

THE Plain Truth

MCI (P) 132/05/2013

A Magazine Of Christian Understanding

Feb-Mar 2014

**You are valuable
beyond measure**

p.5

Mercy for all

p.18

Can we really forgive?

p.19

THE PLAIN TRUTH

ISSN 1675-3100



9 771675 310008

PP 12578/03/2013 (032108)

God has changed address!

It is important that we get God's address right so we can actively engage him in our lives.
Where does God live? What is his address?

God's old address

God's address is where he is. First, he was with Adam and Eve. Then he was with Noah, Abraham and his descendants. Later, he appeared to Moses. He told Moses to build a tabernacle so he could dwell in their midst. It was a mobile tabernacle. So King David decided to build a permanent temple for God. His son, Solomon, finally completed the temple. God appeared to his people in the temple.

One of Israel's annual festivals, the Day of Atonement, showed clearly God's presence in the tabernacle/temple. On that day, the high priest washed himself thoroughly and put on a priestly robe. First he confessed his household's sins and the sins of Israel with sacrifices. Then he took two goats and offered one for the Lord and the other for Azazel (scapegoat). He sacrificed the first goat and took its blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the mercy seat to atone for Israel's sins. Then he took the second goat and laid Israel's sins on it and drove it away into a wilderness.¹ This ritual acknowledged God's presence in their midst—in the Holy of Holies.

Israel sinned. God allowed enemy nations to come and destroy their nation. They destroyed the temple and that stopped the temple sacrifices to cease. God was no longer present in the temple. His address changed—but to where?

God's new address

The Son/Word of God—the second member of the Trinity—emptied himself and took on human form. Jesus came as Emmanuel, which means God with us. He became flesh, but he didn't cease to be God. He was God in the flesh, fully God and fully human. Jesus was God's address. Anyone who wanted to encounter God must come to him.

The authorities who managed the temple at Jerusalem engaged in corrupt practices. They made the temple into a money-making institution. Jesus was furious. He overthrew the tables and drove the money

by
**Dr. P.
Sellappan**

changers out. He also warned them that they would destroy the temple but he would rebuild it in three days. By this, he was referring to his own death and resurrection. They would kill his body (temple) but he would rise up on the third day.

God's plan has always been to take abode in humans. That's exactly what Jesus did after he rose from his death. He came to live in us. His desire is to express his life in and through us, as us, uniquely. Jesus doesn't come alone; he brings with him his Father and the Holy Spirit as well as for they are inseparable.²

God's address is where Jesus is. Jesus is in us, so we are God's address. We are his temple/tabernacle.³ We are God's Holy of Holies. Jesus, who is the fullness of God,⁴ dwells in our heart, mind and spirit. He lives, moves and has his being in us.⁵ That's why Paul

exclaimed, "Christ in you is the hope of glory."⁶

Just before his death, Jesus assured his disciples that the Father is in him and he is in the Father. He also assured them that he would be in them and they would be in him.⁷ He was telling them that he would take residence in them. Wow, God is moving into us!

Many see God as a distant deity. But he is not. He is with you and in you. He is with you at all times, in good times and bad times. He is in your contradictions and conflicts. He is in your struggles and disappointments. He is in your pain and grief. Whether you are aware or not, he is present with you

every moment of your life. He will never forsake you. After all, he took your cause and entered into your hell to redeem you. So he knows what it means to be in your hell because he was been there. He experienced our hell on the cross.

The risen Jesus lives in you, in your innermost being.⁸ He is with you every moment of your life. He knows you better than you know yourself. You are his favourite address. So don't let anyone tell you that God has left you or that he is far from you. The truth is he is with you and in you. Why because he loves you immensely, because you bear his own image and likeness.⁹ That's why you can trust him completely. Wouldn't you? □



¹ Leviticus 16

² John 14:23

³ 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19;
Revelation 21:3

⁴ Colossians 2:9

⁵ Acts 17:28

⁶ Colossians 1:27

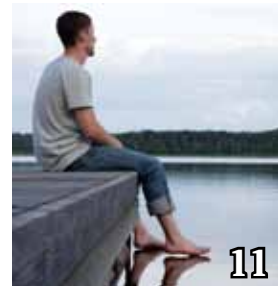
⁷ John 14:20,
17:20–23

⁸ John 7:38

⁹ Genesis 1:27

THE Plain Truth

A Magazine Of Christian Understanding



Issue No. 5	Volume No. 12
February–March 2014	PP 12578/03/2013 (032108)
Editor	Dr. P. Sellappan
Managing Editor	Low Mong Chai
Co-ordinator	Susan Low
Editorial & Advisory Committee	Ben David
	Devaraj Ramoo
	Stefanie Tai
	Tan Ten Lee
	Wong Mein Kong
	Wong Teck Kong
Editorial Adviser	John Halford
Design	Richard Low
Design Adviser	John D. Stettaford

Malaysia

Office Address:
No.98, Jalan Zapin 3A/KU5,
Mutiaru Point (off Jalan Meru),
Bandar Bukit Raja, Batu Belah,
41050 Klang

Website: www.gci-malaysia.org
Email: ptasiamy@gmail.com

Postal Address:
P. O. Box 2043,
Pusat Bisnes Bukit Raja,
Pos Malaysia Bhd.,
40800 Shah Alam.

Singapore

Jurong Point Post Office, P.O. Box 054, Singapore 916402

The Plain Truth is published five times a year as funds allow, and is sponsored by Grace Communion International (formerly known as Worldwide Church of God Malaysia), which is a member of the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Malaysia. It follows a non-denominational editorial policy and provides a message of practical help, hope and encouragement from a Christian perspective.
- For Non-Muslims Only -

DONATIONS: Although we do not put any subscription price for **THE PLAIN TRUTH**, we gratefully welcome donations from readers who support our desire to bring spiritual knowledge and understanding to our fellow brothers and sisters.
Cheques should be made payable to 'The Plain Truth' and mailed to the postal address listed above.

Printed in Malaysia by:
Hin Press & Trading Sdn Bhd (71078-D)
No. PT 45855, Batu 2, Jalan Kapar,
41400 Klang, Selangor, Malaysia

ISSN 1675-3100. Copyright Worldwide Church of God, 2014.

cover story

- 5 You are valuable beyond measure**
Wake up to the treasure in you!

articles

- 7 What sort of God is God?**
God is love.
- 8 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**
God didn't forsake Jesus.
- 10 When "No, thank you" is rude**
Be sensitive to culture.
- 11 Living water—the answer to emptiness**
Only God can fill our void.
- 12 Religion vs. Gospel**
Religion and Gospel are vastly different.
- 14 The story continues**
We are called to fellowship with God and one another.
- 15 Do good laws make good people?**
Gospel changes us, not laws.
- 16 We will see God**
To see God is to awaken to his presence in us.
- 17 You are included and so is everybody else!**
God offers salvation to all.
- 18 Mercy for all**
God extends mercy to all.
- 22 Live to save**
Share God's salvation with others.

regular features

- 2 Editorial**
- 4 What our readers say**
- 19 Another angle**
- 20 Speaking of life...**
- 21 Tammy's turn**
- 23 Hmm...**
Something to think about.

What our readers say:

Your July–August 2013 editorial article (paradoxical saviour) was good reading. It introduces Jesus from another perspective that I have not thought of. Perhaps Jesus means different things to different people, and all these pieces of puzzles come together as we continue to grow in grace and truth.

Paul Fernandez
Kota Kinabalu

A friend of mine loaned me a copy of THE PLAIN TRUTH. I find it very enriching in faith and would appreciate if you could kindly put my name on your mailing list. Thank you. May God's peace and blessings be with you as you participate in building his kingdom.

Margy
Singapore

I browsed through a copy of THE PLAIN TRUTH while waiting to see a doctor in a clinic and I found it quite interesting read. I wish to get a free subscription to THE PLAIN TRUTH magazine. I would appreciate if you could also send some back issues. Thank you.

SC Lee

I am very happy to receive my first copy of THE PLAIN TRUTH magazine. I am very grateful for your support. I hope this magazine will strengthen and increase my and my family's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Best regards to everyone involved in producing the magazine. God bless.

Bambang Widjanarko I
East Java, Indonesia

I would like to have free subscription of THE PLAIN TRUTH. I read some articles in the April-June edition and I was inspired and moved to do more on sharing the Good News with other people. As matter fact, my colleague was with me when I took a copy of the magazine in Tung Shin hospital. And she was listening as I was reading it. Thank you very much!

Rem Ortega
Kuala Lumpur

Good day! We are a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. We happened to receive THE PLAIN TRUTH by 'accident'. Since then we have been subscribing and reading and finding it very

useful, interesting and inspiring. It helps to deepen my faith and makes my spiritual journey more joyful. Thank you to THE PLAIN TRUTH team. Please accept my token contribution for the continuance of God's work. May God's blessings be with you all always!

Freddy & Shirley
Kota Kinabalu

Foremost, I would like to thank you very much for the continuous supply of THE PLAIN TRUTH for so many years. With the technology available today I prefer to read it on-line. In view of this, I would like to respectfully request that my name be removed from your mailing list. Please send me details on how I could make donations for your wonderful work. Thank you very much.

Geronico M. Magpantay
Brunei

Many thanks for sending me THE PLAIN TRUTH. I have been sending a token sum of RM50 every year except last year. I am 81 years, very forgetful and my eye sight is not good. So it is best that you terminate my subscription. Enclosed please find a cheque for RM100. Thank you.

Clare Looi Kum Ching
Petaling Jaya

THE PLAIN TRUTH touches on real issues. It could be a situation that I, my family, or just someone I know is facing. So, reading the magazine helps me to encourage myself or provide hope to someone I speak to.

Marilyn Gerard
Kuala Lumpur

I enjoy reading the magazine. It helps in broadening my understanding towards Christianity and God's word. THE PLAIN TRUTH is always my favourite reading resource, and I hope to continue receiving it. Thank you.

Pauline Tay Pei Yean
Kuching

The articles by Dr Sellappan are touching. It helps me to walk in the truth of God. Please continue sending me the magazine.

S M Arumugam
Klang

When I face various problems/troubles, I read your magazine for comfort and consolation.

Beatrice Arul
Shah Alam

Reading THE PLAIN TRUTH has helped me to understand and overcome problems and obstacles that I face in life.

