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*Faith
Alive!*

“By faith Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice”

(Hebrews 11:17)

Mr. John Thomas calls us to a life of live faith with sacrifice, boldness, patience and prayer.

FAITH ALIVE!

James, the brother of Jesus, believed to be the writer of the book of James is known for his teaching on works that follow genuine faith. He was able to establish this truth because he was well versed with the Scriptures. During the Jerusalem council, when Peter spoke on the grace of God in the salvation of Gentiles, James was immediately able to cite the right passage from the Old Testament in support of Peter's report. Because his faith was backed by the Word of God he taught about the genuine faith followed by works of faith (Rom 10:17). From his knowledge of the Old Testament, he brought out in his Epistle, the following four characters whose faith was justified by their works.

1. *Abraham, the friend of God* 2:21-24
2. *Rahab, the instrument of God* 2:25
3. *Job, the blessed of God* 5:11
4. *Elijah, the prophet of God* 5:17,18

In their times they proved to others that their faith was alive through their acts. How?

1. Faith with Sacrifice

In this passage, Abraham's faith is highlighted in his act of sacrificing his own son. Sacrifices can be made without faith just as giving can be without love; but there could be no confession of faith without sacrifice just as there is no love without giving. Please check your life in the light of this statement.

James says that Abraham is considered righteous because of his act (work) of sacrificing his son. First of all he believed God when God called him to follow Him. Then only with that same faith he was able to sacrifice his own and only son. Sacrifice followed his faith.

To be counted as righteous, there are two things necessary like the two sides of a coin. One side is that, unless we believe God and make a personal commitment of our life, all our works and sacrifices are as filthy rags before God (Isa 64:6). The other side of the coin is that, when we have

genuinely surrendered our lives to God believing in Christ, we cannot be without doing good works. Our Christian activities, Church attendance or offering alms are not going to justify us as righteous before God. It is the simple obedience to the call of God to follow Him and to submit to the Lordship of Christ, that will be counted (Heb 11:8).

After commencing his step to follow God in faith, Abraham proved his faith through that unique sacrifice. But how was he able to do that? He knew God as Jehovah Jireh, the name by which he called God after the sacrifice. But he knew God that way even before the sacrifice. On his way to sacrifice his son, Abraham told his servants that he would come back with Isaac after worshipping God on the mountain (Gen 22:5). Again when his son Isaac asked him about the sacrificial lamb for worship, he answered his son's heart throbbing question saying, "The Lord Himself will provide" (v 8; Heb 11:19). What a faith! It was the knowledge of God that gave him such a faith that made his sacrifice great! The more we know God, the more we know

of His power. The more we experience his power, the more we can trust Him. The more we trust Him, greater will be our sacrifice. Are you afraid that God will demand more and more as you grow in faith? No my friend, God is not a confiscator to grab all that we have. He just gives us a probation for a promotion. God is not a debtor but a rewarder. Is not Christ our example—even His sacrifice! (Phil 2:5-8). And then His exaltation! (v 9). God is faithful.

2. Faith with Boldness

What Rahab did was to give shelter to the spies without the knowledge of the king of her land (2:25). What made her take that bold step? All the people of Jericho heard what Jehovah did to the people of Egypt (Josh 2:10). When all the hearts melted (v 11), there was this lady, a harlot who was so bold to take a stand for the True God

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and His people. When all the people turned away from God, she turned towards God (1 Cor 1:18). She swam against the current and refused to perish along with others, instead, she took the risk. "I know that the Lord has given you the land" (Josh 2:9). This knowledge gave her faith. Not only that, she also confessed her personal trust in the living God, "For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below." Doesn't it sound like her faith confession as per Acts 4:12? This knowledge and faith confession emboldened her to take such a risk.

Friend, having known God as the God of the universe, when was the last time you did something boldly for God. Are you prepared to burn your fingers for God? We talk much about faith in Faith Seminars. I have come across preachers who claim to do Faith ministry but usually confess only about God's material provision. They think living by faith means, to believe in God for material provisions for this life. They keep on testifying how God gave money in their need and how God healed when they were sick. What a pity! (1 Cor 15:19). Some assume that by doing ministry independently they take a great risk for God. Real boldness that comes out of faith brings deliverance and blessing to others.

I recall an instance in the year 1975, when under the banner of Summer Missionary Programme we went as a team of 10 young people into the Bondo Hills of Orissa for a week. On a very sunny morning we set out to walk to a village, about 8 km away. As we walked and walked crossing one mountain after another on empty stomachs, we almost fainted. Suddenly one brother shouted in jubilation. What did we find? Wild figs just ripe all around in the shade of a big tree. We all fell on that as a spoil and ate stomach full and drank the crystal clear water of the stream that was running by. What a miracle when we venture for God! Truly our God cares. But we are to take risk boldly for others' sake like Rahab.

When it comes to the question of taking risk for God, we generally shun it making excuses. We say, "There is a lion in the road" (Prov 26:13). But we forget Proverbs 28:1. Faith with boldness takes any risk. David trusted in the Lord of Hosts and faced the giant Goliath boldly (1 Sam 17:24,48). Daniel boldly took the risk of the lion's den.

Dare to be a Daniel (Rahab)
Dare to stand alone
Dare to have a purpose firm and
Dare to make it known

Please read through the list of risk takers in Heb 11:31-38. A soul stirring passage indeed!

3. Faith with Patience

Thirdly James brings an ancient saint before our mind's eye. "You have heard of the patience of Job" (5:1). Patience is a costly commodity. It costs a good deal of our character. Often people regret losing their patience. The reason is quite obvious. When you don't pay the cost, you lose it. But it is very difficult to pay the cost. Almost every day we lose it. Sometimes with God, and often with people. We lose control of ourselves because we fail to know that God is in control. That is why James expects us to be familiar with this virtue. He writes,

"You KNOW the testing of your faith produces patience" (1:4).

