



Blessing

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"He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with sufferings... Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows!"

(Isaiah 53:2-4)

PASSION AND FAITH

Pearl John

The movie *Passion of Christ* by Mel Gibson is considered to be a masterpiece and has gained world wide acclaim for the effort to paint a lucid picture of the sufferings of Christ. Of the various portrayals of Christ's pain and agony, this is deemed to be the benchmark. However, Biblical scholars are of the view that Mel Gibson's presentation is at best a poor reflection of the real sufferings of our Lord. The life of Christ Jesus on earth is an epitome of suffering. This season of lent we will do well to take a closer look at the passion of Christ and draw upon life-changing lessons to aid our faith walk that is beset with trials. Jesus' words ring so true, "You will have sufferings in this world" (Jn 16:33) and further, "For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (Lk 23:31). However, sufferings in this world should spur the Christian to a greater commitment to fulfil his calling. The sayings of Jesus on the cross summarize His response to the trials He faced during His lifetime. Seven significant principles can be drawn for application in our faith walk.

Forgiveness Principle

"Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). That was Christ's response to the perpetrators of His physical, psychological and social harm. The people who sang hosannas shouted heart rending slogans to crucify Him. Those who once eagerly held on to every word from His lips, now mouthed expletives at Him. Those who placed their robes on the ground to host a royal welcome joined with those who cast lots for His robe. Those who were amazed at His wisdom derided His very personality (Mt 22:22; Mk 3:22). Those whom He placed in authority now questioned His authority (Mk 11:28). Those whom He called His own rejected Him (Mt 27:21,22).

A murderer was preferred over Him (Mk 15:7). For the good He did, he was treated badly. For the light He ushered in the lives of men, He was crowned with darkness (Jn 1:4; Mk 15:33). For the life He gave He embraced death. That was the plight of Jesus, the Son of the Living God, and the Creator of the universe.

Man's need for affiliation and acceptance is real. Personal rejection is a serious problem that invades the life of every Christian. When encountered with rejection from man and at the receiving end of insult and misery in every facet of His life, Jesus' words bring a fresh breath of life; "Father forgive them." In forgiving, He gained all that was lost. Through forgiveness, He reached out to the soldiers who caused Him physical harm as also the Pharisees who caused him mental and social harm. His forgiveness was also available to His closest disciples who hurt His psyche, deserting and denying Him. In one master stroke, He forever silenced His critics and thus triumphed over His trials.

What is our response to the hurt and harm designed by men? How do we handle personal insults and slights? How long do we harbor the misdoings of others? Some of us are possibly guilty of doing harm to those who desire good for us! Christ's example in this regard is exemplary; He merely forgave! The result: generations to follow live to tell the tale of forgiveness. Forgiveness is indeed divine. It is a balm that soothes suffering and positively energizes the forgiver and the forgiven. The Master forgave and taught to forgive (Lk 17:3,4).

The words of Jesus, "They do not know what they are doing" present a completely new perspective of forgiveness. In the natural sense, the perpetrators of evil on

Jesus were fully aware of what they were doing. Judas' betrayal was a conscious act of a devious mind. The arrest of Jesus initiated by the Pharisees in legal terms may be called as 'premeditated' as they certainly desired and devised means to destroy Jesus (Mk 11:18; Mt 26:3). Pilate was fully aware that he was sentencing an innocent man. The list goes on. However, Jesus operates from a completely different paradigm. He recognized that all these lacked true knowledge of the gravity of their actions or the Person on whom these heinous acts were being committed. Very often we hold grudges against others as we see things in the natural, at the surface level, lacking insight into the finer spiritual dimension. This results in our inability to forgive unconditionally, without holding back. Seeing beyond the obvious at the treason, betrayal and denial, we should obviate rancor and release divine forgiveness as Jesus did. When undeserving persons like Barabbas, are preferred over us and become the popular choice of the masses, let Jesus' response be our principle—forgiveness and compassion for the erring. During this season of lent may the forgiveness of God infiltrate our entire beings and usher in a spirit of forgiveness.

Eternity Principle

The King of kings was reduced to a condemned criminal at the hands of man who was created in His own image. He was riled and ridiculed. Along with the pain induced by the physical abuse, His heartache was compounded by the slurs cast by the unbelief of one section who cried, "Save yourself" (Lk 23:36). Amidst the sneers and taunts if any one needed empathy, it was Him! But not the Jesus we know. He was not consumed by His suffering and pain. He did not wallow in self pity. While He met the insults hurled at Him with a laconic silence, His heart was attentive to the feeble cry of his neighbor to 'remember him!' (Lk 23:42)! Earlier, on His way to Golgotha when He

observed the tears of the women who loved Him, His response was significant, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children" (Lk 23:28). Jesus, all through His suffering did not seek comfort or sympathy. The common response to trials and grief is to seek consolation and solace from those near and dear. Not so with Jesus. As He went through the fiery ordeal, His concern was for the wellbeing of those around Him. Those who saw the pain and agony of the mangled body of Jesus were moved by His physical suffering. However, Jesus was concerned about their spiritual health. "I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in Paradise," was Jesus' response to the penitent thief at the throes of death and eternal separation from God (Lk 23:43).