Melinda Lee
Klang

The articles encourage me when I am down with problems. I learn to lift up everything to God and live a more peaceful and meaningful life.

Ang Siew Ya
Klang

The articles are inspiring and enriching. May God continue to bless your good work. Thank you very much.

Mary Emmanuel
Penang

Although THE PLAIN TRUTH is sent free of charge, it is not without cost. Each copy is made possible by the generosity of others. So we are very grateful for those readers who send a donation, and make it possible for us to continue to publish the good news of the Gospel. Donations should be sent to the addresses listed on page 3 or sent electronically to the bank account:

The Plain Truth
A/C No: 1203-0386318-05-6
CIMB BANK BHD
Jalan Dato Hamzah (Branch)
12-14 Jalan Dato Hamzah
41700 Klang,
Selangor, MALAYSIA.

We welcome your comments. Letters for this section should be addressed to: "Letters to the Editor", The Plain Truth, P.O. Box 2043, Pusat Bisnes Bukit Raja, Pos Malaysia Bhd., 40800 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.
or sent via electronic mail to:
ptasiamy@gmail.com

The editor reserves the right to use letters so addressed in whole or in part, and to include your name and edit the letter for clarity and space.

You are valuable beyond measure

by
Andre Rabe

You are valuable, you are loved, and someone knows you even better than you know yourself. There is an image and likeness imprinted upon your being that is the basis of your value... a value beyond your wildest dreams.

Coins used to have the face of the person who guaranteed their value, minted onto them. Any note or coin has a guarantor, a person or institution that guarantees its value. Even if a coin gets lost, the coin never loses its value.

The one who invented and designed you, stamped you with His own image and likeness.

He knows you better than you know yourself... He knew you even before you were born. You might not know Him, but He has always known you. You might not be aware of Him, but He has always had you on His mind.

You might think 'why'... why would anyone have such an obsession with me. Well, the Creator of this universe sees a value and a beauty in you beyond anything in this natural world. He even sees a possibility of romance!

When, Where and Why you began.

Whatever age you are, you have a beginning that cannot be measured in time.

You have the most awesome origin. In the beginning, before creation, before time as we experience it, before the existence of evil, there was a dynamic exchange of love, a relationship without boundaries, an enjoyment of total abandonment... a being we now call God. It was in the very midst of this fiery love, at the core of this passion, that the idea of... you came into being!

The God who is love planned to share this love with beings created in His image and likeness. This God, who is all-knowing and able to accomplish all of His purposes, planned a love-affair that would span over eons and conclude with a final victory in which His love conquered all—no contradiction; no evil.

This good news is not some new idea, but the ancient, original thought of God.

Let's imagine this beginning, let's allow the spirit of God to draw us to this place in which all things had their origin. Although no science can explain it, although the greatest minds have tried and failed to define it, God is confident that you are able to comprehend the unsearchable; to appreciate the motivation that gave you birth; to remember where you began. In this place there is no space, yet no limit; no creation, yet no emptiness—there is only God in all His fullness. He is not lonely or in lack. It is out of His fullness, out of the overflow of love that you are conceived.

God did not imagine a pet that would simply entertain Him! This God-dream is about a being who has the capacity to intelligently appreciate, to receive, to produce and to exchange the same quality of love that flows within God. His plan is not vague or speculative

philosophy, but clear and specific... so clear, that He uniquely identifies and names the individuals who would form part of the plan and become part of creation. And so before the foundation of this world, He saw you in Christ. At this point, He made up His mind about you! No matter what detours, no matter what contradictions would come, He determined that you would be His treasure—blameless and innocent before Him in love.

When did you begin?

Before creation, before time itself.

Where did you begin?

In the very heart of love, a love relationship we call God.

Why did you begin?

To be loved, adored... and ultimately for that love to be awakened in you.

The Word made flesh.

The original, authentic Word was face to face with God from the very beginning. God Himself is the content of this communication—revealing His personal presence and unique expression in all that exists.

In fact there is nothing original or innovative outside of Him! He is the only Creator and the source of all inspiration and creativity. Everything that is, has 'Made by God' stamped on its existence.

The very life of God is what ignited the existence of man. This original light still shines even in darkness and no amount of darkness can put this light out. (John 1:1-5 Breath of Life)

The time lapse between the original thought of God and now is obviously vast. Has this original thought not been lost through time?

No, this authentic dream began before time and was preserved, set apart, in a person called Jesus Christ. In Him the logic of God was kept until the right time when it was made visible in flesh. He came and demonstrated in human form, the kind of life God had in mind from the very beginning... a life where God and man is so fully united that we cannot even tell them apart.

Man began in God. No matter how far man has fallen from his original place of innocence, God has never been confused about the true identity of man.

Jesus Christ is the place, the event and the person in which God and man meet once again. In Christ Jesus, God has taken the initiative to reconcile man back to Himself—to restore man to blameless innocence.

Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, and as such does not only represent God's initiative, He also represents man's perfect response of faith to God's initiative.

Jesus reveals the heart of God more than any other story ever told or any scripture ever written. In Him God reveals that He does not want to be God apart from us. He does not want to be a distant or unknowable God. The only way in which He wants to be God, is with

man, in man, and as a man.

Jesus reveals the truth about man more accurately than any other story, or even the factual history of man. In Him we see that the only way to be fully man, the only way to be fully free, is in union with God.

This passion of God to restore man to that place of union would drive Him to pay any price, to go to any depth to see it accomplished. And so in the act of becoming man, He places Himself in a position of conflict. Everything that has ever stood between God and man, every obstacle and every form of separation (called sin in the Bible) would meet and come to a final conclusion in this God-man, Christ Jesus.

When your timeless Creator became a man, He mystically united Himself with you, so that He could bring an end to everything that stood between you and release you to be fully and truly yourself again. In this unity He faced everything you faced... and conquered! In His death, you died! That old state of being, separated from Him and united with sin, was brought to a final end in Him. He has wiped your slate clean, forgiven you of every wrongdoing.

In His resurrection, you were resurrected to newness of life—that original life that God imagined for you from the beginning. In His ascension, you were raised to the most glorious place of honour—a place where God delights in you!

The only thing that has ever kept you from enjoying these realities is blindness. Not seeing what He sees, keeps us from enjoying what He enjoys. But these very words you are reading now, are reminding you of your union with Him. As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness (Psalm 17:15)

What should I do?

You might ask, what should I do... how does one respond to such news? Well the good news is that the hard work has already been done for you! Jesus defeated everything that stood between you! Gratitude... love awakened, is all that's left to do. Some call it faith.

Here's a simple suggestion to give expression to this faith. Turn your focus inward. Become aware of the One who made you and united Himself with you... within you. In your own thoughts and words respond... something like: Thank you for who You are and what You have done for me. As You gave yourself in love to me, in Jesus Christ, I give myself in love to You. You made me in Your image and likeness, I acknowledge Your ownership. You made me to be loved... here I am, love me! ☐

Copyright 2012 Andre Rabe, Hearhim.net



What sort of God is God?

One of the most profound questions and current debates is what sort of God is God? What underpins his nature, what is at the heart of God?

In life, first impressions and reputations have a huge impact on how we view an individual or even a group of people. If someone gives us an undeserved bad name, it can take a long time to correct it. Where we start in our understanding of God profoundly affects everything else we think about him and where we end up in our overall view of and relationship with him.

What is the image that comes to mind when you think of God? What sort of being do you think God is? Or to reverse the question, what sort of being do you think God thinks you are? What is his attitude towards you?

When I was young I distinctly remember a scene in the popular movie, *Pollyanna*. One of several at the time starring the very young Hayley Mills. The scene was in a small

but crowded church in rural America. The preacher had everyone frozen to their seats, warning them of God's punishment if they didn't repent. He assaulted the hearts and minds of his congregation with a god of devastating anger and vindictive vengeance, a towering judge who was waiting to destroy any hint of wrong with fire and brimstone. One of the points of the movie was that this was a wrong view.

Recently one of the most popular topics on social media has been the debate about hell.

Well known US minister and author Rob Bell wrote a book called *Love Wins* in which he suggested that hell may not be the final end of all the wicked. The debate swings on the question, what sort of God is God? What is the core nature and mind of God?

Is God primarily a sovereign almighty God of supreme power and authority, or is he primarily a God of love? Few would doubt that God is both. But if we start with the first premise as most important, the rest of our beliefs and views of God's will and how we interpret issues of who God will save, hell and final judgment etc., are going to be quite different than if we start with a God of love.

So how do we know the primary motivation and heart of God that underlies who he is and therefore what he does and his view of each of us? Through his words

by
Phil Hopwood

and actions. And his words and actions are revealed to us through the one who became God in the flesh, Jesus Christ. As Jesus himself said, "by their fruits you shall know them,"¹ and "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks."²

The life, the words, the actions, the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Son of God reveal to us the underpinning nature and heart of God. He demonstrated that God's love underpins his sovereign power and righteous judgments. Jesus' life exemplifies and makes clear that all God's actions and future plans regarding you, me and everyone who has ever lived, are benevolent and purely based on love. John 3:16 makes clear that God's judgment is based on his loving desire to save us, so much so that "he gave his only Son." God stopped at nothing to rescue us and restore us to a relationship with him.

John's first epistle makes boldly plain, that "God is love." Love is not an occasional feeling with God. It is who he is, all the time, in everything he does. His loving judgment is that through his Son becoming one of us, and dying and being resurrected as one of us, that all mankind is forgiven and invited to be part of his family. "Whilst we were still sinners, Christ died for us."³ It is God's will that none should perish, but that all should have their lives turned around.⁴ This is hardly a God whose primary motivation is to



condemn and punish anyone who steps out of line.

God opposes sin and evil, not just because he is the omniscient, almighty, sovereign judge of the universe, but because he loves us. He does not want his children to suffer by living contrary to his loving way of life. His plan and promise is to restore the universe to be as he intended from the beginning.⁵

The more we read about God's words and actions, and his promises for the future, the more it becomes clear what sort of God he really is. And, no matter what our first impressions may have been, the more it becomes clear; God is a God worth knowing and trusting. □

¹ Matthew 7:16, 20

² Luke 6:45

³ Romans 5:6–8;

1 Timothy 1:15–16;

1 Peter 3:18

⁴ 2 Peter 3:9

⁵ Revelation 21:3

My God, my God, why

It was one of the defining moments in all of history. Jesus crucified.

