

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT!



**R. STANLEY,
B.E., M.TECH.**

**A CALL TO YOUTH
TO SWIM
AGAINST THE TIDE**

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT!

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A BUILDING ENGINEER

TURNED BIBLE TEACHER

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Dedicated
to
the members
of
the prayer group
gathering
in the premises
of
the Engineering College
in Karaikudi,
Tamilnadu, India
since 1963.

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Dare to be Different!

“Be a Roman when you are in Rome!” The meaning of this saying is not that we should compromise with evil but that we must not create conflict where we live. The youth of today are subject to all sorts of pressures and pulls as never before. The majority is in the grey zone which is neither black nor white. This book is written for young men and young women who are confused as to whether they should join God’s minority or jump into the devil’s majority.

Where you stand when you are young will decide where you would sit when you get old. For ages the devil has kept people, especially youngsters, imprisoned inside the triple-walled fortress of “fleshly lust, lustful look and pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Those who believe on Jesus Christ who defeated him on the Cross are delivered instantly and completely. But the devil will chase to catch them again. He will entice them to compromise. He will persuade them again and again to embrace the opinion of the majority,

and do all that’s possible to deviate them in thought, word and deed so they may be enslaved again. Here’s where you must dare to swim against the tide. Those who hesitate to swim against the tide are sure to be caught up in the devil’s net. Swimming against the tide is of course difficult. But force against force gains strength.

The Bible abounds with stories of those who swam against the tide—

Noah swam against those who mocked at God’s warning. Abraham swam against the philosophy that wealth and health is everything. Joseph swam against the trend that it’s cleverness to sin in secret. Moses swam against the thought that affluence and influence are more important than God’s guidance. Caleb swam against the notion that sense knowledge and not faith will win. Ruth swam against sinful pleasures. Nehemiah swam against bribery and corruption. Job swam against the expectation that worship of God is just to receive His blessings. David swam against the spirit of vengeance. The youth—Ananiah, Azariah and Mishael—swam against the spirit of idolatry. Daniel swam against the idea that you can sacrifice anything if only you can safeguard your administrative position. Jesus swam against selfishness and self-exaltation. Paul swam against the preachers for whom their belly was God. To his trainees like Timothy he wrote several times, “Others can, but you...!” This book has reached your hands so you may also join these swimmers against the tide—who *Dare to be Different!*

I started swimming against the tide in 1962 when I was a fresher in College. I have written my story briefly in the next chapter. Live holy in this ungodly world; study well and work hard; Besides textbook knowledge learn good manners also; Talk to God and listen to Him; Follow good

leaders; Be sincere servants of Christ in the society; Be careful in choosing your life partner; Practical guidelines on these issues appear in the other chapters.

Christian life means swimming against the tide, from start to finish. To go on till the end is neither easy nor impossible. It may appear as if you are sinking midstream, but Jesus will reach out to you and lift you up! He will also stand on the other shore to receive you with outstretched arms and shouts of applause!

There are only two rules for life. Number one: Never quit! Number two: Never forget rule number one!

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Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

“God chose the lowly things of this world so that no one may boast before Him!” (1 Cor 1:28,29). Personally I have not come across a better illustration for this eternal truth than myself. When I turned fifty on the 13th of February 1997, the realisation of my absolute unworthiness to be chosen by God to be His son and His servant gripped me stronger than ever before.

My birthplace is too small to be marked on the map of India. Situated near the southern tip of the country, it was named as Nazareth by the early missionaries when the villagers turned to Christ en masse. We also have a Bethlehem and a Jerusalem closeby. The Anglican Church with its bottle-shaped steeple is central to the life of the community. From time immemorial two morning and one evening services have been conducted daily in this Church, one of them being a communion service. There are five main streets in this small town. Daddy Mr. G. Rajamani came from the second street and mummy Mrs. Anbu

Rajamani from the fourth street. I was born in the third street known as the Queen Street where we owned a small house.

My maternal grandmother, Jebathai (meaning, mother of prayer), was a ward-helper to Dr. and Dr. Mrs. Vedhabothagam, the founders of St. Luke's Mission Hospital in Nazareth. Mrs. Vedhabothagam was my God-mother and she named me as Stanley after a British soldier and the famous preacher Dr. Stanley Jones. Her prayerful desires have been fulfilled in that I am a soldier in God's army with the sword of His Word in my hand. I believe there is nothing accidental in our lives. The sovereign Lord orders everything. He knows the end from the beginning (Isa 46:9,10).

Mummy was an elementary school teacher. In fact she was my class teacher for class one. My enthusiastic parents admitted me in school when I was just four but tall, giving a false age! Today I have two birthdays—one official and the other real!! Mummy became too weak to work following a severe bout of jaundice. Daddy was a junior commissioned officer in the Indian Army. We are two boys to our parents. Christopher is two years younger to me.

Economically we belonged to the poorer section of the society. Our house couldn't afford a proper flooring. Mummy gave it a weekly cowdung wash. The roof leaked. Windows had no shutters. When there was wind and rain, mummy would drape the windows with gunny bags. Our parents had almost nothing to spare after spending on us. Christopher and I shared a single hurricane lamp till we finished schooling. We had no slippers or shoes to wear to school. Mummy taught us to be satisfied with whatever she cooked at home and never gave us money for junk food.

Eventhough I was the class pupil leader several times, I could not every time join the annual school excursions for economic reasons. Mummy didn't believe in borrowing. How I wish today's parents learn this and hesitate not to say no to children! Parents' loving-strictness is more powerful than peer-pressure. Today I have perhaps travelled more widely than all my classmates! I appeal to young people not to bother their parents to spend beyond their means. A branded shoe or a VIP suitcase is not a must. Never compare or murmur. Don't be ashamed of the humble background of your family. Jesus' dad was not a District Collector or a building contractor, but a countryside carpenter!

Because daddy was in the Territorial Army, he had left us with mummy in our hometown. He would visit us just for two or three weeks every year. But he was a good correspondent and we always enjoyed reading his newsy and affectionate letters. He gave attention to details. Both his children have inherited his minuteness.

Mummy was quite strict. She would not give us breakfast unless we had memorized atleast one Bible verse each day. On Sundays we must memorize one Psalm and a collect from the Common Book of Prayer. Those days I wondered why the other mothers in our street had not been so strict. But I am awaiting the resurrection morn to greet and bless her for filling the reservoir of my heart with the Scriptures. My grand- mother taught me the twentythird Psalm. This was a privilege similar to that of Timothy (2 Tim 1:5). I thank God for mummy who drove away foolishness from my heart with her frequent use of the "rod of correction" (Prov 22:15). She would buy another cane the moment one is broken!

I can never forget my schooling years in the Margoschis High School. The headmaster Mr. S. A. Thomas and the

class teachers spared no pains in shaping me. As a rank student I was their pet, but lenience they did not show. I still remember their slaps and canings, especially from the Hindi Pandit, for my mischiefs and carelessness. Several of my teachers were believers. One of them Mr. T. Michael Chellathurai had been praying for my salvation since 1956. God answered him in 1962. The privilege of each Christian teacher is admirable and the responsibility awesome.

Since there was no college in Nazareth at that time in 1962, I joined St. John's College at Palayamkottai. Because parents could not afford hostel fees, I commuted by train from Nazareth. Leaving home at six in the morning and returning by eight in the evening was quite tiresome. I would come home exhausted because the only thing I would have eaten was a cold lunch. I used to envy my hosteler classmates who obviously had more study hours and freshness. But now I know that God had been preparing me through disadvantages and inconveniences for a life and ministry which cannot ignore ground realities. Mrs. Suganthi Jacob a family friend who lived across the street graciously let me use her room upstairs, which had an electric bulb, while I was preparing for the university exams. I again passed with a first class.