"You KNOW, we consider blessed those who have persevered" (5:11).

The words "You know" in these statements show that knowingly we run the risk of losing our patience. On the other hand we can be blessed if we stand the test of faith. Patience is an acid test of Faith. It can be revealed only under a trial. While the test for Job was directly from God, it was followed through his friends. For example, his friend Zophar's words only hurt Job (20:1,2). Job answers his impatient words with great patience (21:1-3). What a role model for us! "Water in a tumbler remains still as long as the glass is not disturbed" says Swarnaraj, my son. But when the tumbler is shaken, it splashes out the content. Only then we can know what the content is, whether good or bad (Lk 6:45). Beloved, when you are shaken, what do you bring out? Anger, murmur, complaints, envy, strife, disobedience etc; or love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, etc.? (Gal 5:19-23). How often our impatient words have hurt others? Friends and colleagues fall out; division in churches and organisations arise out of flimsy reasons.

Faith with boldness takes any risk

On the contrary, while patience is an acid test of faith, it is the probation God gives us to go on to spiritual maturity (Js 1:4). God wants that through trials, we mature and shine for Him. Peter says in his first Epistle that gold shines when it is purified by fire. He affirms that our faith is much more precious than gold. If gold that perishes shows up such a glory, how much more will be our glorious faith when it passes through and comes out of the fiery trials! (1 Pet 4:12). Such faith results in praise, glory and honour when Jesus, the Omega of our faith comes again (1 Pet 1:6-7). When the Lord comes back we can experience the inexpressible and glorious joy. Praise God.

James writes, "You have seen the end of Job." What do we see in Job 19:25-27? He yearned in patience and confessed that as long as his Redeemer lived, he had hope of eternity though his body would perish. He longed for eternal reward. God gave him a bonus of earthly blessings too!

4. Faith with Prayer

Fourthly and finally James refers to Elijah, the Old Testament prophet for his faith that resulted in prayer of intercession. A man, very ordinary as we are, but brought fire and rain from heaven when he prayed. Once, Mr. Solomon Das, our missionary in Orissa, while leading a team of students for the Summer Missionary Programme to an interior village in Orissa faced a challenge from a particular group of people. They said, "We have not had rain since last year. So we are starving now. If the God whom you preach is more powerful than the spirits we believe in can give us rain, then we will believe your God." The missionary immediately remembered Elijah of old and agreed to pray. With a genuine love for those people he and his team pleaded with God to have mercy on them and to give them rain. After prayer they slipped out of the village telling them, "Don't worry! You will get rain." But believe it or not, by the time they reached the next village, black clouds chased them as it chased king Ahab! O, what a joy! That year those villagers had a good harvest of grain and during the following years,

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our missionaries had a good harvest of souls! Today we have a mission field in that area. Dear reader, would you mind taking a few days off from your regular work to see how God is working in such places? You can see the illiterates worshipping our Lord in rapturous joy.

This is only one instance. But many more unsung miracles and wonders take place. But how? By the prayers of ordinary men like Elijah. God promised Elijah that He would send rain. The prophet Elijah by faith declared, "I hear the sound of abundance of rain" even before he could see the hand sized cloud! (1 Kings 18:41-45). But it rained only when the faith was followed with work which is prayer.

God has promised an end time revival for us (Joel 2:23,28,32). Beloved, do you hear the sound of the latter rain? Are you able to see the signs of the end time revival? For example, since the last five decades, Tamilnadu has experienced these showers of blessing. Now, the rain cloud is moving towards North. Andhra Pradesh is already experiencing spiritual awakening these days. Thousands of people have put their heads between their knees in prayer. Hundreds are added to the Church and scores of congregations keep rising every month. Will you join this great move of God?

Leonard Ravenhill writes in his book, Why Revival Tarries, "Where are the Elijah's of God?" Yes. You and I need to answer his question if we ought to meet the need of the hour for our land. We need Elijahs who not only bring down fire and work miracles, but Elijahs who ascend to mountains to be alone with God; put their head between their knees in humility and repentance. Elijahs who would challenge Ahabs of today of their wickedness and corruption. Oh, may God grant me that faith that I may stand in the gap (2 Chro 7:14; Ezek 22:30).

May God help us prove our faith by acts of sacrifice, boldness, patience and prayer and thus keep our faith alive. WE are the salt of the earth! f
(Mr. John Thomas served God faithfully as a missionary in the Blessing Youth Mission. He was the one to plant the seed of Orissa ministry which is now a banyan tree. He is now retired. He and his wife Rebekah continue to help the mission in many ways.)

In Search of Wisdom...

Dr. Mrs. Lilian Stanley

A couple came to me at their wit's end because of the crisis they were facing. As I talked to them I understood she was pregnant with their second child and they were planning to abort the baby. Elders in the family also didn't want the child. They had already fixed an appointment in a clinic. I tried to dissuade them. They kept saying, "You don't understand." I kept pointing to the Scriptures. After some days I was able to convince them. Finally with heavy hearts and swollen eyes they agreed to go through the pregnancy. Shortly they came out of the crisis. They were blessed with an unusually bright and beautiful boy. One by one other problems were solved. Today he is the apple of their eye and the heart-throb of the entire family. Though they were believers, in turbulent circumstances they were not able to discern between good and bad.

Do you remember a situation when you were confused, unable to take a decision not knowing what was the right thing to do? We all face crises in life and we need wisdom to tackle not only difficult situations but matters in our day to day life too. When things don't go right we take decisions with considerable crankiness. Instead of kicking and screaming against God, if we use our head, God will guide us perfectly.