During those approximately six hours that he hung on the cross, many memorable events took place. Not least when he cried out, “My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?”

Jesus always spoke of God as his Father.¹ Even when he talks to the disciples about God he refers to him as your father or my father.² Each time Jesus prays he addresses God as his father. Never does he address God as ‘my God.’ This was a major source of conflict between the Jewish Rabbis, leaders and Jesus. The Jews never referred to God on such personal terms as ‘Father.’

When Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane before his arrest, with tears and sweat drops of blood, he repeatedly called God ‘Father’.³ Even at the age of 12, when his parents find him in the temple, he refers to God as his Father.⁴ It therefore makes sense that during his most trying moments, such as when praying in Gethsemane and on the cross, he would talk to God in terms of ‘Father.’ An obvious question would then be why would Jesus, while hanging on the cross, call out, “My God, my God” and not “My Father, my Father?” Jesus never uses words randomly, so it was not by chance that he said God and not Father.

Taking on the sins of the world

A common belief is that at the exact moment Jesus called out these words was the moment that he took on all the sins of the world and that God the Father turned his back on him. Even with that scenario, the question still remains as to why would Jesus not say, “My Father?” Looking at Jesus’ relationship with God as father it is even more pertinent that that would be the one time Jesus would cry out, “My Father”. Even after this incident Jesus still addresses God as father when he says, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” and having said this, he gave up the ghost.”⁵

Two things stand out here. Firstly, why now address God as ‘Father’ and secondly, at this point Jesus would still be carrying all the sins of the world. So if God had turned his back on him, how could he commend his spirit into God’s hands?

The gospel writers only mention that when Jesus cried out, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” that some of those who stood by, when they heard it, said, ‘behold, he calls Elijah’.⁶ Those that heard him either did not speak Aramaic, or did not hear clearly what he said. However, at some stage those standing around (or those who later heard of the incident) would have definitely thought of Psalm 22. Why? Because Jesus’ words were a direct quote from the first verse. This was no coincidence. Jesus knew exactly what he was doing and saying. Therefore, in a genuine attempt to find out exactly what was behind Jesus’ words, it would be helpful to study the whole psalm.

**by
Johannes
Maree**

The psalm of the cross

It is quite apparent why Psalm 22 is often referred to as the Psalm of the Cross. There is no mistaking who David is talking about nearly 1,000 years before Jesus’ crucifixion.

“They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.”⁷

David is obviously not talking here about himself. Reading Psalm 22 a person can get confused at times as to exactly whom David is referring to. Sometimes it sounds like he is talking about himself. Then in the next breath he is prophesying about Jesus and then talking to us, or the nation of Israel. In fact, often the words do not even appear to be those of David, but Jesus’ or God’s own.

On the cross Jesus was pointing everyone to the fact that Psalm 22 is referring primarily to him. This in itself is beautiful and amazing, but there is more. A central theme of the Psalm is about asking God why does he ‘appear’ to forsake us in our times of dire need.

We have to understand that because the Psalmist says, “My God why have you forsaken me?” does not automatically mean that God has forsaken him. It is clear from verse 24 that God “has not despised nor disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; Neither has he hid his face from him; But when he cried unto him, he heard.” There are times in our lives that we feel as if God has forsaken us and we might even cry out in desperation, ‘God, I am going through terrible trials and my prayers are not being answered. Why my God, have you forsaken me?’ And God lovingly answers, ‘No my child. I have not forsaken you. For I have promised that I will never leave you, nor forsake you’.⁸ The Amplified Bible, which is a literal translation, puts it this way, “for He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!].”

If you are still not convinced carry on reading through Psalm 22 and 23. The two Psalms are so harmonious in their message that it is no wonder they were placed next to each other.

My God why have you forsaken me?

He has not hid his face from him [me]

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want

Yes, thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.

have you forsaken me?

Did God really turn away from Jesus?

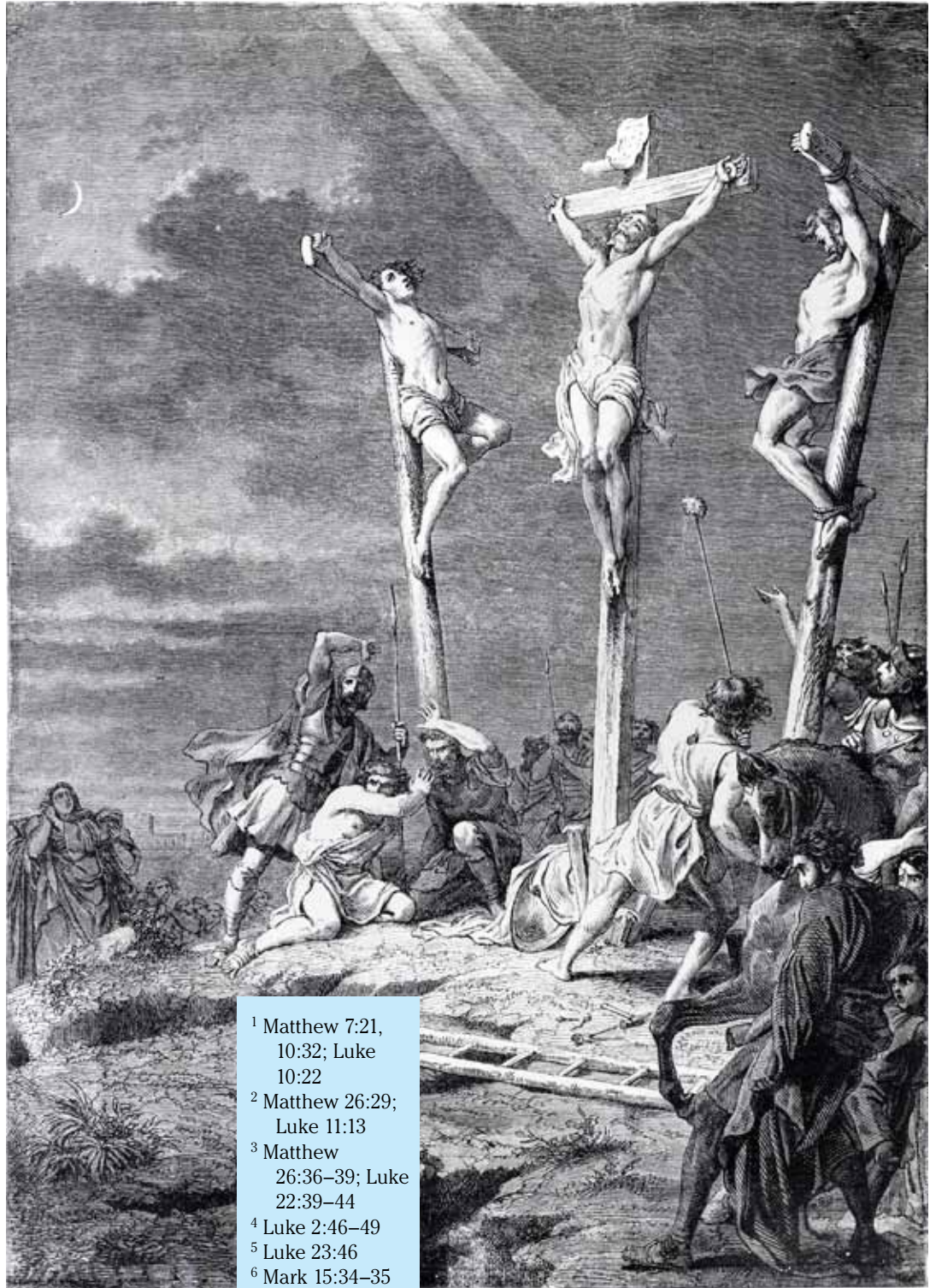
This should cause us to pause and consider that maybe God did not turn his back on Jesus, nor forsake him. That was not what Jesus was saying, but in fact he was saying the exact opposite. It could give us the wrong idea about who God the Father really is. If God the Father forsook Jesus, his one and only begotten Son and Jesus is himself fully God and part of the Trinity, then what chance do we have?

Central to the argument of God having forsaken Jesus is that Jesus had taken on all the sins of the world and that God cannot be in the presence of sin. But then how come, after Adam and Eve had sinned, did God come and speak face to face to them?

There is also the story in the book of Job where Satan (the chief of all sinners) comes into the presence of God in heaven. Another thought is if God, who is omnipresent and 'holds the universe in the palm of his hand' cannot be in the presence of sin, where can he go? He is everywhere. Jesus (who was fully God while on earth) regularly ate and mingled with sinners. We humans are tainted by sin, and when we rub shoulders with it, it sticks to us and doesn't wash off. Not so with God the Father or Jesus.

Does this mean that God is okay with sin? Of course not. As the old cliché goes, God hates sin but loves the sinner. An amazing part of the Gospel is that God, who is perfect, undefiled and sinless, was willing to come and sit in the dirt with us. But he did not leave us there, he took off his clean coat and put it on us and we became sinless. God is not scared to get his hands dirty.

In our moments of greatest need and in the depths of sin, God is always there. When God says, 'I will never



¹ Matthew 7:21, 10:32; Luke 10:22

² Matthew 26:29; Luke 11:13

³ Matthew 26:36–39; Luke 22:39–44

⁴ Luke 2:46–49

⁵ Luke 23:46

⁶ Mark 15:34–35

⁷ Psalm 22:13–18

⁸ Deuteronomy 31:8; Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5

leave you nor forsake you'—he means it. He has not despised our sufferings nor hid his face from us.

Praise our loving Father for that. □

When “No, thank you” is rude

by
Carrie Smith

I grew up using the phrases “please,” “thank you,” “yes, sir” and “yes, ma’am.” These were the polite things to say, especially when I wanted to show respect to my elders or those in authority. These lessons are still valuable to me in adulthood, and I have tried to instill them in the children I have had the privilege to work with and mentor along the way.