On the cross when His physical pain and agony was at its zenith, He practiced what He preached, "Love your enemies" (Mt 5:44; Lk 23:34). He transcended His physical discomfort to relate to the inner need of an insignificant criminal. That was perhaps the peak of faith and presents certain basic lessons. In the Scriptural context, the faith that is exercised is primarily spiritual rather than physical. Faith exercised by the thief at the point of death was not a physical escape from his present suffering but a permanent establishment in "the kingdom!" Jesus' response to the faith of the criminal was again not based on His current suffering but placed on the thief's future wellbeing in eternity! Very often as Christians we tend to focus primarily on the present and seek to employ our faith for achieving the things of the world. Our calling in this world is clear—sojourners, pilgrims, and mere travelers. The focus of our life is the life hereafter and not herein! His current sufferings did not merit even a passing reference by our Lord! He reached out in faith to the repentant sinner and met His need of a secure future in His kingdom. Like Jesus, we need to concern ourselves

with our “Father’s business” whether it be in the company of clergy or criminals (Lk 2:46; 23:43). Jesus truly lived the words, ‘Our current sufferings are no comparison to the future glory’ (Rom 8:18). May our actions align to the paradise principle!

Care Principle

When Jesus saw His mother ... He said, “Dear woman, here is your son” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother” (Jn 19:26). This is perhaps the practical application of faith! In and through His afflictions, Jesus did not allow His sufferings to come in the way of dispensing His duty to His mother. Here was the God Son acting in His physical capacity as a son to His mother. While as the Son of God, He could have designed a life of ease and life long comfort with angels attending to her daily needs, He chose to take the natural course of action. He merely commended her to His disciple’s care. In so doing Jesus possibly illustrated three critical lessons on faith. Firstly, faith need not bring about the supernatural always and while the natural course can usher the desired outcomes, God prefers to use the natural to the supernatural.

Secondly, despite His primary focus to be after the “Father’s business”, He did not neglect His ‘mother’s needs’! To a “super-spiritual” group that metes a second class treatment to their parents, and relegate their wives and children to the last priority, Jesus’ message is clearly spelt out: ‘take care of your family!’ One cannot be too busy to attend to one’s family, even while dispensing the Father’s work. To make provision for the well being of one’s family is not a lack of but a clear demonstration of faith! Finally, one’s own afflictions and problems are no excuse for not responding to the needs of those who are under one’s care! Personal struggles, pressures and pain should not deter us from addressing the specific needs of those near and dear to us. That is faith in action.

Loneliness Principle

Suffering and pain are varied. They impact us differently. What is considered utmost suffering by one may be seen as peripheral by another. What is perceived to cause extreme agony by some may not impact others as much. The orientation, focus and individual’s worldview largely shape the extent of pain and suffering experienced. By any defined standard the Son of Man’s suffering is unparalleled in human history. Those He nurtured and called as His friends abandoned Him (Mk 14:50). Those who walked, dined and lived with Him for three and a half years suddenly were nowhere near Him in the hour of trouble (Mt 26:31). At the face of it, He experienced a 100% loss! On account of Him all fell away! The three and a half years of God ordained earthly ministry of the Son of Man appeared to have borne no fruit!! Of the closest three who experienced the heavenly intervention at the mount of transfiguration, one denied Him, another followed Him upto the High priest’s courtyard and the third’s whereabouts finds no mention in the Scriptures (Jn 18:27; Jn 18:15). However, Jesus did not see their present failures. He did not see the current betrayal of Peter but the 3000 odd who would turn around as a consequence of his first sermon. Jesus did not see the unbelief of His dithering disciples at the stormy sea but foresaw the millions who would be ushered into the kingdom of grace through their apostolic leadership. Jesus did not hold the desertion of His disciples against them for He saw the thousands they would draw towards Him! When we go through stints of loneliness are we consumed by the present or do we see things from a long range perspective?

On His sinless body He took the weight of the sin conceived and carried out from Adam to the end of the world. In His sinless mind, He bore the psychological duress and distress of mankind. In His Spirit, He carried the spiritual separation from God as a consequence of the weight

of the sin of the whole world. From the sixth hour with every passing second the intensity of His suffering was raised n to the power of a zillion times (Isa 53:3,10-12). The Son of Man, the embodiment of Love, the seat of all comfort and the One who shed tears in grief at the death of His friend Lazarus experienced agony that no man in the past, present or the future will ever endure (1 Jn 4:16; 2 Cor 1:3; Jn 11:35). The second Person of the Triune God, Equal with God and the One who enjoyed close communion with the Father at all times was suddenly confronted with separation from the Father (Mt 27:45). The suffering was supreme and the agony absolute that nature reacted with a spell of darkness to cover the face of the earth. That was the nadir human suffering had ever reached. No affliction is akin, no torment comparable, no misery equivalent to the anguish He experienced.

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," which means "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mk 15:34). That was Jesus' response to the agony experienced at the separation from the Father. He refused to summon the aid of His angelic host from heaven to shield Him from physical abuse (Mt 26:53). He did not as much as open His mouth at the barrage of ridicule and affront made on His authenticity. However, His sufferings did not cease there. God subjected Him to the utmost; the depths of pain—abandonment from the Father! None of the other sufferings bothered Him; He took them all in His stride. When the presence and the intimacy with God the Father ceased, He found it unbearable and He cried His heart out, "Why have you forsaken Me?"