1962 is an unforgettable year in my life. Since I was not too good in Chemistry, I avoided meeting the Chemistry lecturer Mr. D. P. Gnanadurai outside the classroom. Moreover he appeared to me too religious! But one evening he tight-cornered me on a street. Taking out his pocket Testament he preached to me a short sermon which I could not evade. A deep conviction of sin fell on me. I refused supper and told mummy I wanted to pray. I was ashamed when I realised that I had been a white-washed tomb. I confessed my sins to God and got reconciled with him.

The peace of His forgiveness flooded my soul as I believed on Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. It was November the 18th. I was born again!

I began attending the prayer fellowship regularly which met in the red sandy desert outside Nazareth under the leadership of Mr. Michael and Mr. Gnanadurai. Daddy used to go to this place of solitude to prepare his sermons with fasting and prayer. Most of the members of this fellowship were students. Soon the Lord filled me with the Holy Spirit in one of the evening gatherings. As high Anglicans we were anti-pentecostal. It was strange I was speaking in tongues! Yes, God shows no favouritism. Since that time I have been preaching that the Holy Spirit Baptism is a transdenominational blessing bestowed by Christ on those who hunger and thirst for a higher, deeper, broader and wider understanding of God's love. Prayer and Bible meditation were no more a duty but a delight. With passion I started sharing with my friends and classmates the gospel that "lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire ...and put a new song in my mouth!" (Psa 40:2.3). My unconverted friends would not crack filthy jokes any longer in my presence. Mummy and her prayer partners like Mrs. Pushpam Koilpillai and Mrs. Jemy Jacob rejoiced in the Lord for saving me.

One of the exercises emphasized much in the Nazareth Prayer Fellowship was reconciliation with the wronged. We were taught that getting right with men was as important as getting right with God (1 Jn 4:20,21). The necessity to maintain a clear conscience was stressed in the messages and meditations. This Fellowship had an influence of the ministry of Brother N. Daniel of the Laymen's Evangelical Fellowship. Unfortunately the teaching of reconciliation and restitution is hardly heard from pulpits these days. According to Revivalist Charles Finney, this is one of the

basic reasons for the shallow conversions of the day. When Christ entered the home of my heart, I started like Zacchaeus to set matters right with people. I apologised to parents, relatives and teachers for cheating them or talking against them. I confessed to the headmaster how I once had copied in the class test. I paid some money to a Hindu gentleman from whose garden I had stolen some sappota fruits (Ezek 33:15). I had been postponing this matter until I could not resist the Spirit's prompting any longer. When I got married eight years later, I was excited to find that my father-in-law had a big garden of sappota trees wherefrom I could eat as much as I wanted!

I preached my first sermon in May 1963 in a CSI Church at Virudhunagar where we had been vacationing with mummy's unmarried elder sister, Miss Mary Sundaram, who was a famous nurse-cum-midwife in the town those days. She used to take me to the local Brethren Assembly where Missionary T. Brown was the elder. I was greatly benefited by his teaching and that of visiting preachers like Mr. A. H. Roberts, the father of Mrs. Nirupa Jebaraj of Bethel Ministries, Chennai. I am yet to come across a Bible teacher like Mr. Roberts. These men have left some indelible marks on my life, especially in the area of Biblical understanding. It was in Virudhunagar which was his hometown where I first met Brother A. Jeyaraj in the sixties. He became my Tamil translator from 1972. Marvellous are the ways of God!

After his premature retirement from the Army, daddy was appointed as the Security Officer in the Alagappa Chettiar College of Engineering & Technology in Karaikudi. He desired both his sons to become engineers. But we stood very little chance because most of the seats were allotted on community basis. However the Lord overruled the circumstances and gave us seats in this same college.

Of all the six Engineering Colleges in the State under Madras University, students would have Karaikudi as the last option. It was a dry place and had a deserted look. I was starving for fellowship. For nearly a year my prayer was that God would give me atleast a couple of prayer partners in the campus. I kept claiming "streams in the desert" (Isa 35:6b). My first fruit was Mr. S. R. Ebenezer, a student of the Polytechnic. We met daily for prayer and meditation near the bushes around the Campus. Both of us were staying in a village named Kottaiyur at four kilometers. Daddy had bought for me a very old bicycle which was so warped that the two wheels would not go aligned. By seeing the parallel tyreprints anyone could say that Stanley had bicycled that way!

The moment the lists of new students were put up on the notice board, Ebenezer and I would rush to see whether there were any Christian names. The next year's list had the name, A. Lionel. I searched for him in the hostel. He was rather scared when he saw me because he thought that I had come to rag him! I invited him to our bush prayer cell to which he instantly agreed. Now we were three! But after a month when the ragging season in the campus was over, Lionel became irregular to the prayer gatherings and he began to dodge eventhough he already had had a rebirth experience. I kept following him up for nearly a year. At that time I didn't understand why I was passionately praying and trying to win this young man. The Spirit fell on him and soon he became another leader for our cell. I discerned that God would use him to lead thousands into the baptism with the Holy Spirit and encouraged him in that direction. I rejoice in my spirit that my labour in the Lord has not gone in vain. All these years he has been my first associate preacher. As a co-founder of the Blessing Youth Mission he is more than my right

hand. I thank God for giving him to me to bless my life, my family and my ministry.

The campus prayer cell in Karaikudi was the training ground for my future ministry. There were students in this cell not only from the Engineering College but also the Colleges of Arts, Physical Education and Teachers Training of the Alagappa Campus. After our classes in the evenings each of us would spend at least half an hour in personal prayer and meditation in the shades of trees and assemble at seven. The meditations especially from the New Testament epistles would throw us into rapturous worship. Sometimes the Spirit of God would burden us unusually to intercede for India with tears. Little did we realise then that the Lord had been preparing a team of leaders for nationwide ministries. "Who can despise the day of small things?" (Zech 4:10). Zerubbabels and Joshuas were in the making!

Our fellowship was named as Gospel Team. We were after the perishing souls. We prepared a tract titled *Good News of Deliverance* in 1965. This is one of the most popular evangelistic tracts in India, available in ten languages, now titled, *Blessing for You!* We went on bicycles to nearby villages to preach the gospel, cast out demons and heal the sick. The books and tapes of missionary evangelist T. L. Osborn impacted us terribly. We visited a leper colony weekly with eatables bought with our pocket-money for these untouchable poorest of the poor. How we used to jump with joy if one of them would say he had regained sensation on his dead flesh! We also conducted midweek cottage prayer meetings in some selected Christian homes to strengthen the believers.

My daddy collected money from friends and built the first Church in Kottaiyur and affiliated it to the Church of

South India. The members of the Gospel Team were invited to preach to the congregation. There could not have been a better on-the-job training for the college students.

The Karaikudi Campus cell is still growing strong in its 39th year (2002). It keeps sending into the world hundreds of Spirit-filled engineers! Some of them have founded great ministries. I remember Karaikudi every time I read John 15:16, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

The Lord honoured me in my studies. I never missed first class though a major portion of my time was spent in prayer gatherings and ministries. This was His sheer grace. Though daddy was particular that I chose Mechanical Engineering, I took up Civil because I felt led so. The principles of building construction are precious in Kingdom building also (1 Cor 3:9-15; Zech 4:10; Mt 7:24-27). I graduated in 1968. Employment opportunities were plenty those days. But I wanted to enjoy student life for some more time! I told the Lord of my desire and applied to the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, Indian Institute of Technology and College of Engineering in Chennai for my postgraduate studies. I attended the interviews without any recommendation. To my surprise I got selected in all the three! In fact I stood first in the selection list of two Institutes! The Lord reminded me of Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you!" "Grades" and "seats" added!