I was a little surprised, though, when I found myself in a place where some of my ideas about politeness didn’t apply. My friend Kayla Elliott and I taught school at Young Ambassadors Private Primary School in Malawi in southeastern Africa, and we found a much different standard of politeness there. The school’s Director, Fadrick Nihaka, who is also a church pastor, and his wife did everything in their power to make our stay comfortable. I was not used to such treatment and it felt odd to receive so much attention. Kayla and I both wanted to fit in, to live simply and to not be a burden to anyone, but we didn’t initially realize our idea of burden was different from theirs.

One of the first culture shocks was when Dorothy was hired to be our housekeeper and cook. Neither Kayla nor I had ever had someone to help us with housework. We were the domestic staff for our parents; doing chores, keeping our rooms clean, doing our own laundry and helping out around the house. So to have someone take care of these needs for us seemed excessive. What we didn’t understand, though, is having a house caretaker is a part of Malawi culture. It is expected, and even our housekeeper had a house girl who helped care for her young son and do housework at Dorothy’s home while she was at work.

Our first reaction to Dorothy’s service was to say, “No, thank you” and try to do the work ourselves, or at least to help her with various chores. What we didn’t realize was that saying, “No, thank you” to Dorothy meant we were rejecting the provisions Pastor Nihaka and his wife made for us. In our attempt to be gracious and polite, we were actually communicating a lack of respect for them and their culture.

I am glad to say that Kayla and I learned quickly and soon began to appreciate Dorothy and all she did for us. We chose to learn from her, asking many questions about her life and culture. We continued to learn this “new” politeness at church as well. Food and drinks were served after the first church service we attended in Malawi. This is something Kayla and I were used to,

so we didn’t think much of it when we left to get our jackets; we wanted to be polite and let others go first. When we came back, though, no one had eaten yet because they were waiting for us, their guests, to go first. Oops.

The hardest place for us to learn not to say, “No, thank you,” though, was at school with the children. Every day the students would try to give us part of their lunches, one of their favorite school supplies or some other item that held great value to them. Kayla and I did not want to take food from the children because they didn’t have that much to begin with. What we failed to realize was our “polite” refusal of their gifts was received as rejection. This was the last thing we wanted, yet we knew we could not take their food or limited school supplies from them. So we compromised. If a child tried to give us a package of cookies, we said we would accept only if we could share them. If they wanted to give us a sticker or

bracelet, we made sure they had something to match or we would give stickers in return (Kayla was smart and brought a lot of stickers with her).

The results of no longer saying, “No, thank you” were incredible. Instead of feeling uncomfortable about being given gifts, we joined in the excitement and joy the children felt when giving. We got to see the beautifully radiant smiles of the children when we accepted a gift, and we began to see them sharing with one another as well.

We reciprocated with gifts of

hugs and spending time with the children during recess and after school. As we learned to accept their gifts, we began to recognize that the children themselves felt honored and accepted by us. This was important as some of the children rarely felt acceptance, a fact that still breaks my heart. Yet, even in that I praise God because he allowed Kayla and me to participate with him in showing his children they are accepted, valued and dearly loved.

God gave us a glimpse into his heart for his children and the delight he has when we accept his gifts instead of “politely” saying, “No, thank you.” Now, when I am given a gift, I am more mindful of the gift-giver’s heart and identity as a child of God rather than any temporary discomfort I may feel at the moment. I learned that receiving a gift is just as important as giving one. □



Living water—the answer to emptiness

Rita, a middle aged single woman came home after a stressful day at work. She lived alone in her tiny, modest flat. She sat down on the threadbare couch. Every day was the same. “Life is so empty,” she thought despondently. “I’m all alone.”

In an upmarket suburb, Gary, a successful businessman, sat on his patio. Everything seemed right on the outside. Yet something was missing. There was an emptiness in his life.

Different people. Different circumstances. Same problem. People cannot find true satisfaction from people, possessions, pastimes or pleasure. To them life is like the centre of a doughnut—empty.

What is God’s answer to emptiness? The answer can be found in the book of John chapter 4:1–16.

Jesus had left Jerusalem because of opposition from the Pharisees. Returning to the province of Galilee,

he had to pass through Samaria, a no-go area for the Jews. The Assyrians had conquered Jerusalem, the Israelites had been deported to Assyria and foreigners had been brought in to keep the peace. Inter-marriage occurred, resulting in a mixed race, despised by the “pure” Jews.

Jesus was physically thirsty, the midday heat having taken its toll. He came to a well outside the city which was not a spring fed well. Water

had to be drawn from it. Jesus met a woman at the well and asked her to give him a drink of water, initiating a conversation which was taboo.¹ This was because:

- She was a despised Samaritan of mixed race.
- She was a woman.
- She was shunned because she had a bad reputation.
- She had had five husbands and was living with a man.
- She was alone in a public place.
- Unrelated men and women did not speak to each other in public places.

These were the cultural restrictions which Jesus ignored. He sensed that she was incomplete. She had looked for security in human relationships, but could not find it. Something was missing but she didn’t know what it was. She had not found completeness in the

by
Owen Visagie

arms of six different men, and had probably been abused and humiliated by some of them. Divorce laws allowed a man to “put away” a wife for trivial reasons. She had been rejected, but Jesus promised to quench her spiritual thirst. He told her he was the expected Messiah. Completeness was found when she met the 7th man in her life. God is the “foundation of life.”² He is the “spring of living water.”³

She then enthusiastically told the people in her town about her experience, and many came to believe in Jesus as Saviour of the world. She began to understand and experience this new life—that she was complete in Christ.

Drinking from the world’s well could not fill the emptiness in Rita’s or Gary’s lives any more than the Samaritan woman.

However, even believers can experience that emptiness.

- Do you feel empty or lonely?
- Is there anybody or anything in your life that is an attempt to fill your emptiness?
- Is joy and peace lacking in your life?

God’s answer to these feelings of emptiness is to fill the void in our lives with his presence. We were created for a relationship with God. We were created to enjoy a sense of belonging, acceptance and being valued by him. We will

continue to feel incomplete if we try to fill this void with anything but his presence. Through an ongoing close relationship with Jesus, you find the answer to every one of life’s challenges. He will not disappoint you. Your name is on every one of his many promises. Jesus is a person, and like any friendship we have with others, a relationship takes time to develop. This means spending time together, and sharing, listening and talking about anything and everything that is on your mind. It means being real with him about your struggles and worries.

Drink of the Living Waters and you will have a new perspective. You will never be alone. Never again will you experience that spiritual thirst. ■



¹ John 4:7–10

² Psalm 36:9

³ Jeremiah 2:13

Religion v

Many equate Gospel to religion, including Christian religion. They think both are the same and produce similar results. This is a tragedy because they are vastly different and produce very different results. We need to know the difference so that we don't become slaves to burdensome religious practices and enjoy the freedom the Gospel offers.

So what's the difference? Here are some.

Source

Religion originates from man's collective wisdom, philosophy and experience accumulated over centuries. It represents man's best effort to know/reach God. Gospel, on the other hand, originates from God. It reveals who God is and who we are in Christ.

Faith

Religion demands faith. It asks us to muster faith by praying, studying, fasting, meditating and doing good works. It sees faith as a currency for buying favors from God (e.g., healing, financial breakthroughs). Gospel supplies faith, Christ's faith. It doesn't require us to muster faith by performing spiritual works. It sees faith as God's gift, not something we earn to buy his favors.

Control

Religion controls and manipulates us. It tells us to observe rules (laws) and rituals to receive God's blessings. Failure to comply may mean curses. It teaches forced obedience. Gospel sets us free so that we can be truly ourselves. It doesn't require us to observe rules and rituals in order to receive his blessings.

Sin vs. righteousness

Religion declares that we are sinners and asks us to atone for our sin by doing penance, good works and charity. Failure to do so may produce adverse consequences. Gospel declares that Jesus died to settle our sin and rose to make us righteous.

Law vs. grace

Religion tells us to follow rules to receive God's blessings. The more we obey the more blessings we receive. It sees blessings as conditional. Gospel asks us to trust in Jesus' perfect obedience on our behalf. It doesn't see obedience as a condition for receiving his blessings. He blesses us because he loves us.

Salvation

Religion preaches salvation by works. It asks us to strive by praying, fasting, meditating, studying and doing good works. We are responsible for our salvation. Gospel preaches salvation by grace—unmerited, freely given. Jesus secured our salvation by his reconciling work—through his life, death, resurrection and ascension. We receive it as a free gift.



by
Dr. P.
Sellappan

Judgment

Religion warns us of God's judgment—rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. It sees judgment as punishment for not following rules. Gospel assures us that Jesus has taken all our judgment upon himself and therefore there is no condemnation. It sees judgment as putting things right so that we can have intimate fellowship with him.

Inheritance

Religion asks us to work hard—keep laws, behave well—to receive a good inheritance (reward) from God in the next life. Gospel assures us that we are already his heirs and therefore receive everything freely.

Satisfaction

Religion leaves us spiritually hungry and thirsty. It asks us to do more—keep the laws more perfectly, pray harder, fast more, study more and do more good works—to satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst. Gospel fills our spiritual hunger and thirst. Christ gives us his love, joy, peace, passion and satisfaction and makes us appreciate his sacrifice for us.

Gaining vs. losing life

Religion asks us to work hard to attain material success and be counted important. Losing life is considered a failure. Gospel asks us to die to self, lose our (sinful) life so that we might gain true life—Christ's resurrection life.

Bondage vs. freedom

Religion leads us to spiritual bondage. It makes us slaves to oppressive rules and rituals. Gospel frees us so that we can be truly ourselves.

Distance

Religion tells us that God is there and we are here. It tells us to pray, study, fast and do good works to draw close to him. Gospel tells us that he is with us and in us. We don't have to go somewhere or do something to be close to him. It asks us to wake up to 'Christ in us' reality and participate in his life.

Timing

Religion promises to bless us in the next life if we behave well in this life, but leaves us high and dry now. Gospel promises blessings here and now. As we get to know God, he unveils more of the blessings he has already given us in Christ.

Finding God

Religion asks us to seek God diligently. It asks us to take the initiative to find him. Gospel tells us that he has come to us in the person of his son Jesus. He has taken the initiative to find us.

vs. Gospel

Fear vs. assurance

Religion puts fear so that we will follow its rules and rituals. It tells us that there will be blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. Gospel assures God's love for us even if we have gone astray. It asks us to trust in his unchanging love, not in our obedience.