What do we consider as suffering and when does it become unbearable? What makes us cry out in despair unto God? Do we cherish the presence of God as Christ did? Are we as sensitive to the soft but sure company of God? Is He the single most desirable Person in our lives? Do we cry in despondency at the incidence of physical

ailment or a financial impediment? It is in the realms of darkness and loneliness that the maturing of character takes shape. It is in the deepest of troubles that the loftiest of God's plans for our lives are revealed. Christ had to go the loneliness route; left unaided by the closest and the most intimate of all relationships He had valued. When we go through the lonely terrains, let us by faith appropriate Psalm 23:4.

Thirst Principle

Our suffering and physical inabilities are God's agents to fulfill His plans and purposes in our lives. He allows these in sufficient doses so that we may become a true reflection of our Saviour. Having gone through the peak of physical and spiritual suffering; dehydrated in body and dizzy in His spirit, Jesus said, "I am thirsty" (Jn 19:28). That was the physiological response of a physically drained body. His thirst reiterated His human-ness! For those of us who shrug off the suffering of Christ as that of God's superior ability to handle adversity, this is a gentle reminder that He is fully human. However, the thirst He referred to was not merely a physical thirst. It was not only to quench His need for water that He called out. It was not only to ease His intense physical pain that He cried out. If that were so, when offered the sponge with wine vinegar, He would have gulped it down to alleviate His physical pain.

Jesus' Cry, *I thirst* refers to predominantly a spiritual thirst than the physical. He had left the glory of Son-ship in pursuit of doing righteousness (Mt 3:15). In His sufferings, He yearned that His overriding purpose be accomplished. That was the chief concern of Christ all through His life. He came to do the expressed will of God. His life mission was to present the reflection of the Father. In His suffering, He sought nothing different; He thirst for righteousness (Mt 5:6). His thirst was to become the righteousness of God to make many righteous (1Cor 1:30; Rom 5:19).

As we traverse through the agony of pain and walk in loneliness, deserted by the closest and perhaps for a twinkling of an eye even by God Himself, what do we seek? (Isa 54:7). Is freedom from current suffering our focus or furtherance of His will and His Kingdom our thirst? When we thirst after His righteousness despite our suffering we will indeed be filled (Mt 5:6).

Surrender Principle

“Father into your hands I commit my Spirit” (Lk 23:46). All through His life Jesus lived a life of surrender. At the Cross in the last few moments of His life on earth, He reiterated complete surrender. Earlier, at the garden of Gethsemane, when the stakes were high and His physical and mental stress snowballed to a peak, He committed Himself unconditionally to the Father, “not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:42,44). Jesus was fully aware of the cost of surrender. Yet, in complete understanding of the consequences He gave Himself up!! It was not a helpless submission of a hapless individual but a conscious surrender of the Highest on earth or heaven in view of larger purposes and far reaching goals.

As we go through trials and suffering in our faith walk, like Jesus, we will do well to surrender ourselves unconditionally unto the Father that His will be done despite the discomfort and dis-ease it creates for us in the interim. Such surrender will endow us with the supernatural grace to go through the trauma of mammoth proportions in private that the glory of God may be revealed in public (Lk 23:47). It is in complete surrender there is complete victory.

Completion Principle

“It is finished” (Jn 19:30). The anguish and agony are finished. The pain and suffering are finished. The insults and invectives are finished. His mission in this world is finished. In suffering the worst ordeal ever, Jesus paid the price and emerged victorious; no suffering—even

abandonment from God—could tie Him down. Although physically exhausted and drained, He emerged triumphant. The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end had indeed achieved the divine purpose for which He came down to earth. There were no tasks left half done, no chores that needed completion, no work that was unachieved; it is all finished. The price had been paid, the power of Satan decimated and salvation wrought for mankind. His life that was conceived without sin was concluded sinless.

Christ’s faith bore out in its entirety. The purpose He set out to accomplish was achieved. The veil that separated the Most Holy and the Holy place in the tabernacle was torn and a new era of direct access to God for the sinful mankind was paved by the propitiation of Christ’s work on the Cross. He exemplified completion of the good work He began. But sadly today in Christendom, many commence their faith walk in good spirit but seldom conclude it in the Spirit (Gal 3:3).


As Believers, we have a God-designed purpose we are to achieve in our lifetime. Our efforts to realize His plans will invariably be countered by diverse distractions including suffering and pain that seek to destroy our efforts to achieve His purposes. Christ’s finished work is a role model to all those engaged in pursuit of His plans. When faced with sufferings it is perhaps easier to give in and give up. However, in the face of the most arduous of trials, Christ demonstrated a high staying power and at the close of His earthly sojourn, He could boldly state, “It is finished.” That is the standard we need to achieve. It is not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit that this is possible (Zech 4:6).

May we flex our faith muscle and achieve that which seems impossible, move that which is immovable and redeem the irredeemable. Faith exercised in the passion of Christ is the faith we need to live by today. f

Dead Flies!