I was in a dilemma to choose between Chennai and Bangalore. The garden city was attractive but when I sought the Lord for His will, He guided me to Chennai to join the IIT. I chose Foundation Engineering as the branch of study.

Coming from a small town like Nazareth and dry place like Karaikudi, the German-aided IIT Campus with its about 200 acres of fertile land, thousands of deers, huge trees, beautiful roads and multistoreyed buildings was a different world to me. This was my first hostel experience too. The furnished single room was another luxury. Daddy could not send me much financial support because he had to spend for my brother also who was in the prefinal year of his electrical engineering degree. My aunty from Virudhunagar and Mr. A. Sivapragasam of Madurai helped me occasionally besides the monthly stipend of Rs 250/- from the Institute. I had to manage with just two sets of clothes during the two year course.

The two years, 1968-70, in Chennai gave me a good exposure to various ministries. Each Sunday I would attend the service at the Apostolic Christian Assembly of Pastor G. Sundaram and then the Zion Gospel Prayer Fellowship of Sister Sarah Navaraji. It was in one such service I met Brother K. Ponraj Isaac and we became thick friends. Being away from home, I enjoyed very much the Tirunelveli lunch his wife and mother would serve me after the services. In the evenings Ponraj and I would attend any of the public Gospel meetings. The city of Chennai was and is known for “special” meetings with preachers of “international” repute almost every week. It was good to attend so many programmes but sadly the personal devotional hours were stolen. Believers were getting evangelised again and again rather than being edified.

Gripped with an intensifying passion for souls I was visiting various hostels in the IIT campus to meet with students in their rooms to present the Gospel. Some of the anti-christian hostellers started spreading a rumour that a sixfooter from the M. Tech. course was going from room to room and some money and things were missing! When

Dr. Swamidoss, a Christian faculty member, told me of this, I was shocked. I went out into the woods to pray. The Lord reminded me of Matthew 17:20 to speak to that “mountain” of rumour to disappear from the campus. I did it in simple faith. The rumour died the same week! I continued my soulwinning.

During the first year’s summer vacation the Institute expected each postgraduate student to visit a major civil engineering project for study and presentation as a partial requirement for the course. My professor suggested the coastal projects in Bombay or Tuticorin. I had never visited Bombay and it would be a rich experience to spend a month in this gateway city of India. Tuticorin was after all just two hours from my native town Nazareth. But my spiritual mentors had earlier taught me that I must beware of greener pastures while making choices. When I waited before the Lord I was guided to go to Tuticorin. My friends laughed at my decision. The Executive Engineer Mr. A. George under whom I worked in the harbour project at Tuticorin was the one who later proposed his wife’s younger sister Lilian to me whom I married the following year immediately after completing my course!

Of the six students in our class, I scored the highest mark (93%) in the final semester. It was normal for the postgraduates of the IIT to go overseas for doctoral studies. Except me all my classmates applied for the same. I somehow felt that my student life was getting over and the Lord was taking me into the next phase of my life. When I was just winding up things in IIT, there was a letter from my parents that Dr. & Mrs. Muthiah Pandian of Thanjavur had approached them seeking me for their daughter Lilian who was doing senior house surgeoncy in the Christian Medical College, Vellore. I gave an instant yes to my parents because through one of my Karaikudi prayer friends I had

already heard enough about Lilian and her parents. As my leaders had taught me I had been also praying for a suitable life-partner since my rebirth. Though I did have an apprehension to marry a girl from a rich family, I had an inner peace about the matter. But when my parents learnt that Lilian was a severe asthmatic they backed out. I was quite disturbed but I left the matter in God's hands. Job's confession to the Lord quietened me: "I know that You can do all things; no plan of Yours can be thwarted" (Job 42:2). In a couple of months, daddy of his own self decided to reconsider the proposal. I was excited. Lilian and I talked to each other for the first time on the day of our engagement, 20 August 1970. After a month of courtship we got married on the 21st of September in Thanjavur. Rev. Benjamin Selvaratnam of the Apostolic Church in Chennai solemnised the wedding. Both the engagement and marriage functions were like revival meetings! Ours is thus an "arranged love marriage" and it has been a blessing!

Shortly after marriage I was appointed as a faculty in the Regional Engineering College, Tiruchirapalli and Lilian continued in CMC, Vellore. During one of my monthly visits to Vellore, I met with Mr. C. Samuel the then Chief Engineer of the CMC Hospital who had been looking for a well qualified engineer for the Hospital's new projects. The Director Dr. Webb and the General Superintendent Rev. A. S. Savarirayan were quite impressed with me and I was immediately absorbed. Lilian was selected for the Diploma in Child Health and thus we began our life together in Vellore.

The Blessing Youth Mission was started in 1971. Brother Jeyaraj joined the engineering department of the same hospital next year. In the providence of God he was my first assistant in the profession and is my close associate

in the ministry till date. Evangeline was born in 1972. Lilian and I decided to keep our family small in view of her health and for the sake of the Kingdom. The Lord has been good to us in that Lilian's health improved after our marriage. In fact most of those who know us for years don't know that she is an asthmatic. God's grace is sufficient and His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9).

With the increasing ministerial responsibilities I had to choose between engineering and evangelism. I resigned from CMC in 1975. Daddy died in 1973 supposedly due to heart attack. Mummy was with us in Vellore helping in the ministry actively until she died of cancer in 1981. I could not have had better parents. They invested themselves on their sons and succeeded in raising a godly generation. They have left for us no big bank balance but Biblical values. Oh, for more parents like them to bless the Church and the country!

A couple of months after my heart surgery in 1996, Lilian and I had been to Nazareth for rest and relaxation. We attended the Sunday morning service in St. John's Church, the same church where I was Christened and confirmed. What do you think I would have felt when the lesson read for the day in the service was from Luke 4:16-21? "So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ...He found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach!" I broke into tears of thankfulness to God who remembered me in my lowly state! Hail the Carpenter of Nazareth!

What to expect in the New Life

Congratulations on entering New Life! Your sins are forgiven. You are born again. You have become a child of God. Your name is entered in Heaven. You are now a new creation!

There's nothing like getting saved when one is young. When an old man is saved, his soul alone is saved. But when a young man is saved, not only his soul but also his life is saved! Shout praises to God for saving you before your life got wasted. Undoubtedly God has a great purpose in saving you when you are still young.

This new life is one of constant challenges. You will be disappointed if you think that Christian life is a bed of roses. You must expect the unexpected! Here are seven things you will have to face almost immediately.

1. You will be hated by the world!

Before going back to Heaven, in one of His farewell addresses, Jesus told His disciples, "If the world hates

you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world. That is why the world hates you" (Jn 15:18,19). He mentioned the same thing when He later prayed to His Father: "I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world" (Jn 17:14).

If Christ was unpopular, a Christian cannot expect to be popular. The world which rejected Christ has not got any better now. In fact it has become worse. Cain cannot love Abel because evil cannot love good (1 Jn 3:10-13). The devil's majority will oppose God's minority with perfect hatred. God and Satan cannot come to terms with each other.

