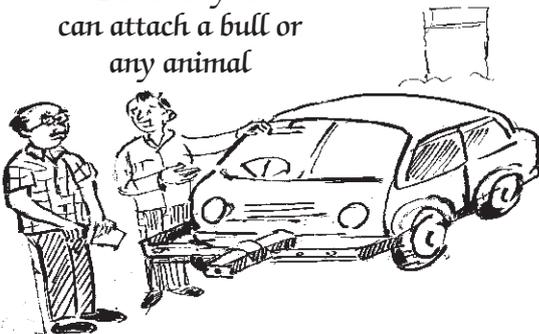


Jesus wrote on the Ground



Pheba Susan Sam
Kerala

New model during Petrol Crisyis can attach a bull or any animal



Holding truth with Love



Banage P.K.