Dr. Mrs. Lilian Stanley

Since the dawn of history man has been on the hunt for wisdom. Last month we saw that the first step to wisdom is not to be a fool. All of us are not fools; but we do commit foolish things. Even the most brilliant of us have tinges of foolishness. Solomon put it poetically, "Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, and cause it to give off a foul odour; so does a little **folly** to one respected for wisdom and honour" (Eccl 10:1). Perfume spreads its aroma all around. So does a man's reputation. But a little folly in his life spreads bad smell surpassing the aroma of his wisdom. So much labour goes into the preparation of a perfume. But a silly dead fly cancels it all. Let's see what the Bible has to tell us about "little follies" that can stink our testimony and rot our life. Let's try our best to keep off these dead flies from our life.

The first dead fly that makes the air around anyone so fetid that it makes people gag is rejecting God's Word. We can see that it leads to foolishness: "It shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments  and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you." What curse? "The Lord will strike you with **madness and blindness and confusion of heart**. And you shall grope at noonday as a blind man gropes in darkness" (Dt 28:15,28,29).

At every step of the way if we are not careful to walk inside the marked path, we are sure to become stumbling fools at the most critical junctures of our life. This has happened to many God's people. Nebuchadnezzar was God's chosen vessel. That's why God took Daniel to his court to interpret his dream. Nebuchadnezzar confessed, "Truly your God is the God of


gods, the Lord of kings" (Dan 2:47). But very soon he became a flagrant sinner against God by making an idol of gold for people to worship. God was not ready to give up on him. Again He revealed Himself. Still he hardened his heart and God sent a dream to warn him. Yet his heart was lifted up. What was the result? He became like a **beast**. When he lifted his eyes to heaven his **understanding** returned to him. When he acknowledged God his **reasoning power** returned to him (Dan 4:33,34,36).

How wise Saul must have been to be God's chosen king of Israel! But when he failed to obey a seemingly insignificant commandment, Samuel said, "You have done **foolishly**. You have not obeyed the commandment of the Lord your God" (1 Sam 13:13,14). Samuel tells him point blank that the Lord does not have as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices. See the sad end of a chosen king, "So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the Word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance" (1 Chr 10:13). A little folly indeed, for which he paid a heavy price. A warning also to those who dabble in the occult or traffic with mediums.

It is not out of place to remind ourselves of our Lord's teaching in the sermon on the mount: "Everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a **foolish** man who built his house on the sand" (Mt 7:26). Can words be more clear? Read the Bible word by word with an uncluttered and focused heart and don't miss a detail. Wordless life in an empty-headed, empty-hearted life! Every time you open your Bible you gain wisdom.

Another dead fly that can putrefy our perfume is ignorance of God's will. My oft repeated prayer is, "Lord, keep me from

making big mistakes in life.” Some think it is difficult to know God’s will. But the Lord throws the ball in our court. “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the **horse** or like the **mule, which have no understanding**, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you” (Psa 32:8,9). The lesson for us does not need to be spelled out. He is ready to give us eye signs. But do we maintain eye contact with Him? If we hear God right and don’t obey that’s when we’d be fools.

There was a man called Balaam, supposed to be a wise man. He had difficulty knowing God’s will. God had to put the bit and the bridle to get him walk His way. (Were his eyes not looking at the profit?) Isn’t it humorous that his donkey was wiser than him? (Num 22:23).  Peter, writing about him in his second epistle states, “A **dumb donkey** restrained the **madness** of the prophet” (2:16). In other words, he became a moral dunce. Yes. The price that you pay to do God’s will is far less than the price you will have to pay not to do it.

In Ephesians we are admonished as follows, “Therefore do not be **unwise**, but **understand** what the will of the Lord is” (5:17). Proceeding in life without knowing what the Lord would have us do is wasting a lot of time and energy. Each of us should pray like Paul, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” regularly. Then He will guide us as He guided Paul if we have a willing heart to do His will like him. Then we’ll be as sure-footed as mountain goats. Many of us do many good things that are not God’s will for us. If we weed them out, we will have enough energy and time to do what God really wants us to do. When you pull out the weeds the flower plants will flourish. Life is measured. Save every drop of time. We are not left with much time. Understand what God wants you to do with the rest of your life and pour yourself heart and soul into it than splashing through life with all limbs like an unlearned swimmer.

Paul prayed for his fruits that they may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all **wisdom and spiritual understanding** (Col 1:9). Jesus taught us to pray to the Father that His will be done on earth (that we do His will here on earth) as it is in heaven. Prayer clears our mind to understand the heart of God. Paul admonished Timothy, “Consider what I say and may the Lord give you **understanding** in all things (2 Tim 2:7). We have to put together many factors, use our head and then look to the Lord for clarity.



Take for example the young girls of this generation. They all study and pray for a good job. It does not occur to them that being a housewife may be God’s will for them. Finding God’s will could be tricky if you are not open. Let God have the last word.

I want to quote Mr. Eugene H. Peterson in the MESSAGE, with which I have fallen in love, “One of the stubbornly enduring habits of the human race is on domesticating God. We are determined to tame Him. We figure out ways to harness God to our Projects. We try to reduce God to a size that conveniently fits out plans and ambitions and tastes. But our Scriptures are even more stubborn in telling us that we can’t do it. God cannot be fit into our plans, we must fit into His. God is not a tool or appliance or credit card.”