He who seeks wisdom is a wise man; he who thinks he has found it is mad—goes the adage. One woman was humble enough to acknowledge her lack of wisdom and was willing to take up an arduous long journey to go to a wise man and learn from him. She is none other than the Queen of Sheba who throws a beam of light in our dark passage to wisdom. We do not know her name but her designation has become her signature today.

We read in I Kings 10:1, "When the Queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions." Solomon rode high on a vest of popular acclaim. All the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart (10:23,24). Solomon's name was on everyone's lips. Because one man sought wisdom all the earth came to know of a living God.

When we read the Bible report about Solomon, two things stand out. One is that though he was famous for many things, beyond ques-tion, it was his wisdom that stunned the whole world. Mind you, he was an inter-national figure in his generation. The second thing is that people not only heard of his wisdom, they also heard of his relationship to God (1 Ki 10:1,24; 2 Chro 9:23). The queen of Sheba was one of them.

Sheba was somewhere near today's Yemen. It was a rich country. The Bible speaks of traders from Sheba (Isa 60:6). The visit of the queen was a prophetic fulfilment of David's prayer for Solomon, may be on the occasion of his coronation (Psa 72:10,15,20). The estimated distance from Sheba to Jerusalem is about 2000 kms. Think of the yearning in her heart that made her take up such a hard journey through the deserts. What made her go for it? From I Kings 10:1 we understand that she not only heard about the fame of Solomon but that his fame was in some-way connected to the name of the Lord. The purpose of her visit was to know these two.

When I go to see my doctor I write down all the questions I need to ask him because I do not want to forget any important doubt I have. I imagine this queen doing the same. What would have been her

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questions? If I were in her shoes the following would have been my first questions: How did you get this wisdom? How can I get this wisdom? What is the name of your God which is so famous? Is this God for Israel alone? Is He superior to my gods? Plus so many other questions that were raging within her. If we let loose our imagination she might have asked about life after death and related questions which are hard questions for anyone.

Let's try to imagine Solomon's answers. How did Solomon get wisdom? When Solomon ascended the throne he was a lover of the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David (1 Ki 3:3). God had a special love for Solomon (2 Sam 12:24). So He appeared to him in a dream and asked what he wanted. Solomon's answer was totally honest and unhypocritically frank: "I am a little child; I do not know how to carry out my duties" (1 Ki 3:7).

Solomon was not enamoured of ascending the throne rather he was intimidated by the titanic responsibility of governing a great nation. "Your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and evil" (3:7-9).

Solomon's motive for acquiring wisdom was not name or fame, but that he may not make grave errors in governing the people. He wanted God's wisdom that the people of God may be blessed. He was aware that the right or wrong decisions he made would affect the people of God. How much we need God's wisdom that those around us may not be hurt by the decisions we take. God's heart rejoiced at the way he humbled himself with a desire to serve His people and a pure motive to bless His people. There was nothing selfish about it (3:10). Solomon's genius is no tantalizing mystery. He went straight to God with straight motives.

What took the back seat in Solomon's caravan of desires? Long life, riches, life of enemies, honour and the like (3:10). One who zealously pursues wisdom should set his motives right and put such secondary longings behind his back, yes. That is God pleasing. Many who have run after wisdom have fallen by the wayside, sidetracked by other targets in life.

So God gave Solomon a wise and understanding heart (3:12). The Bible does not make a mistake by mentioning the seat of wisdom as the heart. We may think wisdom pertains to the brain. That's the different kind of wisdom that James mentions as earthly, sensual and demonic. The wisdom from above dwells in the heart. The wise man has heart, feelings, tenderness and love. If foolishness proceeds from the heart (Mk 7:22), wisdom also proceeds from the same place. It is a matter of which supersedes what.

So God added to Solomon riches and honour he did not ask for. Truly, when we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness first, all these things shall be added to us.

This is not the wisdom that we talk about today in terms of intellectual brilliance. It was the wisdom of God. "The wisdom of God was in him to administer justice" (3:28). That's why Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt (4:29-31). East was known for wisemen (Mt 2:1). Solomon was head and shoulder above them. In this era of iPods and iPhones we should humbly bow our heads and accept that there were men wiser than us more than 2000 years ago.

Men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon (4:34). The Queen of Sheba and Hiram king of Tyre were some of them. Both magnified the Lord (2 Chr 9:8; 2:11,12).

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Who knows how many of these kings and queens became Jehovah worshippers!

The queen came not with the idea of snubbing or trapping Solomon but in utter sincerity to see the depth of his wisdom. Her good heart is seen in the gifts she brought for Solomon. A busy king like Solomon had time to answer “all her questions” and she saw “all the wisdom of Solomon” (1 Ki 10:3,4). Solomon had acquired a reputation as a hotshot who can answer any question. A woman travelling long distance to meet an awesome man, eating his every word—what would have been her response?

You can easily guess her next question. How can I become wise as you? Did Solomon give her a copy of his Proverbs? At least he would have told her, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding,” generating another round of discussion. What do you think they were discussing as Solomon led her to the temple by his entryway by which he went to the house of the Lord? (10:5). About the Holy One of course.

What was Solomon’s longing when he prayed in the temple dedication prayer? “Concerning a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, but has come from a far country for your name’s sake (for they will hear of your great name and your strong hand and your outstretched arm) when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in heaven Your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name” (1 Ki 8:41-43). His longing was that God’s name should not be within the confines of Israel but reach every foreigner. He found one in the queen of Sheba and was more than eager to clear

all the questions of her heart. Did he teach her how to fear God as he teaches us today?