The world is sold to sin. Its very order is corruption. But now as a child of God, you cannot love sin. "He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue in sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God" (1 Jn 3:8,9).

When you refuse to live on the world's terms, you cannot escape the frown of the devil and the fury of his agents. Mass copying in exams is commonplace. When you decide to hold on to your integrity, you may become the victim of verbal and even physical abuse. You may even have to lose some of your best friends. But remember, God loves you. You cannot find a better friend than Jesus. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

2. You will be called to compromise!

The world will hate you but it will not ignore you. It will do all that's possible to get you back into its fold. Beware!

Satan tried his level best to prevent Jesus going to the Cross. He brought so many obstacles to distract Jesus from fulfilling His mission. But Jesus was firm and He kept rebuking the devil with a resounding no. Even while hanging on the Cross, the passersby challenged Him, “Come down from the Cross!”

The world will have no problem with you as long as you confess that Christ is one of many ways to God. Indians have no difficulty to add a sweet Jesus to their list of 330 million gods! Only when you say that Christ *alone* can save and “salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved,” arrows of anger will be aimed at you (Acts 4:12).

All religions are the same, but Christianity is not a religion. Christianity is a Person. Christianity is Christ. It’s a relationship. In all history, no one ever claimed like Jesus that He was the only way to God (Jn 14:6).

Three Jewish young men namely Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were taken as captives to Babylon. The King was very impressed with their intelligence and he promoted them to high positions in his Kingdom. But when he ordered that everyone should worship the huge golden image he had set up, these three young men politely but firmly refused. The King got furious and commanded his soldiers to throw them into a fiery furnace. But Jesus joined this trio in the fire as the fourth Young Man and saved them! Read this thrilling story from Daniel chapter 3. (Read also Chapter 16 of this book.)

Ignore the threats of anyone, be it your peers or professors. Proclaim your faith without fear. Jesus says, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul... Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge before My Father in Heaven” (Mt

10:27-33). Don’t be surprised if your own family people turn against you (vv 34-36). Respect all men. But Christ alone died for you. Therefore love and worship Him with all your soul, spirit and strength.

3. You will be punished unjustly!

This is a world of lawlessness, injustice and ungodliness. The weak and the godly are accused falsely whereas the wicked go scot-free. But God’s Word speaks to us aloud in such a condition: “Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong... Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes” (Psa 37:1,7).

Unless you have the mind and spirit of Christ, it is just impossible to be patient and quiet when you are falsely accused. “If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that Name” (1 Pet 4:16). “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth. When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly” (1 Pet 2:21-23).

When the young man Joseph refused to have sex with his superior’s wife when she enticed him, he was falsely charged by her and thrown into prison. He waited patiently in the jail meditating on the promises of God. The Lord marvellously worked on Joseph’s behalf and led him majestically from prison to palace. Have him as a model for trying and inexplicable situations (Gen 39-41; Psa 107:16-22).

Don't be discouraged or disheartened as long as your conscience is clear before God. Whatever be the false accusation against you, leave the matter into God's hand. He is the Righteous Judge. He will fight for you. He will bring about justice in His time. "But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Pet 3:13).

4. You will be surprised by disappointments!

"Come to Jesus and all your problems will be over!" Don't be carried away by such false promises. The Bible does not teach anything like this. Many have believed this lie and are disillusioned. The truth is that now you are not alone to fight your battles and face your problems. The *Father* keeps pouring out His **love** abundantly on you. The *Son* keeps giving you His **grace** sufficiently. The Holy Spirit keeps comforting you with His **fellowship** constantly. But "we must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Study the following Scripture passages carefully, You will be better prepared to face the realities of life.

Ecclesiastes 7:14, "When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider. God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future." These are the words of the wisest man who ever lived. It is God who orders the good times as well as the bad times in your life.

Psalms 74:16, "The day is Yours, and Yours also the night; You established the sun and moon." This confession is the outcome of a perfect confidence in the Creator. Would you like a world where the sun never rises or sets? Praise God for His balance system in the world and in our life. Truly it is "good" (Gen 1:1-5,14-18).

Lamentations 3:38-40, "Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come? Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins? Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." Disappointments, defeats and distresses are attention-getters to the Lord so we may examine ourselves before Him and walk in obedience.

Don't be like Jonah who was extremely happy over the fast-grown vine, but became vehemently angry when the worm chewed it away (Jon 4:5-9). But be like Job who praised the Name of the Lord who "gave and took away" (Job 1:21,22).

5. You will be tempted to boast!

Lucifer fell because of his pride of beauty and wisdom (Ezek 28:11-19). No human being will be spared of this temptation, but young people are the most vulnerable. That's why Peter wrote specifically, "Young men, be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time" (1 Pet 5:5,6).

Prophet Jeremiah points out three primary things of which men normally boast: Wisdom, Strength, Wealth (Jer 9:23,24). q Praise God if you are able to study well, memorize fast and do things intelligently. But never think that wisdom is of your own. It is a gift of God. Don't despise anyone who is less intelligent or poor in studies. The Lord will be displeased. q Similarly thank God for your good physique but don't boast of it or despise the weak or those not so good-looking. q So also God does not give wealth to people equally. If you have more or earn more, it is for you to give more. The pride of face, race, place, lace and grace is all demonic. Stay clear of it.

The elderly apostle Paul warned young Timothy, "Mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be... boastful, proud... headstrong, haughty... Have nothing to do with them" (2 Tim 3:1-5).

The Old Testament has stories of kings and leaders who became proud when the Lord blessed and exalted them. That was their downfall. When the Lord blesses you, don't be over-occupied with that blessing. Keep worshipping the Blesser.

Basically I am proud. I still remember that one of my class teachers in order to illustrate pride wrote on the blackboard, "Stanley is a proud boy!" Over the years I have become better and I am aware how the Lord is dealing with me in this area. Without a conscious and consistent effort and cooperation with God, one cannot subdue his ego.

6. You will be puzzled by uncertainties!

Christian life is one of faith. It cannot be successfully lived by sense knowledge (2 Cor 5:7).

As a student you are trained to think analytically. You look for experimental proof before you accept anything. But in the spiritual realm it is totally different. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him, but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit" (1 Cor 2:9,10). Life with Christ is A to Z of faith. That's why the commonest name for God's people is "believers." We believe and pray. We believe and speak. We believe and proceed. Jesus declared, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (Jn 20:29).

A walk of faith is characterized by uncertainties. You will come across many crossroads in life. There will be too many alternatives to choose from. But you will not be without help. God generally offers four helps to make you understand His will: The basic teaching of the *Scriptures*, the inner voice of the *Spirit*, the godly counsel of the *saints*, and the circumstantial evidence of the *situation*. You can unhesitatingly proceed in the direction where these four guideposts are aligned. If you deviate to the left or to the right of the perfect course, God has promised that He would guide you with His voice of correction (Isa 30:31).

The saints of old sang, "O Lord, Your path led through the sea, Your way through the mighty waters, though Your footprints were not seen" (Psa 77: 19). Don't expect to have all the answers to your questions before you proceed. Step out in faith. God will take over. When God called Abraham, he went out in obedience "not knowing where he was going."

Whether it is the choice of a study course, a career, the life partner or ministry, decide on the basis of whatever light you have from the four sources mentioned above. Trust in God, commit your way to Him, and proceed. Christ is the forerunner and finisher, pioneer and perfecter of your faith (Heb 12:1,2).

7. You will be called to sacrifice!

There was a godly young man from a religious family. He was a law graduate. Impressed with the teachings of Jesus, he asked Him what good thing he must do to get eternal life. Jesus answered, "Obey the Commandments." "Which ones?" the young man inquired. Jesus replied, "Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, etc." The young man said, "All these things I have kept from my youth.