If you have missed God’s will and gone astray, you can always retrace your steps back to God. He shall make your life complete and give you a fresh start. The nights of crying your eyes out shall give way to days of laughter.

One dead fly that has blown up the lives of innumerable wise people and make their names stink to high heavens is adultery. It’s the day of playboys and playgirls. Sex scandals are international stench. The spirit of adultery is getting deadlier by the decade. Sexual sins were considered foolishness in Israel. Tamar was seduced by Amnon.

When she knew his intention she said, "You would be like one of the **fools** in Israel" (2 Sam 13:13). She was no less a fool herself because she was his quarry who nibbled at the bait. She could have avoided the visit, gone with a friend or shouted for help. Young people should learn to take hold of the reins of their emotions. One wrong move can destroy your whole life and brand you a fool. Your life will leak out bit by bit.

Young people having dalliances with the married is everyday news now. I heard a joke. A girl asks her girlfriend if her lover was willing to marry her. She says, "Oh, yes, of course." "Then why are you procrastinating your marriage? Do you have any problem?" she asks. "Oh, no, I am more than willing" she replies. "Then what's the hitch?" she probes. Much to her bemusement,  pat comes the answer, "His wife is not  willing." It is sad these days, men and women need external control to keep their sexual appetite under restraint than exercise their self-control.

"Whoever commits adultery **lacks understanding.**" Why? Because it is a brainless act which destroys your soul and ruins your reputation. And because you have to face the fury of an angry spouse (Prov 6:32-35). When you struggle back to your senses, you will find yourself demoralized and dragging your tail. So stop frivolous spending of time, dawdling, amorous play and flirtation with the opposite sex. Do not keep temptation inside the house though he/she may be as precious as the right eye. Avoid social butterflies like poison.

One day Solomon was looking through his palace window observing **simpletons**. Among them was a young man **devoid of understanding** (Prov 7:7). He went out in the night thinking nobody saw him. But someone was watching him through a window. He lunged forward for his easy catch and—boom! became a target. Hers was only a secondary role. The married

woman seduced him with bedroom eyes and honey tongue and soon he was tottering behind her. He went as a **fool** (v 22). That's the last we hear of him. One lustful look led David to break five of the ten commandments says Rev. David Pawson. Promiscuous women shipwreck leaders. But often the fence eats the crop too! Beware crop, don't be fooling around the opposite sex.

Sex predators are everywhere. So never let down your guard in the presence of known or unknown persons who try to get too familiar with you. Sexual urge is like a lion; you cannot walk him on a leash. Don't cave in to pressure. Don't even give an inch. Never allow an inappropriate touch and never indulge in casual sex. Never be afraid to approach a senior of the same sex if you need help and hold tight to God. Boys and girls, men and women need backbone these days. Nobody can threaten you into a relationship. You have the right to refuse. If you pick up sexual vibrations cut them off immediately. If fingers brush against you in a sexual way, give a cold stare and move away. If you have failed, it is never too late to come back to God and turn around your life. Living a holy life was much easier decades ago. Youth of this generation need to be wiser. Win every temptation and God will reward you lavishly in due time.

There are many fool saints who lead a double life trying to drink their porridge without wetting their filter moustache, throwing fuel on the already blazing anger of God. Don't take your sides with them. They are going to face a terrible judgment. Of the man who leaves his wife and goes to another woman it is written, "He shall die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his **folly** he shall go astray (Prov 5:23).

Some consider internet and cell phone affairs as permissible. Don't deceive yourself. Flirtatious sms-ing will mess up your life. Until you leave your mobile in a common place for your consort also to use


you are not unswervingly loyal. A fortune seeking girl friend cannot replace a faithful wife. Somewhere, someday you have to break unholy relationships. The earlier the break the less painful it is. It is not worth sacrificing your family for another woman or man—so much pain, so much heartache, so much gossip for a little bit of temporary selfish pleasure.

We have to escape the dead fly of blabber mouth too to preserve our aroma. “A **foolish** woman is clamorous; **she is simple and knows nothing** (Prov 9:13). Why does she know nothing? It’s because she wastes her time in talking rather than spending it fruitfully. The chapter starts with Wisdom calling the simple to forsake foolishness and live and go on in the way of understanding. But the foolish woman calls those who walk straight on their way and entices them to the depths of hell. “A **fool’s** mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul” (Prov 18:7). We can kill ourselves by our careless words. We need to be extremely careful about the way we talk, the words we use and the message we convey. Our words should revive people, not kill them. “We are born with our eyes closed and mouths open and we spend our whole lives trying to reverse that mistake of nature” said Dale Turner.

There are other areas where we need to govern our tongue. “Whoever spreads slander is a **fool**” (Prov 10:18). The slanderer thinks he is making someone a fool whereas he is making a fool of himself. Listening to slander itself is foolishness; passing it on is doubly foolish. Defamatory statements injurious to the reputation of others should not escape our mouth.

Another danger of indiscreet chatter is exposing our thoughts. “Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has understanding, but what is in the heart of **fools** is made known” (Prov 14:33). Thoughts should be allowed to mature and fruition before they spill out. Mary kept her thoughts to herself (Lk 2:19). It is an art to be learned.