The queen’s heart was leaning gradually towards the Living God from her own handmade gods and goddesses and she might have exclaimed like king Agrippa, “You almost persuade me to put my trust in your God.” Her journey through Solomon’s kingdom was one heart-stopper after another. The exhilarated queen exclaimed, “Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom” (10:8). In other words she was saying, “I wish I resign my job as queen and stand in your presence to hear your wisdom day in and day out.” Of all the exciting things she saw, it was Solomon’s wisdom that struck her dumb,

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

because she had everything else. She could go home and build a palace like his and supply uniform to her servants. But what she wanted was his wisdom from which she was just a heart beat away. “I am not as happy as your servants who hear your wisdom every minute” was her heart cry. If we are honest wisdom-hunters we must start by fearing God and daily digging the Bible to know more about the Holy One. It is this knowledge that makes us wise.

Then she blessed God (10:9). She gave Solomon gold and spices and precious stones by the truck loads. Did his jaw drop? Far from it! “King Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever she asked, besides what Solomon had given her according to the royal generosity. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants” (10:13). May be she asked for a copy of the Pentateuch and a copy of his writings. All her desires satisfied, all her questions answered, plunged into a sea of joyful reveries she returned with a new revelation of a supreme God. Though many kings from all over the

earth visited Solomon, why is it that this queen's visit is elaborated? May be because of her genuine thirst to experience the wisdom of God.

Of the sons of David two were supersmart. One was Solomon the great and the other was the Greater than Solomon. Behold, a greater than Solomon is here. How much time and labour do we spend to sit at His feet and hear His wisdom? If He loved Solomon, He loves us all the same. If He chose him as a king He has chosen us kings too. If we in all earnestness like a little child confess to Him our inability to do our duties and ask for His wisdom like Solomon, will He deny us? What is God's promise to us concerning wisdom? "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith with no doubting" (Js 1:4,5). Let's ask boldly believingly, without a second thought. The best thing about God's generosity is that He doesn't find fault with us.

"The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment in this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here" (Mt 12:42).

If Solomon could give the queen according to his royal bounty how much more shall our heavenly Father give us lavishly, wisdom and all that we desire and much more! Do we take advantage of that offer?

"And when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart." Solomon went beyond the call of duty to answer "all" her questions (10:2,3). All of us have lot of questions for which we don't find the answer. We are tossed about in the sea of life when we reel like drunken men and are at our wit's end

(Psa 107:27). Our so called wisdom flies out of the window. Here's someone greater and wiser than Solomon to whom we can speak about all that is in our heart. Let's walk step for step in the tracks of this queen. Let's talk, talk, talk to Him and unburden out hearts. He will make everything clear to us.

Have you ever thought, "Why am I so foolish? I wish there is a wisdom pill?" Well, the Queen of Sheba probably felt the same way. She went in search of it to Solomon and was blessed more than she could every think of. Come to the One, greater than Solomon, who is the source of all wisdom and ask Him. When we go to God in dead earnest interceding for wisdom, we may not become instant celebrities like Solomon but we'll find God enabling us to discern between good and bad and take wise decisions in our personal, family and social life. In a world that is losing its conscience and no longer able to differentiate between right and wrong, it is time we Christians start praying for wisdom to discern between good and evil, right and wrong.

What is Solomon's formula for getting wisdom? "If you cry out for discernment and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; THEN you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright" (Prov 2:3-7). Two things are implied here: One is—it is paramount that we cry to God. The second is labour. Solomon did both. The Queen of Sheba did both. Let us follow them in the search of wisdom.

"Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding" (Prov 3:13). f

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Who Next?

J. Arun, Karnataka (General Contest)

Ready or not—you're next—This is the time to shape the future. "Those who have rolled up their sleeves and got down to work in the present are under training"—This is the punching statement of Atlanta's young preacher Andy Stanley in his article on Leadership that stirred up my spirit to pen the following thoughts.

In this exciting dispensation when we are expecting an explosive revival, the need of the hour is excellent leaders. Nasty leaders cannot even save the harvested and gathered grains. The new generation they give birth too will only be a can of worms. All along the Christian highway there has been a dearth of Second Line Leaders. My sincere belief is that at the end of a Revival there ought to be a rising of faithful leaders to spark world evangelization. As this thought bombarded my grey matter, the personality of Nehemiah who turned the wheels of history pushed me to take my pen in my trembling hands. Please read the article with the same spirit.

God is ever ready to wave His green flag to herald a spiritual and social revolution that will make a dent in history through a conscientious leader. But are there such leaders ready to take His lead? If a shattered people can rebuild the broken down walls of Jerusalem in a mere 52 days, you can imagine the dynamism of their leader. Let's delve into the open Bible to see his qualities that gave him the muscle for the task.

1. PASSION

Nehemiah's passion cannot be highlighted with a torch. It is not the usual 'burden' we talk about. In the Babylonian palace He was a trustworthy A-1 attendant. Though his body was in a palace his spirit was with his own people dwelling in the unsafe city without walls. He enquired about them. They were subjected to abuse and mockery. Words will fail to explain the force of his feelings that flowed in all directions, when he heard about them. He who noted down the exact month and date lost count when it came to the days of weeping (2:1). He simply writes that for some days he shed tears and mournfully made petition to the God of heaven.

This funny generation that allowed Christ to invade its soul is short of this character. Or else, the North of our country would have witnessed

the sunrise of God's kingdom. It is this passion that incited the Heavenly Father to subject His only Son to the holocaust that brought about the forgiveness of mankind. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" says the Scripture (Rom 8:32). The need of the hour is passion packed Christian leaders. These are the ones who will risk stepping out of their comfort zone to enter the battle field.

2. PRAYER

This is not the, "O Lord, save India" prayer breathed through a yawn inside the blanket on a wintry morning. It is an unusual bitter cry to God that, 'I and my father's house are responsible for the sad state of affairs.' We have become weak by pointing our finger toward this person or that person for today's condition. Let the Nehemiah's spirit of intercession possess our every cell. Let his prayer be our model. Let our temples throb with the ache, "I am the cause of the distraught condition of my people and the shame of my country."