What do I still lack?" Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me." That was the last thing the young man expected to hear. And so, crestfallen, he walked away. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and he couldn't bear to let go (Mt 19:16-22).

This story repeats simply too often. May be you are next for the test. The Lord knows where each person's heart is. We will be called to sacrifice our rights, or sometimes very dear relationships. It varies from person to person. But there's no progress possible without sacrifice. We must follow the example of Christ. He sacrificed everything and finally Himself. We dare not choose any other way than that of the Cross. Jesus laid down the condition of discipleship in no uncertain terms: "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it" (Lk 9:23,24).

The slogans of the world are, "Grab it ! Keep it!" But those of the Kingdom are, "Give it away! Leave it!" This world is our temporary abode. Because you are born again, you are a citizen of Heaven. The world will pass away. The Lord Jesus is coming soon to take you and all His followers to His eternal mansions. What a privilege that you have joined God's company of the redeemed! Congratulations again!

4

Holy Excuses

Making excuses is basic to human nature. We have inherited it from our first parents. When God confronted them after their fall, they invented excuses to cover up their failure. For every sin we commit Satan is ready to provide us with an excuse. But excuse is the most unprofitable item ever manufactured, especially in Christian life. Unless we stop making lame excuses we will only be walking with crutches. Here are ten commonest excuses we give when we fail to walk holy before God.

1. Holiness is impossible!

This excuse paints God as a merciless dictator instead of a loving father. Which father will give impossible commandments to his children or make impossible demands? The Bible and Church history abound with stories of men and women who did walk holy in their lifetime. A few examples: "**Noah** was a just man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God" (Gen 6:9). God

Himself testified about **Job**, “There is none like My servant Job on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8). Concerning **Zacharias** and **Elizabeth**, Luke has recorded, “They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless” (Lk 1:6). Watching the lives of saintly men and women instead of the failures inspires in us a confidence that we too can make it. The fact that the call to live holy comes from a loving God is a further encouragement.

2. Holiness is optional!

Holiness is not optional but a basic obligation expected from us by our Creator. Micah the prophet cried to the backslidden people of Israel, “God has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord REQUIRE of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Mic 6:8). Because the Church has canonized only a select few with sainthood—like St. Paul and St. Augustine—the average Christian has developed an unconscious conviction that only a special category of people is empowered or expected to live holy. But the Bible explicitly teaches that “no one” will see the Lord without holiness (Heb 12:14). God desires that “all” of His children grow “to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Holiness is a command from God and not a nice suggestion. Each of us is special to God — “chosen... precious... royal”—and there are no deluxe editions among His people (1 Pet 2:4,5,9). Let holiness be our watchword.

3. Holiness is abnormal!

We not only think that holiness is for a special group of people but also that holiness is an above-average condition.

We have become so subnormal that normal appears abnormal! The Epistle to the Corinthians was not written to a mature group of Christians but to a church which had all the strife and sensuality as any church on earth today. But in his very greeting the apostle Paul reminds the recipients of the Epistle that they had been “set apart in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Cor 1:2). This explains growth in holiness as a march from “positional” sanctity in Christ to “practical” sanctification in life. “He who is holy, let him be holy still” (Rev 22:11). Christian life means *climbing* God’s holy hill (Psa 24:3). The moment we look behind instead of pressing forward we will begin to slide down (Phil 3:12-14). We must resist the temptation to settle down in mediocrity but stay sensitive to “the upward call of God in Christ Jesus!” Pastors should “strive” towards this end of making every member of their congregation “perfect” in Christ Jesus (Col 1:28,29).

4. Holiness is vocational!

We have secretly and stubbornly convinced ourselves that it is not practicable to maintain holiness in certain types of jobs and trades. This is another deception from the enemy of righteousness. We think that consistent holiness can be practised only by those who have resorted to ascetic lifestyle. But the Bible emphasizes “*Holiness to the Lord*” to be written not only on the bowls of the altar but also on the bells of the horses and the basins in the kitchen (Zech 14:20,21). This means that God expects His people to be holy not only in religious exercises but also in civil and domestic affairs. When it comes to our chief duty of glorifying God, not even eating and drinking is excluded (1 Cor 10:31). Let’s not divide our life as sacred and secular. John the Baptist had ready answers for practical righteousness whatever be the profession of the enquirers—

policemen, tax collectors or the general public (Lk 3:10-14). Love of money lies at the root of other evils like lust for prominence, misuse of power, lack of consideration for fellowmen and sexual indulgence. If one is unalterably convinced that a particular job or a workspot is least conducive to holy living, he must change the profession and place instead of compromising on his Biblical convictions, even if it could mean positional and financial disadvantage. God honours such daring acts by reversing palace-to-prison into prison-to-palace, as He did for the young man Joseph.

5. Holiness is temperamental!

“I can’t help it; that’s my nature!” This oft-heard excuse is both right and wrong. True we have differing temperaments—some are naturally soft while others are born tough; some over-sexed, others under-sexed; and so on. But when we are born again we become a “new creation; old things have become new” (2 Cor 5:17). Which means, a new ability is implanted within us as the seed of God by the Spirit of God to overcome the pull and push of our sinful nature (1 Jn 3:9). The infinite blessing of the New Covenant is the replacement of our stony heart with a soft heart (Ezek 36:26). This doesn’t imply we will be unable to sin. Rather, God’s enabling grace will give us power to overcome sin (Rom 6:14). You may get angry soon but you must also turn from it soon! (Eph 4:26). Never give up even if you fall seven times. Claim God’s “exceedingly great and precious promises” given to us and cling on to His “divine power” that you may be a partaker of the “divine nature” (2 Pet 1:3,4).

6. Holiness is situational!

The incarnation of Christ is the sharpest rebuke for the excuse that the degree of holiness depends on the situation

or environment one lives in. Jesus lived a sinless life on this sin-toxic planet earth (Jn 1:14; Heb 7:26). He was tempted like us “in all points,” yet without sin. He sympathizes and empathizes with us extending His “help in time of need” (Heb 4:15,16). The spies to Jericho maintained their purity even when hosted overnight by a notorious prostitute. Daniel freed himself from lust for forbidden food in a land of gluttony. No spot on earth is sin-free (Gen 6:11,12). The “whole” world lies under the sway of the wicked devil (1 Jn 5:19). We cannot run away from the world (1 Cor 5:10b). The prayer of Jesus to the Father for us is practical: “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (Jn 17:15). Tyron Edwards observed, “A holy life is living *above* the world while we are still *in* it!” God opens an exit door for every trap of temptation (1 Cor 10:13).

7. Holiness is dispensational!

Liberation from the Old Testament law and life under the New Testament grace should not be misunderstood as a license to sin (Rom 6:1,2). It’s folly to think that the God of the Old Testament has relaxed His demands for us in the New Testament time. The fact is that He has actually raised the standard of holiness. Even a lustful look is considered as adultery now, and an unreasonable anger is equivalent to murder (Mt 5:21,22, 27,28). There are still others who hold an extremely futuristic view regarding holiness. They await the return of Christ when they would be perfected, but fail in their present responsibility of “cleansing themselves from all filthiness” and “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1). Christ’s final call to each of us is, “He who is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work” (Rev 22:11,12).