Sometimes we hastily pour out words only to repent later. “Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a **fool** than for him” (Prov 29:20). “Think twice before you talk” is a good dictum. You need to call upon every bit of willpower you possess to zip your mouth. Take time to pray before giving your decisions. Cool down and calm yourself to put together all information before you give your answer. You can even ask for time instead of giving a lightning reply.

Avoid loose talk at all costs. You can be eloquent by what you do not say. “... neither filthiness, nor **foolish** talking, nor course jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks” (Eph 5:4). Watch your words, your jokes and comments. Avoid the riff-raff crowd who will drag you into their gossip. When you get  together with friends be conscious of God’s reverential presence. Avoid watching dirty programs in TV that will plant filthy jokes in your mind.

Garrulousness itself is foolishness. “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise” (Prov 10:19). Talk less, work more is a good principle. After talking at length about the evils of tongue in his epistle, James immediately follows it up with a talk on wisdom showing the relationship between both (Js 3). A pastor prayed: “Lord, make my preaching proficient; but stop me when I have said sufficient.”

Too many Christians are slaves to anger—a dead fly that makes people pinch their nose when they come near them. Anger is as old as Cain. It is often vented on undeserving targets like wives, husbands, children, neighbours or employees. It is shredding many homes. Anger is selfishness, pride, lack of self-control and immaturity. It is an animal raging within for release. “He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts **folly**” (Prov 14:29).

If blowing your top is bad, stewing silently is no better. Anger has harmful effects on the body. If we know how to express our anger in a healthy way, it can benefit us and others. "Whoever hides hatred has lying lips" (Prov 10:18). When there is a misunderstanding we can make two mistakes. One is to impulsively burst out, bad-mouthing people. The other is to hide our anger and cover it up with butter talk. Both do not help relationship. Ideally we should learn to express our feelings without hurting the other person. Instead of spilling out our words on other people we should spill it out to God so that we can calmly explain to the other person how hurt we are. Leaders who keep their emotions under control put others at ease. "A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows" (Prov 18:6).

When you feel like cracking open someone's skull, withdraw yourself from the scene so you can get some breathing room. Give yourself enough time — hours or days or even months to cool down. Analyse the situation. Pray. Then decide upon your course of action. "The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression" (Prov 19:11). Take it easy. Our grandeur is to forgive and forget. "Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools" (Eccl 7:9). Make a decision today. The journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step. "Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances" said Thomas Jefferson. As you practice the technique, your outbursts of anger will soon be just memories.

It is rightly said, "He who seeks wisdom is a wise man and he who thinks he has found wisdom is mad." Let us acknowledge that there are dead flies in our lives that let out a bad stench spoiling our Aroma. Let's clean up today!



(Contn. Page 15)

ÂGandhi, Annamalai, Mari, Gowry and Kuppayee listened to the gospel recently. Pray that the Word of God may work in their hearts leading them to the saving grace of God.

ÂMinistry among the children is growing steadily in six places around Aranoothumalai in which more than 150 children are regularly nourished by the Word of God. Pray for these children and the missionaries involved.

ÂMrs. Dora Daniel Sunderaraj, our close partner and a devoted servant of the Lord, went to be with the Lord. Pray for Dr. Daniel Sunderaraj and the bereaved family.

ÂPray for Bro. Sivapragasam, our close partner who is suffering from infection in the right eye after surgery.

ÂMayanakollai, a local Hindu festival is popularly celebrated in Kalinjur. This year not many people joined the celebration. The talk among the people is that the influence of BYM missionaries is changing the scenario. Praise God!

ÂPray for the following people: Lata (Thyroid problem), Anju (Mentally retarded), V. K. Massey (Disc slip), Mahaveer (Kidney stone), George (Hernia), Ramswaroop and Rajender (Piles). f

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I, V. Ashok Immanuel, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

V. Ashok Immanuel

April 2007

Signature of publisher

Flashes from Orissa!

Prakash Chandra Nag, Missionary, Orissa

I would rather live in a jungle to bring the ignorant to Christ than regularly attend church in a city to listen to spicy sermons week after week. The reason is the joy of soulwinning out where the sinners are. There are problems within and fears without, but God gives us the courage to go on.

My coworker Rabindranath Das conducted two Christian tribal marriages in the Kurumahandi Church. He led 17 people to Christ who obeyed the Lord and joined the Church. 30 believers attend the fasting prayer. Mrs. Premamani and Mrs. Subamani, our believers are suffering from cancer. Pray for Rabindranath's family who are yet to taste the love of Christ.



Ondri Believers inside the water

Silas Khosla works in Chandahandi. He is surveying the area to open up a new station. His target is to add 1000 people to the church in the next 3 years. Pray that God will enable his team to build a Church in Kenduwan village. A believer Pramila Bhoi has conceived after 6 years of marriage.

Bilodmandi from Sankoroda writes that the two-day fasting prayer was attended by 60 people. Looks like they have over taken city Christians in spirituality. They have surveyed Benora and Rajpur with a view to establish new stations. Social restrictions hinder young people from joining the church. They need a prayer shed in Ragniguda. Please pray.