Focus

Religion focuses on our efforts to please God. Gospel focuses on what he has done for us in Christ Jesus.

View of God

Religion sees God as schizophrenic, as having split personality. He will be kind if we obey him and harsh if we don't. Gospel assures us his love even when we hurt or disappoint him.

Things vs. relationship

Religion focuses on getting answers to prayers, not in knowing God or building a personal relationship with him. Gospel focuses on knowing him and building a personal relationship with him. And as we get to know him, he takes care of our daily needs.

Behavioral vs. connectedness

Religion emphasizes on external or behavioral change through spiritual disciplines like praying, studying, fasting and meditating. Gospel emphasizes on abiding in Christ (being connected to him) so that he can transform us from inside out.

Love

Religion tells us to love those who are nice to us and shun those who are not. It leads to conflict and tension. Gospel commands us to love everyone including those who hurt or abuse us. It leads to lasting peace.

Image and likeness

Religion tells us that God is different from us and therefore it is difficult to approach or know him. Gospel tells us that he is like us because we are made in his image and likeness, and therefore we can know him. Jesus is the proof.

Life and death

Religion produces death because no one can keep its requirements—perfect obedience and perfect faith. Gospel produces life because Christ has given us his perfect obedience and perfect faith as a free gift.

The above list suggests that God's gospel and man's religion are vastly different and produce different results.

Religion provides a good *window-shopping experience*. You can ask God anything you want—good relationship, health, riches, peace, joy, power—but you must produce the required spiritual currency. You must show faith, holiness and good works to get what you want.

Religion represents man's highest wisdom and philosophy which God calls foolishness.¹ Why?

Because our fallen mind can never discover God even in a million years. Jesus chided the Pharisees for not knowing God in spite of their thousands of years of reading their scriptures.² They studied the scriptures diligently but failed to recognize God [Jesus] who was standing right in their midst. Like the Pharisees, we too will miss God unless we allow the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to us.

We can know God only if he chooses to reveal himself to us. Thank God, that's exactly what he has

done through his son Jesus. Jesus came to reveal his Father. Indeed, he is the full and perfect revelation of God. Seeing Jesus is seeing God.

Unlike man's do-it-yourself religion, the Gospel offers every good and perfect gift. And the good news is: it doesn't depend on us! It depends solely on what Jesus has done for us in his reconciling work—in his life, death, resurrection and ascension. He died to settle our sin and rose to give us his righteousness and resurrection life.

Jesus is also our Creator. He created us in God's image and likeness. He shares with us his own intimate fellowship with his Father. And he has taken all the steps needed to make this relationship possible. We don't have to do or show anything to receive it. We



continued on page 14

The story continues

Each one of us has his or her story. And each person's story is important and significant, no matter who we are or what we do.

Another year has ended; a new one has begun. It's natural to reflect on the year that was—our story during 2013, if you like.

I hope you are able to look back on your story over the past year predominantly with gratitude, peace and contentment. I hope your story has plenty of peak moments of accomplishment, satisfaction and joy. Yet all of our stories also inevitably involve difficulties, challenges, disappointments and discouragements. It's the story of being human. Whether it's a matter of health, employment, finances, relationships, stress, loss or grief, or frankly just the everyday pressures of getting by, we all have our burdens to bear, our crosses to carry.

Just as well then that we are not alone. Each of us shares the story—"my story", if you like—with others—"our story", together. We are parents, children, siblings, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, friends, colleagues, and so on. We are related to others; we are in relationships with others. None of us exists in isolation—we live in a complex web of interactions and inter-relationships.

So "my story" only takes place within the broader context of "our story". And "our story" informs and helps give meaning to "my story", and vice versa. And that's a good thing.

Yet, if that's all there is, there's still something profoundly and radically missing. "My story" eventually goes back to dust. If we disconnect our individual story from the stories of others, we are candidates for becoming self-focused, selfish, boorish, and mentally unwell. Even "our story" can become tribal, competitive, adversarial: us versus them. And much of our human history bears the scars of this kind of

by
John McLean

thinking and behaviour.

What we need to give meaning, coherence and integration to "my story" and "our story" is—"His Story". That is, God's story, or the story of the One who came to show us the Father, the gospel story of Jesus Christ. This story is the one Christians celebrate at Christmas—every day of the year, certainly, but especially during Advent season. This story includes Jesus coming into our world as a baby, as an expression of God's love for the salvation of all mankind.¹ But the story doesn't begin there.

It begins in the heart and mind of the eternal Triune God, who, before the world began, determined in love to adopt all of humanity as his children in Christ.² In delight, he created the universe, and human beings, to be the recipients of his love. He moulded and fashioned the nation of Israel to be the place where the incarnation, the coming of Jesus in the flesh, would play out.

And so Advent unites my story with our story in the context of His story—with the interruption of His story into human history. Not as one more event among many significant events. But as THE event which changes the meaning of all the other events—as THE story, which gives life and meaning to all our stories, to the stories of all people. In Jesus, God has united himself with all humanity. In the resurrection and ascension, Jesus takes us back into the arms of the Father.

We are lifted up, united, brought into participation in the very Triune life of God. Fellowship with God and with one another: that's the story we celebrate at Advent, and that Christians have to share with the whole of creation. □

¹ John 3:16

² Ephesians 1:5

continued from page 13

simply receive it with thanksgiving.

God has put eternity in our hearts.³ There is a spiritual void in each of us that only he can fill. Jesus came to fill our deepest spiritual hunger and thirst as the following verses assure us:

"...whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."⁴

"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."⁵

"Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink—even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it's all free! Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no

good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food. Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life."⁶

"Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst."⁷

Let's summarize

Religion stifles and kills. Gospel liberates and gives life. Gospel is not some dry religious information. Jesus is the Gospel. He came to deliver us from our burdensome religious practices so that we can be truly ourselves. He came to satisfy our deepest desires and give us his abundant life. It's absolutely free. Why not go for it? □

¹ Romans 1:22;
1 Corinthians 3:19

² Matthew 11:27

³ Ecclesiastes 3:11

⁴ John 4:13–14

⁵ John 7:37–38

⁶ Isaiah 55:1–3

⁷ Revelation 7:16

Do good laws make good people?

I have the privilege of living in a really well run complex.

The gardens are always neat and the trees trimmed regularly. A dedicated team of trustees are diligent about caring for the property, many of them going beyond the strict call of duty. I have recently joined this group and I'm really impressed by their energy, capabilities and enthusiasm.

But none of these qualities would make the slightest impact were it not for the long list of "rules for residents." When we moved in almost nine years ago, there were just a few simple guidelines—be sure to put your garbage bin out Tuesday evenings; drive carefully through the complex; watch out for children playing in the streets; pay your levy before the 7th of the month.

But as time passed, more and more rules had to be added. It seems this is the only way to curb the selfish inconsiderate behavior of some people. Now we have a 6 page list of finely detailed "thou shalt nots," and monetary fines are imposed for any transgressions, regardless of the circumstances. Of course, people don't like to be hit where it hurts most and there is generally good cooperation from most home owners. But why the need for such a long list in the first place? Some basic consideration for others would go a long way in eliminating the need for so many rules.

When Israel trekked through the wilderness so many centuries ago, they started out with a relatively simple list of do's and don'ts—the 10 commandments and some enlargements on them. Had they but kept these, they would have been a model nation to all those around them. But sadly, over time more and more laws had to be added. And why? Because their hearts were not really in it. At best, they were only keeping the laws in the letter. There had to be specific laws forbidding specific activities, such as in chapters 18 and 19 of Leviticus. Shortly before he died, Moses said to God's people: "With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those miraculous signs and great wonders. But to this day the Lord has not given you a mind that understands, or eyes that see or ears that hear."¹ Yes, God had to give them this kind of mind and

by
Hilary Jacobs

heart. It wasn't something they naturally had.

A hopeless creation?

Today, we are really no different. All the laws on our statute books and all the harsh punishments in the world don't stop crime and the evil intent in the hearts of human beings. We would be a hopeless creation if God did not have a plan to rescue us from the vice grip of sin and death. But not only does he have a plan, he has already sealed the deal. Jesus has paid the price for all human shortfall and sin. We've been forgiven and now we can share in the love of God and let it flow out from ourselves to others. Jesus said to the

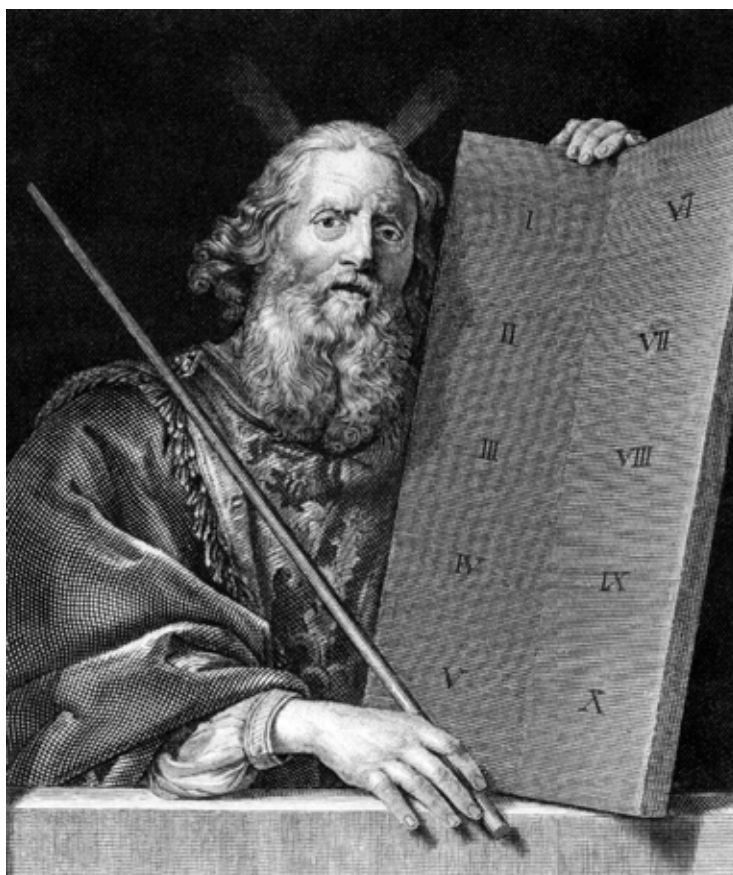
crowd gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, "Whoever believes in me as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive..."²

But does that mean followers of Jesus Christ will be perfect—never slipping up or making mistakes? Of course not. As long as we are flesh and blood humans, we will stumble and make mistakes and sin. But as the Spirit guides and teaches us, we will learn and grow. And what a relief to know our sins and mistakes are completely removed by Christ's sacrifice.