God is seeking for someone to stand in the gap dutifully to get his people reconciled to Him that He may restore the smile on their faces. Where is the prophet to answer, "Here I am" to a shocked and disappointed God who has found none? Let there be a revolution and renewal in our prayer life.

3. PATIENCE

According to Bible Scholars, after Nehemiah's emotional upheaval he was hibernating for four months. Why not dash and do instead of wait and waste? It was a divine silence. Hurry leads to worry. Patience is the hallmark of unique leaders. Do you see a parallel in Christ in the wedding of Canaa? Mary was gripped with anxiety for the wedding hosts. But the answer of Jesus was, "My time has not yet come."

Talkers are plenty. This kind is the banging beginners—not persevering to the end. The need for today's Christianity is quiet and persistent workers. This is an admirable quality we have to catch from Nehemiah. Those who listen to a single missionary challenge, commit themselves to serve the most high God, devastated by field conditions and bounce back to their native place like a ball, ought to cool down their emotions and take a

decision. The wise words of the Scriptures to those who contemplate mighty plans, whether it be building a bullwark on bulldozing to the battle is—sit down and count the cost. Those who count the cost will never be chocolate soldiers.

4. PLANNING

True is the saying, “Those who fail to plan, plan to fail.” Though Nehemiah was patient his heavenly vision did not fly out of the window. There are many who declare their decision pompously and then as days go by deviate from their dedication. But as for Nehemiah the four months only sharpened his plans.

His first concern was to estimate the duration to carry out his plan (2:6). To the king’s question, “When will you be back?” he was able to give an accurate answer. He had the blue print of his plan spread out in his brain. He was aware that he was speaking to the king. He did not answer, “Let me think about it” or “approximately” or “May be.” How neat was his planning!

He had planned the route to Judea. He requested letters from the king for the governors beyond the river to permit him to pass through (2:7). He also got a letter to the forest guard for needed timber (2:8). Such acumen in Nehemiah speaks of his seasoned leadership. Leaders who visualize the end in the beginning itself are deep thinkers. Such with prophetic vision are the men of action. How can a project planned so meticulously fail?

5. PARTICIPATION

As soon as he reached Judea, the first thing Nehemiah did was to inspect the walls of Jerusalem with a handful Jews. Though the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen to answer his beck and call, Nehemiah wanted to do the survey himself. Modern leaders dust their shoes and keep them in the almirah. They think their calling is to order around workers. Such masters have a lot to learn from Nehemiah. The Bible says that the way was too narrow for his animal to go through (2:14). The narration continues that he went in the night by the valley to estimate the wall damage and returned. This rugged leader had to walk a lot where his animal could not carry him. Easy leaders will be fussy but God-appointed leaders rough it out.

If you opt to be a leader then you must come to Christ’s terms to be a slave on the floor. Only such will be promoted to leadership. The challenge of the leaders whose feet is muddy is a whip. It was this man’s revival message that pulled up the depressed people to shout, “C’mon, let’s build”

and prompted them to put their hands to the job. If we follow Nehemiah to get our hands and feet dirty, no doubt we will raise up an army for God. Anyone who wishes to be a leader must himself be a worker. Only then can he strengthen the weak limbs. Nehemiah’s exemplary life teaches us that a leader’s role is not to command but be a worker at the work spot.

There was a significant set back for the American army in the historical American - Vietnam war. After much discussion the headquarters decided to take back the commander and replace him with a new person. The situation not only was rectified but the victory flags were up for the Americans. What was the secret? When the headquarters probed into the matter a soldier said, “The first commander used to call us early morning and depute us our duties. We would go to the battle front. But without timely guidance we lost our nerves. But the latter not only described our duty but he was by our side in the war front. That made all the difference.” Whenever they were in a tight corner they could always run to the commander for help and guidance. The commander became a common man and that was the secret of the victory.

Victory or defeat is decided by the participation of the leader at grassroot level. The promise of Christ to each disciple who marches forward to the uttermost to shed his light is this. “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” When the Father gets into the field, O, leader what hinders you from getting your feet filthy?

To conclude, everyone who has a live-wire relationship with Christ must be a messenger and a leader for Him. Situation demands it. Christianity should not become a big hoax because of some irresponsible leaders. It should explode in the sky like fireworks for everyone to see. Let this generation mature by imbibing the exemplary life of Nehemiah.

God who gave up His own Son and is working to establish His kingdom is calling you to be THE NEXT to labour along side Him. This is no casual work. We are here to show the world the standard of God and the reflection of heaven by our Christ-like life. A crushed community mustered courage to build the wall and rewrite history. Let this be true of India too. May leaders who preserve the purity of Christian faith arise as a very great army all over the world. Then and only then the darkened souls of India shall receive the gospel light and wake up to a golden morning Sun. f

(The author, J. Arun with his family is working as a missionary at Soundatti in the State of Karnataka)

Poojari's Daughter Proclaims the Goodnews!

Leela John, Missionary, BYM

My heart is filled with gratitude as I look back at the fifty five years of my life. Born to a *Poojari* (temple priest) I was nurtured in the faith of gods and goddesses. My mother died at the tender age of 32. Because of my fair complexion, a Christian man sought my hand in marriage and my father got me married to him. But he drank heavily. He was working in Chennai. In five years we were blessed with two boys. Christians used to visit our area and preach about Christ. So I started going to their Church and trusted in the living Saviour through the preaching of pastor Chinnapparaj and was baptized.

One day my husband came home with severe chest pain. I got him admitted in the hospital but he died. My elder son Selvaraj was 3½ and younger son Devaraj was just 2. I cried not knowing what to do. Pastor Chinnapparaj comforted me with God's Words, packed my things, gave some money, prayed and sent me to Muthukrishnapuram, to my father.