Mrs. Subarnalatha Santanu Korada messaged from Raighar that the entire family was suffering from various illnesses. They thank you for your regular prayers which lifted them up. God heard our prayers and healed Sabetine Harijan from Tetanus and Saudamani Hartal and Sangita Mani

from demon possession. Palabi, Lalmani, Bela Dongri, Josna, Laxme, Reena and Savela are childless believers. Pray for God's miracle.

We, the missionaries and congregants often fall sick from Malaria. It weakens us a lot. We thank you for your sincere prayers which are wheels for our bandwagon! We lovingly invite you to visit us. f



Khiloguda newly built Church



Church Elders training Camp at Khorasahandi



Bendrachaper Believers

News from the Fields

Compiled by S. Mohan Deenadhayan, Regional Coordinator, West

The Blessing Youth Mission has stationed 322 missionaries in 14 States of India, namely Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, for reviving Churches and missionary evangelism leading to church plantation in churchless places. The news of various fields is compiled here for PRAISE and PRAYER.

ASSAM

Â Missionary Ruby Gnanapragasam along with Mrs. Panchami visited the Satribari Mission hospital and shared the gospel and prayed for 11 patients. Mrs. Panchami was encouraged and decided to help the ministry in the future also.

Â Missionaries Gnanapragasam and Leence Joel visited Shillong recently with the view of arranging a Pastors' Meet before the forth coming Literature Drive Program in April 2007. Pray for God's guidance for this mega programme.

Â Missionary Leence Joel entered wedlock with Dolly Dakhar of Shillong recently. Pray for this newly wed couple that God may use them with the same vision and mission for His kingdom.

Â God enabled to conduct a *Leadership Training Programme* in Tezpur. This is the first of its kind organised by our missionaries in Assam. Missionaries Malar Selvan and S. Raja encouraged the participants to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, the model Leader.

Â Kindly pray for Bharathi Nath, who is suffering from liver cancer that the Lord may heal her miraculously and sustain her in complete physical and spiritual health.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Â Praise God for the steady growth of the ministry in Korukonda and the surrounding places. 17 people obeyed the Lord in water baptism and a new worship service has been started for the believers in the Sugar Factory colony recently.

Â Mrs. K.V. Lakshmi was saved miraculously from anti-christian attack in Vishakhapatnam while she was witnessing to the people. Pray that God may give peace to His children in times of such unexpected oppressions and disappointments.

Â Praise God for the *Partners' Meet* held in Warangal in which 800 people participated. They were burdened for the souls of our countrymen through the sound messages shared by Mr.Y. Paul Dinakaran and Mr. P. Selvam.

Â We solicit your earnest prayers for the following persons: Subbarao (Mental depression), Sujatha (Back pain), Baburao (Paralysis), Chinnammalu (Infected leg injury), Shirisha (Safe delivery), Govindamma (Childlessness), Reena (Marriage settlement).

CHATTISGARH

Â Pray for the ministry of Mrs. & Mr. Elisha to the 25 blind children residing in Nigadi Blind Fellowship, Pune so that God may open the spiritual eyes of these children.

Â Missionary Deena Elisha shared the Word of God in a *Womens' Retreat* held at the New Apostolic Church, Raipur. All the participants pledged to meet regularly for a time of prayer and fellowship.

Â God blessed the *National Youth Week* held in Raipur, in which missionary R. Elisha shared the message on *Character and Christ* and admonished the 60 youth to grow in Christ likeness.

GUJARAT

Â Missionary Robin Sam attended a 5-day *Writers' Workshop* organized by Gillian Fellowship at Chennai. Pray that God may equip and use him as he is directly involved in the publication of the *Blessing* magazine in Gujarati.

Â God enabled us to release the Blessing book *Jolly Family* in Gujarati in a recently held Blesso Camp at Nadiad. We sincerely thank Dr. Ritaben Nirmal Kumar for her valuable contribution in the translation of this book for the Gujarati readers.

Â Praise God for the commitment of Mr. and Mrs. Steven, who have joined our work in Amreli, a churchless district of Gujarat. Pray for a special anointing of the Spirit upon this couple.

JHARKHAND

Â Our missionary Narendra Kusha visited Dhawaiya Bunglow, Tand, Lalpur, Nutan Nagar and Deepugada with *Blessing* literature and mobilised Rs. 7,550/- towards the ministry. Pray that this literature ministry may help the readers to lead a witnessing life.

Â Shahawanaz, John, Arun, Shakuntala, Nirmala, Reena and Neetu were reached with the gospel recently. Pray that the Word of God may lead them to salvation.

Â Martha Allembly and Subhendu Mohanty have come forward to help the promotional and literature ministry in and around Jamshedpur. May God bless all our partners and well-wishers for their labour of love in His great cause.

KARNATAKA

Â Laxmi who was deserted by her husband is now happy after the reunion of her family. Praise God for the spirit of reconciliation given to them in answer to the sincere prayers of believers.

Â *Exhortation to Exam Goers*, a SFJ programme conducted for students was much encouraging to the 109 participants. Mr. Daniel Kote encouraged the participants to trust God completely rather than any of their human resources.

Â Basavaraj Chappé passed away recently leaving behind his wife with 3 children. Pray for this bereaved family and for their future.

Â God delivered Melvin miraculously from demon possession in answer to the sincere prayers. Pray that God may use him as a living witness to his family and friends.