Our housing complex is quite popular among home seekers. People see it's well-kept and maintained, and they are keen to buy into it. Yes, good rules (and strict law enforcement) may result in 'good' complexes, or even 'good' cities. In some

countries, the litter laws are harsh. You can be heavily fined or even jailed for throwing a scrap of paper on the ground. So people comply. Who wants to be hit where it hurts most?

But good rules don't make good people. That is why Israel of old was not the model nation it might have been. It takes the Spirit of God to transform the human mind, and Jesus has invited us all to partake. "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds."³ ■



¹ Deuteronomy 29:3–4

² John 7:37

³ Hebrews 10:16

We will see God

We know that God is almighty, all-knowing, and His character can be summed up in the word “love”. But I’m sure that you, like me, we are eager to know much more about Him. Like little children, we wonder where He is and what He looks like. As we study scripture we have even more questions. Does He know everything in advance? When and how did He create the earth? Why doesn’t He reveal Himself so we can see Him?

The Bible tells us that God actually *has* been gradually revealing Himself, first in quick glimpses, visions and dreams, occasional miracles, and even in symbolic ways. Let’s look at how God has revealed Himself in the past, and how He will in the future.

God revealed in the Old Testament

The Israelites saw God’s power on Mt. Sinai prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments. To them it looked like a consuming fire.¹ It terrified them, including Moses who said, “I am trembling with fear.”²

After the Lord spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai, Moses asked Him if He would show him His glory. The Lord responded that no one could see His full glory and live. But He did allow Moses to glimpse His backside. That brief encounter caused Moses face to shine so brilliantly that Aaron and the Israelites feared to approach him.³

The Israelites also experienced God’s intervention in symbolic ways that pointed to a greater fulfillment in the future. When God was preparing for the captive Israelites to flee Egypt, He instructed each family to sacrifice a lamb and smear some of its blood on the doorposts of their dwellings. This ritual protected them from the fatal plague that occurred on Passover evening, foreshadowing an even greater future life-saving event.

Similarly, the forty-year miracle of manna that fed the Israelites for forty years pointed to another future life-saving event.⁴

The Israelites journeyed to the Promised Land, described as full of milk and honey—an expression meaning the finest of foods. They were promised abundant crops, peace, and safety if they obeyed God’s laws. The Promised Land pointed to a far greater future event.

by
Paul Hailey

Later, Ezekiel and other prophets were given glimpses of His glory.⁵

The Lord foretold a time when He would reveal more of Himself. “And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”⁶

God revealed in the New Testament

Isaiah had prophesied of a virgin bearing a child who would be called “Immanuel”.⁷ This prophecy was fulfilled when Mary gave birth to Jesus. The term “Immanuel” means “God with us”.⁸ His name was Jesus, but since he was fully God as well as human, he truly was “God with us.”

Jesus came to reveal Himself and the Father. He said that he and the Father were one—identical in character, mind and purpose. Shortly before Jesus

died, he gave his disciples some instruction, including this statement, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”⁹ Jesus and the Father are in total unity.

The Old Testament sacrifice of lambs symbolically depicted the future sacrifice of Jesus, who is called “the lamb of God.” When Jesus approached John the Baptist to be baptized, John commented, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”¹⁰ Jesus’ sacrifice took away the requirement of sacrificing animals to atonement for sin. His sacrifice of Himself paid for all sins—past, present and future.

The miracle of manna portrayed the far greater life-

saving gift from heaven of Jesus—the true life giver and sustainer. Jesus told a crowd, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”¹¹ Jesus revealed Himself as the one who offers eternal life and spiritual gifts that will satisfy for eternity.

Jesus led Peter, James and John to a mountain where he allowed them to see His glory. “There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the

*“...now we are children
of God, and what we will
be has not yet been made
known. But we know that
when he appears, we shall
be like him, for we shall
see him as he is”*

continued on page 17

You are included and so is everybody else!

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”¹

‘You’re Included’ is the title of a GCI media ministry that seeks to spread the ‘good news that God loves you, wants you, and includes you in Jesus Christ’ (www.gci.org/media/youreincluded). I believe this title was carefully chosen to broadcast a little known fact that everyone is embraced into the triune family of God, and this means me, you and the rest of the world—everyone who has ever lived and who will ever live before the return of Christ.

With today’s population estimated at 7 billion, and forecast to be over 9 billion by 2050 ...well, that’s a lot of people. If we consider the ‘Monkeysphere’ where it is said each of us is able to conceptualize a group of 150 people, or Dunbar’s number of 148 which suggests a limit to the number of people with whom we can maintain stable social relationships, then the concept that God loves the whole world,² can be rather mind boggling. Even the ‘friendliest’ of Facebook members rarely reaches the 1,000 mark. But then our mind is not God’s mind³ ...yet, rather a work in progress!⁴

The familiar 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us “He wants all people to be saved and to learn the truth.” But what about us as individuals? Are we inclusive in our daily lives of people we may touch at some point throughout the day? People at work; people at the supermarket; people on the bus; people we pass in the street; people at church; people in class? Paul urges us to emulate Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 11:1. This is not suggesting we physically interact with everyone we come across during the day, but rather an open attitude of mind that recognises that everyone we associate with, willingly

by
**Irene
Tibbenham**

or reluctantly, is a potential new creation, and child of God. It’s about God’s grace and inclusivity to all.

Are there ‘sectors’ of society we perhaps don’t feel especially inclusive toward? Loving those we would not naturally choose to include amongst our friends is difficult. Consider the example of Jesus Christ telling Zacchaeus, the hated chief tax-collector in Luke 19, that he was going to have dinner with him that night. Others looking on were appalled. The Bible does not tell us to condone inappropriate behaviours or actions—far from it, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Proverbs 12:26, 4:14–15 tell us to ‘flee from evil’, and take care who we spend time with. Yet neither are we to condemn people, for all have sinned and fallen short.⁵

For those reading this, are there people in this world that you choose not to include, either unconsciously or on purpose... for example, prostitutes, gay people, criminals, murderers, rapists, non-Christians. Or perhaps less obvious, e.g. people from different social classes; vegetarians/vegans; sedentary people; hypochondriacs; disabled people; those with mental illness, those who disagree with our opinions. The list of labels is endless, but the answer is simply one: Love each other as I have loved you, said Jesus, This is my command.⁶

Prayer:

Lord God, thank you for including me. I pray your Spirit leads me to include everybody else and love them as you love me.

Amen ❏

Printed with kind permission of daybyday.org.uk

¹ Luke 19:10

² John 3:16

³ 1 Corinthians 2:11

⁴ Philippians 2:5

⁵ Romans 3:23

⁶ John 15:12

continued from page 16

sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.” They heard a voice from a cloud saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” The three men reacted as we would—they were terrified and fell to the ground.¹² But the event indelibly convinced them that Jesus truly was the Son of God.

The Apostle Paul was privileged to be given a vision of God’s realm. He referred to it as “paradise”, saying that he heard inexpressible things that man is not permitted to tell.¹³ This experience lifted his faith, and it certainly makes us wonder what he saw and heard! Some day we will know!

God revealed in the future

Jesus will return as the conquering King to take rule over the earth. Every eye will see Him, including those who have died.¹⁴ He will return in power and majesty with an army of angels. What a sight that will be!

The Apostle John wrote about a vision that God

¹ Exodus 24:15–17

² Hebrews 12:21

³ Exodus 33:12–21, 34:29–35

⁴ Exodus 16:35

⁵ Ezekiel 3:23

⁶ Isaiah 40:5

⁷ Isaiah 7:14

⁸ Matthew 1:23

⁹ John 14:9

¹⁰ John 1:29

¹¹ John 6:32–35

¹² Matthew 17:1–6

¹³ 2 Corinthians 12:1–4

¹⁴ Revelation 1:7

¹⁵ Revelation 22:3,4

¹⁶ 1 John 3:2

showed him about the heavenly city that God will bring to the earth. The throne of the Father and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.¹⁵ We will no longer wonder what He looks like!

Yes, the time is coming when God will reveal Himself to us. “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”¹⁶ ❏

Mercy for all

Have you ever tried to read a book and then just put it down because the characters portrayed are too unbelievable?

One of the coolest things about the Bible is that the heroes are totally authentic, with flaws, just like you and me, yet God still loves them and uses them despite this.

King David was an adulterous murderer, and yet because of his humble and repentant attitude he was called a man after God's own heart. Rahab the prostitute is an unlikely character to be honoured in the Bible, but not only is she recognised for her faith, she is recorded as one of the ancestors in Christ's genealogy. We read about Peter, the one to whom Christ entrusted the founding of the church, denying his Lord and friend, even though just a few hours earlier he was emphatic that he would never do such a thing!

And then we have Paul, who fell out with many other Christians, and we see him struggling to overcome sin as he laments "I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway."¹

If you are anything like me, you can totally relate to this. Sometimes it feels like the harder I try the more often I fail.

I was pondering this quandary a few weeks back, while preparing a sermon message, and I read a scripture that I had read over so many times before. I had one of those 'Aha!' moments that is going to change my Christian walk. Already I notice a change.

Late yesterday afternoon I was fighting (yep... that's the only way to describe my driving!) traffic, trying to get off the N3 highway at the William Nichol off-ramp. I found myself backing off and giving way to a taxi that was illegally crossing a solid white barrier line to jump the exit queue. I can imagine my wife Marissa's jaw drop open as she reads this, and her shaking her head. I picture my kids' eyes large with disbelief and exclaiming 'no way!'

Unfortunately I too am as flawed—ok, more flawed than the Bible greats, and the worst of me comes out when I get behind the wheel to drive. I'm the 'perfect driver' and I can never understand why other road users are so inconsiderate and I often wonder out loud where they bought their driver's licences? Everyone driving slower than me is incompetent and shouldn't be on the road—everyone driving faster than me is a reckless idiot!