8. Holiness is boring!

This is the most vicious lie with which Satan seduces young people. Little do they realize that holy life is jolly life. In His mountain sermon Jesus declared, “Blessed are the pure in heart.” The *Amplified Bible* explains the word “blessed” as “enviably happy, blithesome, joyous and spiritually prosperous!” “A holy life is not an ascetic or gloomy or solitary life, but a life regulated by divine truth and faithful in Christian duty,” wrote an old saint. Solomon the wise confirmed, “God gives joy to a man who is good in His sight” (Eccl 2:26). Those who walk in righteousness become brighter and brighter, stronger and stronger, bolder and bolder everyday (Prov 4:18; Job 17:9; Prov 28:1). God anoints us with the oil of gladness when we love righteousness and hate lawlessness (Psa 45:7). Guilt is number one joy-killer. Holy life is a guilt-free life. Holiness is heaven in us! Thomas Brooks summarised the Biblical teaching on holiness like this: “Man’s holiness is now his greatest happiness, and in heaven man’s greatest happiness will be his perfect holiness.”

9. Holiness is all by God!

Calvinistic theology and Armenian theology are the two main streams in the world of Christian thinking. The former stresses the sovereignty of God and the latter the responsibility of man. To me the Bible seems to hold both these views in proper tension. Without God, we *cannot*; and without us, God *will not*! Both the Testaments teach this truth. We are to “sow” for ourselves righteousness, and the Lord will “shower” righteousness on us (Hos 10:12). As “we” awake from sleep and arise from the dead, “Christ” will give us light (Eph 5:14). When we forget our responsibility we become careless. If we forget what God is doing in us we become joyless.

10. Holiness is burdensome!

Adrian Rogers has penned, “Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness!” When this fact is not properly understood, holy living becomes a burden. When we love someone heartily we will go to any extent to please him. Apostle John experienced it in his walk with Christ for over six decades. This aged saint wrote, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 Jn 5:3). Holy life is actually a restful life. The first mention of the word “sanctify” in the Bible is in the context of rest (Gen 2:3). It’s sin that leads us to bondage and slavery. When we experience the liberty that comes through Christ, we will enjoy the restful fellowship with Him (Jn 8:34-36). As long as sin is covered up we will be mourning like David, “Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.” But when we confess it to God, He instantly forgives us and makes us shout for joy! (Psa 32:4,5,11).

*Rolled away, rolled away, rolled away;
The burden of my sins rolled away!*

No more excuse!

This list of excuses is not exhaustive. With his millennia of experience in leading men and women into sin and bondage, the devil invents for us newer and newer excuses for not living holy. If we believe his lie we will die. But if we hold on to the truth of God’s word, we will enjoy life more and more abundantly!

5

Away with these!

Young people who desire to be successful in life must throw away several things. Illegitimate sexual desires and addictions are quite serious among them. Here's a brief study outline from the Bible on these two.

1. Away with Lust!

(A) The seriousness / importance

1. A fundamental aspect of sanctification
(1 Thess 4:3-8; Eph 5:3)
2. The 7th & the 10th commandments (Ex 20:14,17)
3. The first 4 in the list of the sins of lower nature
(Gal 5:19)
4. Mentioned in almost all the New Testament Epistles
(Rom 13:12-14; 1 Cor 6: 13-20; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:13-21; Eph 4:17-24; Col 3:1-7; 1 Thess 4:3-7; 2 Tim 2:21,22; 1 Pet 2:9-11; 4:1-3; 2 Pet 2:9,10)
5. Horrible judgment
(Job 24:15-19; Heb 13:4; 2 Pet 2:9,10,13,14,17,18)

(B) Some manifestations

1. Lustful look (Mt 5:28; 2 Pet 2:14a; Job 31:1)
2. Effeminacy and homosexuality (1 Cor 6:9; Rom 1:27)
3. Abuse of body (1 Cor 6:15,18-20)
4. Flirtation (Prov 30:18,19)
5. Extra-marital relationships
(Ex 20:17; Job 31:9,10; Prov 5:18-20; Mal 2:15)

(C) Effects

1. Bondage and leading astray (Prov 5:20-23)
2. Rooting out all possessions (Job 31:12)
3. Defilement of the entire body
(1 Cor 6:18-19; 3:16-17; Mt 6:23)
4. Disruption of Christian fellowship (1 Cor 5:11)

(D) Good examples for chastity

1. Joseph (Gen 39:6-12)
2. Job (Job 31:1,9-12)

(E) How to overcome

1. Flee! (2 Tim 2:22a; 1 Cor 6:18a; Gen 39:12)
2. Pluck out! Cut off! (Referring to persons and places of temptation) (Mt 5:29,30)
3. Don't be idle (2 Sam 11:1-4)
4. Confess your failure honestly (2 Sam 12:13; Psa 51)
5. Consider yourself dead to sin and surrender your organs to righteousness (Rom 6:11-23)
6. Learn from Christ His purity (Eph 4:19-24)
7. Be filled with the Word of God
(Prov 6:23-24; Psa 119:11)

- 8. Watch and Pray (Mt 26:41)
- 9. Arrest temptation at temptation's level. Temptation is not sin (Js 1:14,15; Heb 4:15)
- 10. Keep praising and glorifying God (Rom 1:21,24)

(F) Blessings when overcome

- 1. God is glorified (1 Pet 2:11-12)
- 2. We will be glorified with Christ (Col 3:4,5)
- 3. Great commendation in Heaven (Rev 14:4-5)

2. Away with Addiction!

(Addiction = Slavery to a habit)

(A) The Bible speaks against addiction to—

- 1. Foods (Not the basic need)
 - “Be not among riotous eaters of meat” (Prov 23:20,21)
 - “Put a knife to your throat, if you are a man given to appetite” (Prov 23:1-3)
 - “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destory both” (1 Cor 6:12,13)
- 2. Physical comforts
 - “I have learnt, in whatsoever state I am, to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound” (Phil 4:11-12)
- 3. Prosperity & material enjoyment
 - “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord”
 - “What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 1:21; 2:10)

“Those who use this world, as not abusing it: for the world as we see it is passing away... the time is short” (1 Cor 7:31,29)

- 4. Sleep
 - “Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty... Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall your poverty come as one who travels” (Prov 20:13; 24:33,34)

- 5. Liquor, drugs
 - “Who has redness of eyes? Those who wait long at the wine; those who go to seek mixed wine” (Prov 23:29-30)
 - “Not given to wine” (1 Tim 3:3,8)

- 6. Pastimes (Music, TV, Novels, Comics, Etc.)
 - “Whatever my eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy;... and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun“ (Eccl 2:10-11)

(B) How to have victory over addiction

- 1. Be alert at the first stages
 - In the case of drugs, even experimentation should be avoided.
 - “Look not on the wine when it is red, when it gives its colour in the cup, when it moves itself aright. At the last it bites like a snake and stings like an adder” (Prov 23:31-32)
- 2. Call to the Lord for true deliverance, if hooked.
 - “The Lord is near all those who call on Him... He also will hear their cry, and will save them”(Psa 145:18-19)
 - “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (Jn 8:36)

3. The Lord cannot help you without YOUR cooperation
(desire, determination and deliberation)

“I” can do all things “through Christ” who strengthens
me (Phil 4:13)

“The Lord is with you, while you are with Him; and if
you seek Him, He will be found of you; but if you
forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chron 15:2)

(C) The best antidote for addiction

“Love the Lord your God with ALL your HEART, and with
ALL your SOUL, and with ALL your MIND, and with ALL
your STRENGTH” (Mk 12:30)

6

Quiet Time

The Quiet Time is the hour when we withdraw ourselves from the hustle and bustle of the world to commune and converse with God. It’s virtually impossible to stay healthy in spiritual life if we neglect this precious hour of heavenly communion. It’s sad that many Christians have not learnt this holy art. This article outlines a simple procedure to draw maximum benefit from the Quiet Time.