My father used to bring home the coconuts and chicken dedicated to the temple. That was our food. People abused me saying, "You married a Christian and got into all this trouble. Why do you still call on Jesus?" My children started going to the temple. I was clinging to God. I decided to leave my father and go to my husband's relatives who were Christians. My father cried and would not let me go, promising to take care of me and the children. One night twenty houses were destroyed in a fire and ours was one. As I was crying and salvaging whatever was left I found someone had thrown my trunk out. When I opened it I found my Bible and two sets of dresses. I was overjoyed to see my Bible. I knew God was telling me to follow Him. So I bid goodbye to my father and left for my husband's brother's house to Virudhunagar.

He, his wife and sister were believers and took me and my children into their house and started looking for a job for me. I started attending a prayer meeting with them. It was there that I met Mr. Stanley's aunt Maryamma, Sis. Jemima and Sis. Roja. They used to pray for me and comfort me. I used to read Isaiah 54 and feel comforted. One day in a dream, someone sat by my side, opened the Bible and read Genesis 12:1-5. I was

not highly educated and used to read the Bible with difficulty. So, in the morning I wondered how to find the verse and opened my Bible. It fell open at Genesis 12. My heart jumped when I read the verses I heard in the night. I thought God was taking me somewhere. The same evening Bro. Stanley's aunt and mother Anbammal came home and requested me to come and help in their house at Vellore. Anbammal assured me that if I help in the household work I can serve God in my spare time. My oft repeated dream was preaching to non-Christians.

My husband's brother and his wife were reluctant to send me thus far to an unknown place. That Sunday I attended the church service. It was like a bolt from the blue when the pastor opened the Bible to Genesis 12:1-5 and preached on it exhorting we must obey like Abraham. Then and there I decided to go.

So I came to Vellore. I left my children in orphanages. In the evenings I went out with Bro. Stanley's mother and one sister Jessie to preach the goodnews to non-Christians and children. The demon possessed were delivered. This was exactly what I had seen in my dreams. I also used to do odd jobs in the Blessing office and cook for guests. Then I started going with Anbammal to Kalinjur, Vanjur, Senur and Jabrapettai villages to preach the goodnews and teach the children and youth. The children grew up in Christ and three of them are now missionaries in North India. I mobilized ladies for Revivo and Aroma in which camps many found the Lord. After Anbammal died I continued the work. Today more than 100 women gather in Kalinjur for the monthly meeting. Some have joined the Church. I also go from house to house collecting money for missionary work.

My elder son did a Diploma course in ITI and is now working in Saudi Arabia. His wife Malini a staff nurse is a good believer and they are blessed with a son. My younger son is a staff in YWAM married to Laly. Both of them based in Nasik, train young people to serve the Lord!

I was Marah but today God has blessed me like Naomi. Women face lot of problems in this world. But if they trust the Lord, He will take charge of their life and lead them to green pastures. f

MY FAITH EXPERIENCE

Romans 4:17 describes God as One who “calls things that are not, as though they were.” When my husband and I began expecting our second child, little did we expect that we would fall back on this promise over and over again.

Eight weeks into the pregnancy, I was strongly advised to terminate the pregnancy, as TORCH titers threw up disturbing results -three out of the five were strongly positive. A strong family history of diabetes did not help either. On the evening of those results, my husband and I took a stand that God alone reserves the right to give and take life, and that He can not only heal, but put new systems and functions in place.

I was later referred to the Medical Genetics department of SGPGI, Lucknow where an ultrasound showed multiple organ defects, including bilateral cystic kidneys. Other tests followed, including a fetal blood sampling for karyotyping. With all good intentions to help us, the consultants there repeated the advise on termination and were bewildered by our stand. Leading public health practitioners (who come in contact with us through our work) tried to describe how a termination was a “logical” and “merciful” conclusion to this sad beginning.

We found our stand very difficult to defend, and at times my faith seemed too small. Images of a deformed baby tormented me often. It was a hard and rough inward journey that we had to take, that brought out our own inadequacies in the face of a simple step of obedience that God expects of all mankind. We were led to trust God moment by moment. The old hymn “Even when my faith is small—trusting Jesus, that is all” was, never more real.

Matthew was born on 2nd October 2005, after a difficult delivery that ended in a C section. He had a left PUJ obstruction at birth, and we opted to wait for 2 months. The latest ultrasound done is normal, except for a slightly large left Kidney and so were renal isotope scan findings. There are no other anomalies either.

Matthew is a living testimony to the faithfulness of a God Who honors those who honour Him. This experience has given us innumerable opportunities to witness, in a place where such chances are few.

Beulah Jayakumar; by e-mail

(Contn. page 15)

Â Pray for the economically poor believers, who need to purchase the seed and sow in time. They face problem from local people. Pray that all the hindrances may be removed and also they may receive a good rain in due season.

Â In answer to our prayers God healed Rev. Alexander from an eye problem; Vishnoi got transfer to Jaipur; Wilson got government appointment. Pray that they may be great witnesses for the Lord in their respective places.

Â Missionary Grace Vyas is suffering from Malaria and Thyroid problem. Pray for God’s healing touch upon her so that she may minister for Him joyfully in Banswara area.

WEST BENGAL

Â Twenty lay people from eight districts participated in the Key Persons Meet in Calcutta on 7-9 July 2007.

Â A monthly prayer meeting for revival and missionary work has been started in Siliguri this month. Pray that the spirit of prayer may grip the Christians of West Bengal.

Â Col. Gissing, the prayer coordinator (West Bengal) shared God’s Word in the Cuttack Key Person’s Meet. Pray for the spiritual renewal of Christians in West Bengal.