Prosecution or defence?

On a daily or even hourly basis we are faced with two choices when it comes to how we will react to others. Will we join the prosecution team and demand justice, or will we be part of the defence team and look for acquittal and mercy? Well which team is Christ a part of? That's the team I want to be on.

There is a story of a woman going to a photographer and demanding of him, 'Do me justice'. The

by
Tim Maguire

photographer whispered to his assistant, 'What this woman needs is not justice, but mercy.'

We too need mercy. Our human hunger for justice (usually for others, but not ourselves!) is one of our greatest shortcomings and misunderstandings of God's love and mercy. In Micah 6:8 we read "And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Way too many people love justice instead of loving mercy and acting justly, as God requires.

There is one thing that I am certain of. All those clambering for justice today will be singing a very different tune when standing before our Lord and Judge.

By this time you are probably muttering, 'Yes Tim, I know, but like Paul, even though I want to treat others mercifully, I usually mess up.' Well it is here that the 'Aha' verse I read takes on a whole new significance, and I hope for you it will be as life changing as it is for me.

WARNING—Don't read on unless you want your life changed forever! Christ explains to us in Matthew 25:40 and 45, that whatever you do (or do not do) for even one of 'the least of these', you do (or do not do) for HIM. Think about that for a moment. Chew on it. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your mind and give you full understanding. Do you grasp the full significance of what Christ is saying to us here?

He specifically mentions the 'least of them'—those looked down on and despised by most.

It's not about whether the person deserves mercy or not.

The Jews of the day viewed themselves as God's elite and chosen people. All others were looked down upon. Not only the Samaritans, Romans and other gentiles, but the likes of tax collectors, lepers and prisoners. These were the despised of the day—our equivalent of convicted criminals, 419 scammers and taxi drivers! Christ is here telling us that even they deserve our love and mercy, and when we act out of love towards them, as undeserving as we may think they are, we do it directly for HIM. For me, grasping that basic reality has made it a lot easier to back off and give a gap when I realise that it is Christ I'm giving the gap to.

You each have your own 'taxi driver'. An unreasonable boss, an unloving spouse, ungrateful friends or someone who is just having a bad day. In your interaction with them, and with this understanding, the only choice you are left with is "how will I treat Christ?" □

¹ Romans 7:19

Can we really forgive?

Every evening hundreds of Malaysians are glued to television soap operas or dramas that portray stories that reflect everyday family situations. These shows often exaggerate problems faced by people and quite successfully stir up the emotions of the audience who religiously watch them. One very obvious theme presented in these shows is revenge. Week after week the fans of these dramas watch characters being wronged and victimized and wait for them to seek revenge and demonstrate the sweet satisfaction of 'payback'. Nothing really positive is emphasized but the negative elements are milked to the maximum to keep the audience glued to their television sets. Quite often the attitudes shown in these soap operas seem to rub off on the audiences that constantly watch them.

On the other hand it is heart warming to know that there are people who have been wronged, maligned, abused and oppressed severely and yet have chosen not to walk the road of revenge. These people have chosen the path of forgiveness and have become the giants of wisdom among us. An obvious example that comes to mind is Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela the anti-apartheid revolutionary, politician and philanthropist. Mandela served as President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. The whole world also knows that he was imprisoned for over 27 years for his political ideologies especially his fight against apartheid. When he was released in 1990 during a time of escalating civil strife, he decided to carry out negotiations with President F.W. de Klerk to end apartheid and establish multiracial elections in 1994. He became the first black President of South Africa. After 27 over years in prison, revenge was not what he sought. He wanted reconciliation. He forgave his oppressors.

Most of us cannot fathom the suffering he endured. Try staying in your room for a few days all by yourself. No television, no internet, no telephone, just the four walls for companionship. You will soon begin to appreciate this remarkable man. Why is it that we cannot forgive even little wrongs done to us? Why do we keep grudges for years on end that can be detrimental even to our own health because of the poisonous effect of constantly thinking on these perceived wrongs? Many a time the people whom you hate may not even be aware of your anger towards them. In most cases we may really have suffered insult or wrong but revenge is not the answer even though it is our first instinct. An acquaintance of mine once revealed that someone had falsely accused



by
**Devaraj
Ramoo**

him of committing criminal breach of trust. When the authorities took him in for investigation he had to go through the tedious process of proving his innocence. He was interrogated for hours on end. The process continued the next few days. After thorough investigation it was proved that he was a victim of false accusation. The investigating officer then gave him the opportunity to make a report on his accuser. This man refused to do so. He did not want his accuser's wife and children to go through the mental agony that his family had endured. He decided to forgive the one who hated him. That is a rare quality since most people would have jumped at the opportunity to get revenge especially when the opportunity was handed to them on a silver platter. Forgiveness is a reflection of the mind of God.



The Bible states that all humans have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.¹ In other words we have all wronged God. The reward of sin is death.² That means death is what we deserve. We deserve to die for eternity. However God does not desire revenge. He wants us to be reconciled to Him. To fulfill that, he gave us His only begotten Son Jesus Christ.³ Christ lived among us and to reconcile us to God, he went through the horrible suffering of scourging, was slapped and insulted and then finally crucified. No man could endure what Christ endured for humanity. Even at the most agonizing moment of his suffering Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."⁴ By saying that, Jesus reflected the very mind of God the Father who has no desire for humanity to perish. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, humanity has received eternal life.

When we have received so great a gift through the forgiveness of all our sins, why then should we carry so much of hate in our hearts for others? Instead of making New Year resolutions, most of which we soon forget, why don't we let go of the hate and grudges that we have been carrying for so long? As difficult as it can be, the best gift that we can give for ourselves is to forgive the ones who have wronged us. It doesn't matter if they still remain hateful towards us. We need not lug the burden any longer. Let's embrace the eternal life that comes through Jesus Christ. There is no place for hate and revenge in eternity. □

¹ Romans 3:23

² Romans 6:23

³ John 3:16

⁴ Luke 23:34

Prayer relationships

Artists typically depict prayer as going upward from us to God. They might show a person kneeling in a beam of light, or looking up with hands outstretched to heaven. In the illustration below, the artist depicts another dimension of prayer—its roots and soil. It reminds me of Paul’s words to the church at Ephesus to be “rooted and grounded in love.”¹

Christian friendship is based on more than believing similar doctrines or going to the same church. Our relationships are based on our mutually belonging to the body of Christ. They are relationships of unity in the Holy Spirit that are grounded in prayer. We pray for each other, particularly looking to God to support and encourage those in need. We do this not as a duty or mere discipline, but out of love for one another.

I learned this idea of prayer relationships from my reading of the apostle Paul’s writings. Long before Facebook and Skype, Paul maintained a strong network of personal relationships across the Mediterranean world. He prayed that God’s blessings would rest upon the churches that he planted and served. These were not just general “catch-all” prayers. He was often quite specific. To the Thessalonians he wrote: “Night and day praying exceedingly that we...might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.... To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness.”² To the Romans: “Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.”³ To the Philippians: “Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.”⁴ And to the Colossians: [We] do not cease to pray for you... I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you.”⁵

Day and night Paul prayed for God to intervene and that the Holy Spirit might guide and direct these Christians. As earnestly as he believed in the power of his intercession for them, he believed in the blessing that their prayers would bring upon him: “Now I beseech you...that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.”⁶ “[God] will yet deliver us; ye also helping together by prayer for us.”⁷ “Praying...for me...that I may open my mouth boldly.”⁸ “This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer.”⁹

Paul understood that Christian relationships are heavenly ones—developed and maintained through prayer, by the Spirit. It is the same today. Because we are participants in God’s life through Christ’s vicarious life for us, our prayers are ultimately rooted and grounded in the intercessory voice of Jesus as our Faithful High Priest.¹⁰

In *Atonement: the Person and Work of Christ*, T. F. Torrance wrote this: “Prayer is the link between world history and the intercession of Christ in heaven. So far as the church in history and on earth is concerned, therefore, the great connecting link between world history and the heavenly session of Christ is to be found in prayer and intercession.”

Paul’s prayers focused on all kinds of relationships—not only between Christians, but also between church



by
**Dr. Joseph
Tkach**

and state. Remember Paul’s words to Timothy: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”¹¹



¹ Ephesians 3:17

² 1 Thessalonians 3:10,13

³ Romans 1:9

⁴ Philippians 1:4

⁵ Colossians 1:9, 2:1

⁶ Romans 15:30

⁷ 2 Corinthians 1:10–11

⁸ Ephesians 6:18–19

⁹ Philippians 1:19

¹⁰ Hebrews 2:17, 7:25

¹¹ 1 Timothy 2:1–4

Do you see why I like the illustration shown above? Rather than presenting prayer as something vague and ephemeral, it brings it right down to earth. When we pray, we are joining in the work of the kingdom of God, supporting each other and those we serve in a vast “underground” network of prayer relationships that are rooted and grounded in love. ■

The favor of the King

Like many Americans, I enjoy keeping up with the British royals. The birth of the newest prince in July was exciting, not only because of the happiness of the young parents, but also because of all the history behind that little boy.

As I've read about kings and their courts and watched historical television shows and movies, I've noticed not only does the head that wears the crown lie uneasy (Henry IV, Shakespeare), but so did the heads of many in close proximity to the king. Anyone could be enjoying his favors one day and be on the chopping block the next. Even those closest to a king weren't safe. In the days of Henry VIII, heads rolled with alarming frequency.

by
Tammy Tkach

When we misunderstand who God is, we might think he also makes arbitrary laws, that we are at the mercy of his wrath and if we stay far enough away, we can fly under the radar. After all, he's probably too busy to worry about everyone. He's way off in heaven somewhere. Or we think if we can just stay in his good graces, we'll be safe. For many, it's all about gaining his favor by being good enough.

But God isn't like human kings. He rules the universe with love, mercy and grace. He's not arbitrary in any way and doesn't play games with our lives. He values and respects us as the children he created. He doesn't decide who lives and who dies on a whim, but allows



In times past, kings arbitrarily decided whether or not someone pleased them. They often used people to further their own agendas. The court and sometimes the whole country held their collective breath when a king died, as they didn't know if they were better off with the tyrant they knew or the one to come.