Set a time!

Choose a fresh hour. King David was a busy man. But he had set aside the early hours of the day to meet with God. “O Lord, in the morning my prayer comes before You” (Psa 88: 13). Both in the Bible times and throughout history, men and women mightily used of God had been early risers. They met God before meeting men. John Bunyan said, “He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day!”

It's important that we stick to this time whatever the reason. We must take this seriously as an appointment with the King of Heaven. Daniel was a young man under captivity in Babylon. Folks there were hostile to his religious beliefs. There was even a civil law which banned prayer to any god. But Daniel cared the less for all these. Nothing could stop his holy habit. "He knelt down on his knees three times that day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his CUSTOM since early days" (Dan 6:10).

We see another example in the Book of Acts. The Church had experienced a bursting growth following Pentecost. Three thousand people were baptized on a single day. This suddenly multiplied the pastoral responsibility of the apostles. But they never became too busy to go apart to commune with God. "The hour of prayer" was too precious for them to be sacrificed for anything sacred or secular (Acts 3:1). This they had learnt from their Master who often withdrew Himself into places of solitude to pray when great crowds had come to Him for hearing and healing (Lk 5:15,16). Aren't we strict with our office-time or meal-times? So should we be with our Quiet Time. It honours God.

Listen and Speak!

The Quiet Time is not a "silent" time! Noise there is not, but voice there is. We listen to God and speak to Him, which means we meditate His Word and pray.

It's fitting to begin with Bible meditation. We must hear God speak to us before we speak to Him. The preacher son of David spoke these words of wisdom: "Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to HEAR rather than to GIVE the sacrifice of fools... Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart say anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on

earth; therefore let your words be few" (Eccl 5:1,2). The saintly F.B. Meyer said, "It's more needful for you to hear God's words than that God should hear yours, though the one will always lead to the other." Yes, prayer or praise is actually our response to God's revelation.

Devotional Meditation

The Bible can be meditated devotionally or studied analytically. In the Quiet Time we meditate it devotionally.

Whisper Psalm 119:18 as you open the Bible: "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law."

Be a baby at heart when you read the Bible. God has no respect for anyone who goes to His Word as a learned professor. When the uneducated disciples received revelations from the Father, Jesus exclaimed, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes" (Mt 11:25). We must desire the pure milk of the Word as "newborn babes" (1 Pet 2:2).

Start with the New.

Where to start is the question of many. It's better to start with the New Testament for two reasons. The fact that we are now under the New Covenant falls as the first reason. Secondly, the Old Testament cannot be explained or understood without the New.

The 27 books of the NT can be divided into four sections. The four Gospels speak of the life and teachings of Christ. The Book of Acts explains the spread of the gospel which followed the birth of the Church. The Epistles mainly contain exhortations and teaching for personal and corporate life of God's people. The Book of Revelation prophesies the future of the Church and the world. In

other words, the first two sections report what happened yesterday, the third section teaches what must be done today and the final section predicts what would happen tomorrow. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. The message of the New Testament will enlighten your eyes to understand His riches.

Ask Questions.

Read one full chapter at a stretch. Read it twice. Ask these questions on that passage:

- Any promise to embrace?
- Any commandment to obey?
- Any sin to forsake?
- Any warning to note?
- Any revelation to understand?
- Any example to follow?
- And so on.

Answers to these simple questions will bring the message of the chapter to the right focus.

There's another set of questions you may ask over the passage you read and meditate:

- What does this passage say about my responsibility to God?
- And my responsibility to man?

Jesus said that "all" the Scripture is summed up in the two commandments of loving God with all of ourselves and loving our neighbour as ourselves (Mt 22:35-40). When specific answers to these two questions are applied in practical life, we become "doers" of the Word (Js 1:23).

Daily Manna

Believe that what you learn from that passage is God's message to you for the day. Probably you can claim the promise from the passage when you face a crisis during that day. The Bible is like a cheque book and its promises can be encashed anytime. The warning you received from that passage will keep you at the hour of temptation. When you are at crossroads not knowing which direction to pursue, what you meditated during Quiet Time will serve as a lamp to your feet.

Those who are regular in keeping the Quiet Time invariably testify to the above fact. The daily meditation supplies us our daily manna (Ex 16:21). God's mercies and compassions are "new every morning" (Lam 3:22,23).

Besides meditating on a specific passage each day, some recommend the reading of five Psalms and a chapter from Proverbs daily. This way we can read both these books once every month. The Psalms teach us our relationship with God and the Proverbs that with men. In Psalms the Christian is on his knees, and in Proverbs on his feet. This combination balances our growth.

Logos and Rhema

Underline words, phrases and sentences that appeal to you most. All of the Bible is God's Word, but what appeals to you or stands out from a passage at that time is God's specific message to you. The word of God in general is "logos" and the specific word is "rhema." (These are Greek words.) Keep a notebook to jot down each day's message. The shortest road to an understanding of the Bible is the acceptance that God is speaking in every line.

Keep chewing the thoughts of your meditations all through the day. Blessed is the man who delightfully meditates the Word of God “day and night” and deliberately marches out of the ways of the ungodly (Psa 1:1,2). Such a man will be prosperous in whatever he does (v 3). Before retiring to bed, review the day’s walk in the light of your morning meditation.

There are many devotional booklets produced by individuals and institutions. Undoubtedly some of them are very good. But they cannot become a substitute for meditating the Bible itself. These aids can always supplement your personal meditation.

After Bible meditation, we move on to prayer. In prayer we essentially do four things. They form the acronym P-R-A-Y. Praise, Repent, Ask, Yield!

Praise!

The model prayer Jesus taught begins with the praise: “Hallowed be Your Name!” We are commanded to “enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise” (Psa 100:4). You may sing a song of praise (v2). We have so many worship songs and choruses these days. You will experience a new release as you lift up your voice to bless the Lord. The presence of God will be real because He inhabits the praises of His people (Psa 22:3).

Praise can take two forms: worship and thanksgiving. When you praise God for who He is, that’s worship. Praising God for what He has done or is doing is thanksgiving. Do both. The first two verses of Psalm 103 are memorized by most Christians from childhood. Verse 1 is a call to worship: “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” Verse 2 is a call to thanksgiving:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” It’s said, “The pulse of prayer is praise and the heart of prayer is gratitude.”

God reveals Himself primarily through the pages of the Scripture. Let what you learnt about God from your passage of meditation be turned into praise. You might have read in that portion about God’s Omnipresence, Omnipotence or Omniscience. Praise Him for that. Or you might have met Him in that passage as a Creator, Saviour, Restorer, Lover, Keeper or Giver. Exalt Him in praise with appropriate words.

Your praise may also have one of the many redemptive names of Jehovah as its subject—

<i>Jehovah-Jireh</i> , the Lord our Provider	(Gen 22:14)
<i>Jehovah-Rapha</i> , the Lord our Healer	(Ex 15:26)
<i>Jehovah-Nissi</i> , the Lord our Banner	(Ex 17:15)
<i>Jehovah-M’kaddesh</i> , the Lord our Sanctifier	(Lev 20:8)
<i>Jehovah-Shalom</i> , the Lord our Peace	(Judg 6:23,24)
<i>Jehovah-Rohi</i> , the Lord our Shepherd	(Psa 23:1)
<i>Jehovah-Tsidkenu</i> , the Lord our Righteousness	(Jer 33:16)
<i>Jehovah-Shammah</i> , the Lord who is Present	(Ezek 48:35)

Repent!