MADHYA PRADESH

Â A State level fasting prayer for the lady staff was held at Shahgarh for two days. Mrs. Jancy Anantharaj, the lady staff counselor, Northern Region, gave an overview on the role of the lady missionaries in the family and in the ministry.

Â *Deacons' Training Programme* was held at Shahgarh in which 17 elders from 14 different churches of our mission fields participated. All witnessed about their new experiences after sitting and learning in the presence of the Lord. Praise God.

Â *Exhortation for Exam Goers* was much encouraging and enlightening to the 140 students. Pastor Sandeep Singh from the AG Church offered special prayer for the exam goers.

Â Our missionary Jyoti Jeyaraj shared God's Word to the 12 girls on *Holy-Living* in a students' prayer cell. Pray that these girls may live as useful vessels for the extension of His kingdom.

Â Pray for the divine healing of the following believers: Babulal (Kidney stone), Noel David (High blood pressure), Jyoti Moses (Debility), Pinky (Hepatitis), Shweta (Jaundice).

Â Pray for the salvation of new contacts: Kailash, Anil Jithendar, Mahender Kumar, Jaiprakash, Jagdish Prasad Sharma, Choty, Prem, Rameshwari, Survani, Munni and Goyal.

Â Manisha, Mini, Ruhi, Blessie, Tanu, Manu, Priyanka, Anshu, Prachi, Suman, Ruchika and Sunita are the regular students for the prayer cell. Pray that the Word of God they read and meditate together may work towards holy living.

Â Praise God for the 35 people who attended a night service held at Patari village. Our missionaries worshiped the Lord in the local cultural context by singing *Bhajan*s. Mr. Sonu shared the Word of God.

Â Barkhedi and Larethi are new villages reached with the gospel recently. Mr. Tulsiram and Sukhlal have received the gospel. Pray for the salvation of these villagers.

Â Mr. Raghav Bhushan, an Inspector of Police who was a great moral support to our missionaries passed away recently in Sagar. Kindly pray for his bereaved family.

MAHARASHTRA

Â God enabled us to conduct an *Orientation Meet* for the Church planting and growth ministry in Gargoti, Maharashtra recently. Missionaries A. Malarselvan, V. Ponnuswamy, and Peter Luis were the consulting faculties. Our staff worked out the strategy to minister to Mang, Mahar, and Lingayat people groups.

Â The YWAM team visited our mission fields in and around Vaduj for an outreach exposure. Pray that the gospel literature distributed and the message shared by them may bring many people to the Truth.

Â Forty church elders from different mission stations were gathered for a 2-day training programme held in Gargoti. Mr. Peter Luis, Pastor Mulla and Mr. Mohan Deenadayalan taught from God's Word to the participants about the qualities, qualifications and functions of a church elder.

Â The registration of land for the Church building at Vaduj is getting delayed due to some unexpected reasons. Pray that the place may be soon made available for that purpose.

Â A one-day family retreat was held in Gargoti in which 20 families participated actively. Mr. & Mrs. M.C. Ponniah ministered to them from God's Word with an emphasis on Christ Centred family life.

ORISSA

Â Worship sheds in Rajamuda, Topajodi and Pujariborandi are under construction. Kindly pray for the speedy completion of the work so that the believers may be able to come and worship the Lord freely at the earliest.

Â Limajodi, Bakli, Kumudabeda, Kenduput, and Sargiput villages were reached with the gospel recently. Pray for the salvation of the people who showed great interest to know the Truth.

Â Five people in Kadamb and 29 people in Umerkote obeyed the Lord and joined the Church. Pray that all of them may be strengthened and established in the faith as they attend the fellowship meetings regularly.

Â Kindly pray for the healing of the following people: Premdan (Hernia), Donon Manding (Ulcer), Somari (Demon possession), Manohar (Arthritis), Anil (Night blindness), Manju (Jaundice).

Â Babita Kumar was losing her eye sight but after the fervent prayers of His people, God restored her vision and is able to see clearly. Praise God!

RAJASTHAN

Â God enabled us to conduct a *Youth Retreat* in Bijay Nagar recently in which missionary Rose Allen shared the Word of God. 40 youth accepted the Lord.

Â Our Lord abundantly blessed the *Power 2007*, 3-day fasting and prayer meet held in Banswara. Mr. & Mrs. Y. Paul Dinakaran and Mr & Mrs. Ponniah challenged the 70 participants to use His Power to extend His territory.

Â The Mission hospital in Banswara which was closed for the past 15 years is now reopened for the medical service through the prayer of His people. May this hospital serve as a channel of His blessing in this locality!

Â God blessed one of our partners, Dr. Sunitha with a male child recently. She is a blessing to many people through her medical ministry from her remote village Talwara. Her husband Dr. Ambrose is serving in the Mission Hospital, Banswara.

Â Twenty five students attended the *Exam Goers' Meet* held in Jaipur. Mr. Swarnaraj Jacob and Mr. Ashish Andrews gave the practical tips and prayed for them to excel in their exams.

TAMILNADU

Â Senthil family was under the spell of witchcraft and were unable to even sleep for many days. God delivered them in answer to our sincere prayers with fasting. Praise the Lord.

(Contd. Page 11)

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