It's easy to see why legalism came about and why we confuse God's nature with characteristics of leaders, fathers and others in authority. To those living under a monarchy, the king was almost on the same level as God. What he said was law and everyone was at his mercy, even if they thought they were too far away to be noticed.

us to live out our lives and make our own choices for better or for worse.

None of us, no matter what choices we make, have to worry about whether or not we are in the good graces of our King Jesus. We live in God's grace—constant, loving and complete. He doesn't put limits on his grace. He doesn't give it one day and take it away the next. We don't have to earn it. Grace is always available, always abundant and unconditional, just like God's love. Under the love and care of our King, our heads can rest easy on our pillows, for we always live in his good grace. □

Live to save

Once I was saved by a taxi driver. It was the late afternoon in hot and dusty Lagos, Nigeria. I needed to get to the airport from my hotel. I found a taxi and negotiated what I thought to be a reasonable fare.

From the outset, it was clear that I could miss my flight. The traffic was more or less at a standstill. Juggernaut lorries were bearing down on everything and everyone in their path, passengers crammed into dirty buses like hens in battery cages, car horns beeping, radios throbbing out loud polyrhythmic beats, people yelling and laughing. Only the hawkers were moving as they worked their predatory way among the stationary vehicles.

Chased by angry men

"I'll pay you more if you find a shortcut," I told the driver. Suddenly we veered off down what looked like a blind alley. I did not recognize any of the places we passed, and I was more than a little tense. We entered one of Lagos' many shantytowns. How could this be the right direction? We slowed down to turn a corner where a group of five men were hovering. They turned to look at us, and one of them pointed to me in the back of car. They began to chase us. They picked up stones and debris and threw them at the taxi, hurling racist abuse as they went. I am pretty sure they meant to rob me, and who knows what violence would have ensued.

What about my driver? Could I trust him? Would he stop to protect himself? Would he give me up to them? Or would he even join them? All I could see were his eyes reflected in the rear view mirror.

"Don't worry, I'll get you out of this," he said. He drove as fast as he could along the uneven road, but the gang was catching up. I panicked more when I saw in front of us the mother of all potholes. I had seen potholes of all shapes and sizes in my African travels. This was huge and sprawling. I could not see how deep it was. I thought, "This is it, there's no way out now."

My driver, however, went straight on, drove over its precipice-like edge, slid down into its belly, and then accelerated up over the other side. I looked around to see the men break their run at the rim of the pothole, and one of them tumbled, falling inside. The others swore and shook their fists at us. We got to the airport with just a few moments to spare. I gave the driver all the Nigerian currency I had left as a tip. This man, whose face I don't remember and whose name I never knew, had perhaps saved my life.

God helps us

Do you ever wonder how God intervenes in our lives? As a Christian, I interpret events in the light of my faith. A non-believer might say that I just had a lucky escape. Maybe. But in my mind there are so many of them, so many times when things could have been worse, much

by
**James
Henderson**

worse; so many unusual and unexpected moments of salvation. You'd think I would have learned to anticipate them by now, but I haven't. I feel an affinity with Mary, the mother of Jesus. Remember when, after Gabriel had announced to her about how her child would save the world, she pondered those things in her heart. I ponder God's saving moments in my heart. Perhaps you do the same.

Being human, we tend to think more of how God works to help us. Jesus said that he was among us as one who serves, and he continues to serve us to this day. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. We value his acts of service, and it is right that we should.

The gospel, however, is not just about us and about how God saves us eternally and daily. It is also about how Jesus calls us to participate in his salvation of everyone. That calling above all involves our unabashed witnessing to what Jesus has done for us. We preach Jesus and his resurrection. We are his witnesses "to the ends of the earth."¹ In addition, we are part of God's everyday compassion toward others, of his mercies, which "are new every morning."² With God's guidance, we seek ways to aid and assist others practically and verbally, thus producing in us and perhaps in them the Spirit's fruits. Jesus practices his saving acts toward others through us. His ministry of service continues through us.

I don't know what you think about the state of the world, but aren't we in a mess? Sometimes it seems as if we are all heading into the mother of all potholes! He supplied someone like you and me an unexpected answer to help me when I needed it most. I realized later that I did not for one minute think about how to save the taxi driver from what could happen to him. After all, the gang could have assaulted him and taken his car. Of course, the driver no doubt thought of himself. But he also thought of me. He thought to comfort and save me.

The ironic thing is that, when I got into the taxi, the driver had asked me what I did for a living. "I'm a Christian pastor," I told him, "and I train other pastors in how to minister to others." "Oh," he said, "I'm a born-again Christian, too." "Sure," I thought to myself, "probably just a cultural Christian who does not really practice his faith." How often we judge others. Or, should I say, how often we misjudge others?

Saved in order to save

We all share in the suffering of the world. Just as others around us go through difficult times, so do we. Most of us have a story to tell about family tragedy or illness or making ends meet. Together we participate in life's ups and downs. But do we participate in Christ's salvation of others?

As we threaded our way through decrepit alleys of

continued on page 23

If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

Chinese Proverb

Children will invariably talk, eat, walk, think, respond, and act like their parents. Give them a target to shoot at. Give them a goal to work toward. Give them a pattern that they can see clearly, and you give them something that gold and silver cannot buy.

Billy Graham

Ah! dearest Jesus, Holy Child, Make thee a bed, soft, undefiled, Within my heart, that it may be A quiet chamber kept for thee.

Martin Luther

Every noble work is at first impossible.

Thomas Carlyle

All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters.

John Henry Jowett

In quarrelling, the truth is always lost.

Publilius Syrus

Where is the church at 11:25 on Monday morning?" The church then is in the dentist's office, in the car sales room and repair shop, and out in the truck. It is in the hospital, in the classroom, and in the home. It is in the offices, insurance, law, real estate, whatever it is. That is where the church is, wherever God's people are. They are doing what they ought to be doing. They are honouring God, not just while they worship in a building but out there.

Arthur H. Dekruyter

A man should never be ashamed to own he has been in the wrong, which is but saying that he is wiser today than he was yesterday.

Alexander Pope

Man thinks he loses something—time—when he does not do things quickly. Yet he does not know what to do with the time he gains—except kill it.

Erich Fromm

Whosoever believeth in him should not perish... With these words... my sense of inferiority, my fear of handicaps, dropped away. It meant that I, a humble Negro girl, had just as much chance as anybody

in the sight and love of God. These words stored up a battery of faith and confidence and determination in my heart which has not failed me to this day.

Mary McLeod Bethune

The woman who creates and sustains a home and under whose hands children grow up to be strong and pure men and women is a creator second only to God.

Helen Maria Fiske Hunt Jackson

Mass communication can aid in personal evangelism and the development of Christians, but it cannot be a substitute for the world seeing the truth lived through us.

Erwin W. Lutzer

Quick is the succession of human events; the cares of today are seldom the cares of tomorrow; and when we lie down at night, we may safely say to most of our troubles, "You have done your worst, and we shall meet no more.

William Cowper

This is a wise, sane Christian faith: that a man commit himself, his life, and his hopes to God; that God undertakes the special protection of that man; that therefore that man ought not to be afraid of anything.

George MacDonald

We have a shortage of effective Christian action at the real centres of national influence because of misplaced Christian energy, misplaced Christian money—and misplaced Christians.

McCandlish Phillips

"If you keep watch over your hearts, and listen for the voice of God and learn of him, in one short hour you can learn more from him than you could learn from man in a thousand years.

Johann Tauler C

I am always content with what happens, for what God chooses is better than what I choose.

Epictetus C

God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in Him.

John Piper

If you grasp and cling to life on your terms, you'll lose it, but if you let that life go, you'll get life on God's terms.

Luke 17:33

Jesus came to give us so much more than orthodox religion, dry information or boring routine! He never intended to produce nice, well-behaved people. No! What He offers is His own adventurous, even dangerous life. He has no desire to control or

manipulate you, to limit or constrain you. His desire is simply to set you free to be what He dreamt you would be—an expression of His own limitless self—His image and likeness.

Andre Rabe

Many have sought security and found a measure of financial security. Many have pursued stability and comfort and have found a measure of that in gaining possessions. Many have avoided risk and the danger of adventure and instead settled for a form of security. However, the bottom line is this: many who at first thought they found comfort, security and stability, have later discovered that it is a life not worth living!

Andre Rabe

The adventure begins right where you are. His faith will allow you to see the spectacular where others can only see the mundane. But, for some of you, this adventure involves change. This faith will enable you to see opportunities that no one else sees... It's going to take courage to face risks, to step into the unknown, but it really is worth it!

Andre Rabe

continued from page 22

the shantytown, I remember seeing a sign on a church wall that read, "Have you received your miracle today?" God spared me not just to live to be saved another day, but also to save another day. More time to participate in the saving acts of

¹ Acts 1:8

² Lamentations 3:23

Jesus. We are blessed so that we might be a blessing to others.

Have you given someone his or her miracle today? □

The Plain Truth Magazine



TO VOLUNTEER: If you live in the vicinity of Klang and would like to volunteer in packaging the magazine for mailing, please contact / sms Susan Low 017-2559244

FOR FREE SUBSCRIPTION (within Malaysia & Singapore only), please either:

1. SMS Susan Low 017-2559244 (Malaysia) / Jane 91440187 (Singapore)
2. Email your request to: ptasiamy@gmail.com

TO ATTEND SERVICE AT GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL (GCI):

Klang, Selangor
Tel: 017-2559244
(Susan Low)

Penang
Tel: 04-6587132 / 012-4237800
(Ong Eng Soon)

Kota Bharu, Kelantan
Tel: 09-7192528 / 017-9399373
(David Ong)

Kulai, Johor
Tel: 012-7771038
(Keok Chai)

Kota Kinabalu, Sabah
Tel: 088-244773 / 012-8285442
(Ranen Bhattacharyya)

Singapore
Tel: 65453813
(Joe Zachariah)

Published by Grace Communion International (formerly known as Worldwide Church of God, Malaysia)

Printed in Malaysia by Hin Press & Trading Sdn. Bhd. (71078-D), No. PT 45855, Batu 2, Jalan Kapar, 41400 Klang, Selangor, Malaysia.