GENERAL

Â 39 missionaries from 12 States participated in a weeklong Fasting and prayer held in Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh). Mr. Y. Paul Dinakaran led the sessions.

Â The Board and the General Body of the BYM met in Kodaikanal (Tamilnadu) August 24-26. Continue to pray for the leaders to fulfill their calling and responsibilities.

Â A new Study Bible in Tamil prepared by Dr. Alfred Devadason, one of our well-wishers was published by the Word of Christ Ministries in Chennai on 16 August 2007. Congratulations!

Â Our Southern Regional Coordinator, Mr. A. Suthanthirasingh’s younger daughter Babina married Franklin D. Chellakumar on 30th August 2007 in Chennai. Congratulations! f

News from the Fields

Compiled by S. Mohan Deenadhayan, Regional Coordinator, West

The Blessing Youth Mission has stationed 323 missionaries in 15 States of India, namely Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, 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.

ANDHRA PRADESH

^ 30 local pastors attended the Pastors' Meet in Ongole on 2nd July 2007. They were motivated to get involved in the missionary endeavours. Praise God for the new openings. Missionaries E.L. Mathansingh and Dr. Subash Waghmare ministered in the Baptist Church in this town.

^ Praise God for the completion of the renovation work of the Church at Korukonda. The Church should continue to function with Missionary vision and zeal.

^ Praise God that we have received the declaration for the 'Deevana Magazine publication' from the district collector after much efforts. Also pray for the postal concession so that the magazine may reach many more Christian homes.

^ Pray for the healing of Suvarthamma (Swollen knee); Sujata (Kidney stone); Devika Rani (Heart problem); Selina (Typhoid); Vasanthi Devan (Chikungunya); Santhakumari (Cancer); Elizabeth (Leg fracture) and Manga (Gastric problem).

^ Pray for Solomon, Sironmani, Sumalata, Anamma, Prakash, Devadas, Mahesh, Rufus, Srikant, Balaji, Appalagouri and Nagaraju to experience joy of the salvation in their lives.

^ Pray for the safe delivery of Kumari Pruthri, Mariamma, Evangeline, Kumari, Anitha, Sirisha and Bharathi.

^ Missionary couple Saroj and Bharathi has shifted to Warangal to assist our State Coordinator Mr. P. Ramana.

^ A new prayer cell has been started in Korukonda Sainik school campus with the help of Mrs. & Mr. K. Murali. Pray that the fruits may abide.

ASSAM

^ 15 of our well-wishers from the State of Assam attended the Key Persons' Meet in Jorhat town and considered several ways and means to accelerate the ministry in the North east.

^ 32 of our Readers attended the Guwahati Blessing Readers' Meet on 26th June 2007. Missionary Chezhan shared the field news and Dr. Alfred Devadason shared God's Word. Pray that the Blessing Literature may bring a spiritual renewal in the State.

^ Mr. Hemanta Das (29) is working as a missionary with Rescue Mission. He was one of our subscribers for Blessing magazine. On 1st July 2007 some unknown persons entered his house and struck him to death. Please pray for his bereaved family members, who are yet to accept the Lord. Also pray for the safety of Christian workers in Assam.

CHHATISGARH

^ Missionary R. Elisha ministered to 65 youths in a one-day retreat in Jamshedpur. The participants dedicated themselves for a holy life. Pray that they may walk in their decision.

^ Anti-Christian forces have beaten up one pastor Vikas Masih recently. Pray for God's protection to missionaries and other God's servants in this area.

^ Missionary Elisha's house was forcefully opened by thieves, when he and his wife were away for the ministry. Some valuables and cash were stolen away.

GUJARATH

^ The ministry in Khund village is spreading, where our native worker Mr. Joseph is based. Pray for a great harvest.

^ Two prayer cells for boys are functioning in Nadiad. They regularly meet on every Tuesdays and Saturdays. Pray for their spiritual nurture.

^ Praise God for the partners' Meetings held in Vadodara and Nadiad in which 135 Christians were challenged to get involved in the Lord's work. One of our leaders Mr. G. Rajadhas ministered and explained how he is serving the Lord as a tent maker.

Â Mr. Vikram accepted Jesus Christ as his personal saviour through reading of our gospel tract *Blessing for you*. Pray that all our literature may be an effective tool in God's hand.

Â Senior missionaries V. Ponnusamy, A. Malar-selvan and Peter Luis visited the church planting fields in Amreli and Rajpipla and gave practical suggestions for further growth.

JHARKHAND

Â Missionary N. K. Kusha ministered in Ramgarh and Hearnjanj. Pray for the spiritual transformation of those who heard God's Word.

Â Manoj Das, Charles and Sharma heard the Gospel. Pray that they may come to the saving knowledge of Christ.

Â In answer to our prayers Mrs.S.P. Suresh got healed of heart problem and Mr.Victor of acute stomach pain. Pray that they may stand as bold witnesses.

Â In answer to our prayers Archana Kullu is in the family way after 9 years of marriage. Continue to pray for her safe delivery.

KARNATAKA

Â Rs. 12,000/- worth of blessing books were sold in Mangalore. Pray that the readers may be revived through our literature.

Â 60 Christians participated in the Elders Meeting in Hubli. Pray for their witnessing and fruitful life.

Â Missionaries Mr. & Mrs. S. Regunathan and Mr. & Mrs. C. Sadamal attended the *Life Revision Seminar* in Vellore. Praise God for such seminars organized by the Missionary Upholders Trust which help the missionaries to grow spiritually.

Â Six prayer cells are functioning in and around Dharwad. Pray that many more prayer warriors will be raised in this area.

Â Our contact Mrs. Shoba faces threat from anti-Christian elements. Pray for the protection of her family and for a spirit of boldness to witness for Christ.

Â Mrs. Arthi is expecting, she had lost 3 babies earlier. Pray for her safe delivery.

Â 45 children are eagerly participating in the Sunday School ministry in Soundatti. Pray that many may grow and glow for Christ.

Â God protected our contact Manju from a poisonous snake bite. Pray for God's protection of new believers.

Â The study program on *How to study the Bible* for our youths of Alnavar was a great blessing to the 53 participants. Pray that the youngsters may be filled with the knowledge of God through His Word.

Â Missionaries report an open door in Kakkeri and Kulavalli villages. Pray that these folks may follow the true God.

Â Missionaries R.Paul, Albert Jeyaraj and R.S. Pawar ministered to the congregation from the Word of God in a 3 day Revival Meeting in Jamkhandi. Pray for a spiritual renewal of our believers so that they may be saturated with God.

Â Shantha, Laxmi and Thara are facing persecution for their faith in Christ. Pray for God's strength and also for the salvation of the persecutors.

Â Committed teachers are needed for two of our Day Care Centres one each in Kudurenala and Kandrankoppa. Pray for God's provision.

Â The bridge on the way to Mainalli field is badly damaged. Because of this the missionaries have to travel around 20 kms to reach the other side. Pray that the concerned authorities may take necessary steps to restore the facility to help the people.

Â Yamunavva, a crippled lady was also suffering from epilepsy. She was healed after the earnest prayers of our missionaries. Pray for her witnessing life.

Â Pray that Kalmud thanda, Chennapur and Rathnapur villages may be reached with the Gospel of Christ. Our missionaries are taking efforts to reach out those areas.

Â Many houses in Kathijapur (a lambani tribal village) were destroyed due to heavy rains. People take refuge in our Church premises. Pray for the completion of the compound wall work that is being built.

MAHARASHTRA

Â 20 people attended the fasting and prayer in Vaduj. Missionary Vinodh Mallappa led the intercession.

Â God answered the prayers of our missionaries and blessed Sundari and Thushar Kohli to get suitable life partners. Pray for their family life.

Â Praise God for our believers in Narthawade who are growing strong in the Lord. Pray that God may establish them in Faith.

Â Pray for those who are facing stiff opposition—Mahesh Shidha of Jath and believers in Bilur village. Pray for the persecutors to turn to Christ.

Â Pray for God's peace to prevail in the families of Ramesh, Sakat, Kalaidon, Ravi and Jath.

Â Praise God for the prayer groups in Madigyal and Aukaligi which are growing. Pray for the growth of the inner life of these cell members.

Â 20 children participate in the Sunday School in Kable galli village of Gargoti. Pray that their parents too may come to the saving grace of Christ through these children.

Â Pray for a divine healing in the lives of; Bajrang Kude (Childlessness); Malan Kude (Chest pain); Sindhu (Dwarf); Vishal (Abdominal pain); Yohan Jadhav (Drunkenness).

Â Mrs. Shindhe of Gargoti has joined our ministry. Pray that God may use her mightily to reach the local people.

Â Our missionary Shantha Gowda needs to get a proper house in Jath. Pray for God's provision.

ORISSA

Â Medical personnels Manikant, Martha and Pushpalatha joined our ministry to help in Ramagiri Jungle clinic and Hemant joined as a warden in the Blessing Children Home, Ramagiri. Pray for God's special anointing and grace.

Â Our missionaries visited Pandrimati, Batapain and Dudumpadar villages newly. Praise God for the 14 souls added to the Church.

Â Mr. A. Jeyaraj, Member, Advisory Panel dedicated our Church in Pujaribarandi village. 100 believers gathered in the service. Dr. Jayakumar Mohan of Kanyakumari District of Tamilnadu contributed towards the entire construction.

Â Parsu, Budu, Sivo, Kendra, Chandra, Balaram, Jagabandhu, Sardas, Madhia, Susant, Mala, Muna and Madhav are our new contacts. Pray for their salvation.

Â Pray for the healing of Subarna, Nursingha (Paralysis); Premananda, Bimol (Epilepsy); Purnohati (Diabetes); Sanju (Demon possession) and Srimukhachhatri (TB).

Â In answer to the prayers of our missionaries our native worker Pitambar Nayak and our believer Bhagirathi are blessed with a baby boy each.

Â People of Chitakhai village are keenly interested in listening to the Gospel. A new believer Dolbo Tandi of Nuapali village is very much revived and is sharing the Gospel to the nearby villages. Pray for a rich harvest.

Â God protected Kashaav family from a snakebite. Their child narrowly escaped in their very house. Pray for God's protection for our believers and missionaries from poisonous snakes and dangerous animals of the jungle.

Â 35 believers are added to the church in Ramagiri area during this month. Praise be to the Saviour!

Â Pageset and printing work of *Frank Answers Vol-2* and *Better Everyday* in Oriya are in the Final stage. Pray for their release. May the Blessing books bring revival to many Christian Homes!

Â Missionary Biswanath Samal's daughter Elizabeth Samal joined with Dhamendra Nayak in marriage on 16 August 2007. May God shower His choicest blessings upon the newly wed!

RAJASTHAN

Â Three prayer cells for boys have been formed in Jaipur after Halo 2007. Pray that they may bring fruits among the contemporary youth.

Â Susila, Rajkumari, Sanjay, Suman, Saroj Amith, Alok are the seekers. Pray for their spiritual transformation.

Â Pray for the healing of Samuel Massey (Heart Problem); Omprakash, Mahender, Rajkumar (Drunkenness); Kanchan, Deena (Safe delivery).

Â As our believers are the first generation Christians, getting suitable life partners is very difficult. Pray that God may provide suitable life partners for our youngsters to build Christian homes.

Â A prayer cell has been newly started for young girls in Jaipur.

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