Repentance is an integral part of prayer. David prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa 139:23,24). The hidden things of the heart surface when we quieten our hearts before God. An old hymn says, *Take time to be holy*.

The Holy Spirit does not convict us to condemn us but to correct us. We have Jesus on the Throne of Grace to sympathize with us and succour us. He was tempted like us in all points but He never yielded. Therefore from Him we receive both forgiveness and enablement (Heb 4:15,16). When we open up our hearts before Him, there's instant cleansing by His precious blood (1 Jn 1:7-9).

Our repentance must concern not only our sins against God but also our sins against our fellowmen. Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us" (Lk 11:14). Confess before God all anger, jealousy, backbiting and hatred. There are sins of commission and of omission: Doing what we ought not and not doing what we ought to. Jesus said, "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt 6:15). Decide to make reconciliation and restitution wherever necessary and delay not to do it (Mt 5:23,24).

Prayer without a spirit of repentance is a waste. The Psalmist was right when he said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psa 66:18). "The prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov 15:8).

Ask!

Exaltation of God and examination of ourselves are sound preparations for submitting our petitions before Him. In the former we acknowledge God's worthiness and in the latter our worthlessness. Both are a logical must when we go to a king for his favour. But this King is also our Father! So let's now present our needs before Him with reverence and with a realisation of our privilege.

Nothing is too small to be mentioned before God. What should we think of the patient who told his doctor he was

ill, but never went into the details? Importantly there are four needs we should regularly pray for.

a. Intellectual need

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom" (Prov 4:7). Even in his dream Solomon asked for wisdom when God asked him what he wanted! (1 Ki 3:5,9,10). We all lack wisdom and so need it. God is the source of all wisdom. The wisdom that comes from Him is pure and all sufficient for our responsibilities and relationships in the world (Js 1:5,6; 3:17). Prayer for wisdom pleases God and He grants it liberally when we ask in faith.

b. Physical/Material needs

This is pertaining to food, clothing, health and such bodily needs. Jesus taught us to pray for "our daily bread." Set aside all anxiety and worry and trust the Lord of all riches for your needs of today and tomorrow. Jesus is the Lord of the body also. Pray for healing and health, safety and protection. If you have some chronic illness as a "thorn in the flesh," seek Him for removing it. If He chooses not to heal you, He will grant you sufficient grace to live above the handicap by His strength (2 Cor 12:7-10). If you don't get all you ask, it's because God intends to give you something better.

c. Spiritual needs

Our spiritual needs are numerous, but specifically we can think of three here. First of all, victory over temptations. Pray, "Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One" (Mt 6:13). Mere desire and determination to keep ourselves from yielding to temptations does not guarantee victory, necessary though. The Lord admonished His careless disciples, "Watch and pray, lest you enter

into temptation. The mind indeed is willing, but the body is weak” (Mt 26:41). We must seek God’s strength everyday to fight the enemy.

Understanding God’s will is our next spiritual need. Life is full of choices and decisions. Choosing between good and bad may be easy, but God requires that His children choose between good and better. King David prayed, “Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day” (Psa 25:4,5). God is pleased with those who truly seek His counsel.

Thirdly, pray for power to witness for Christ. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt 5:13,14). The salt should not lose its saltiness and the light its brightness. It is the power of the Spirit that makes us dynamic in witnessing (Acts 1:8). Our Heavenly Father freely gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Lk 11:13). No doubt we have to face mockery and persecution when we testify for Christ. And it is natural to feel shy and hesitant. But the Holy Spirit fills us with boldness and zeal when we wait before Him (Acts 4:31).

d. Social needs

Family, friends and folks are our social circles. Our prayer can influence each of these. Pray for their salvation, problems and needs. Don’t excuse yourself saying you have too many problems yourself. The fact remains that when we are genuinely concerned with others and voluntarily involve ourselves in their suffering, the Lord has His own way of taking care of our lives. The man Job stands as a classic example. The Lord restored his losses when he prayed for his friends! (Job 42:10).

These four areas namely intellectual, physical, spiritual and social are nutshellled in Luke 2:52 which covers the fourfold life of a balanced Christian.

We now come to the fourth section in prayer—

Yield!

Prayer time is an occasion to humble ourselves before the Lord. Saints have found this chorus very meaningful to sing on their knees:

*Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me;
Break me, melt me,
Mould me and fill me.*

We are by nature proud and self-willed. True prayer breaks this nature in us. The Gethsemane prayer of Jesus is the best illustration on yielding to God: “Not as I will but as You will!” (Mt 26:39,42). While fighting Satan, having done all, we must “stand.” While praying to God, having said all, we must bend!

Follow these four steps in prayer with a conscious effort to start with, and in course of time it will become quite natural. However, prayer is not easy. You will normally encounter the following difficulties.

a. Drowsiness

Satan rocks the cradle to make us sleep on our knees. To avoid sleepiness, change of posture is suggested. Though kneeling is best, you may also walk and pray. Or you may change over to reading or singing. I do most of my morning prayer when I go out for jogging or bicycling.

b. Distraction

Choose a place of least disturbance. Jesus and the apostles went to gardens, mountainside and riverside for prayer. We are taught to shut our rooms and pray (Mt 6:6). In any case, disengage the telephone during the hour of prayer! When unnecessary thoughts flood your mind, resist the devil in the Name of Jesus and claim victory (Js 4:7). I normally switch over to speaking in tongues to bypass the mind and continue praying (1 Cor 14:14).

c. Depression

Pray whether you “feel” like praying or not. Throw your worries on Jesus. Let not the devil take advantage of your difficult situations (1 Pet 5:7-9). Turn everything to God in prayer with praise and thanksgiving (Phil 4:6).

*What a Friend we have in Jesus;
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!*

When you kneel before God in the morning, you can stand up to anything during the day!

Just two Commandments!

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is comparable to it. You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Mt 22:27-39).

These two great commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ are about “LOVE!” Love is of God and God is love. One who does not love does not know God (1 Jn 4:7,8). Of the three cardinal virtues it is said, “Now abide faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). In this message, let’s consider in detail certain practical implications of these two great commandments of love.

LOVE GOD!

God demands our ALL—all our heart, all our soul, all our mind. He shall have our ***all*** or ***nothing***. If Christ is

not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all! None and nothing should take the place due to God in our lives. Anyone or anything that takes the place due to God is an IDOL. Our God is a “jealous” God! The word next to ‘love’ is ‘hate.’ There is nothing in between. If you do not love God with your all, to tell it in the Bible language, you are actually hating Him. “I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity... of those who HATE Me, and showing mercy to thousands of those who LOVE Me, and keep My commandments” (Ex 20:5-6).

Dear young people, in all the affairs of your life, let the Lord Jesus Christ “have the preeminence” (Col 1:18). Let’s list here some of those who may be a hindrance to you in loving God with all your heart.

(a) Parents / Family

“Honour your father and mother” is “the first commandment with promise” (Eph 6:2). But, parents cannot take the place of God in your life. That’s what the Bible means when it says, “Obey your parents IN THE LORD!” (Eph 6:1). God first, parents and family next. It will not be possible for a believer to please his parents in everything, but he should unquestionably please God in anything and everything. Comparatively speaking, your first obligation is to God than to your parents, because your parents know you since your birth only, but God knows you before you were formed in your mother’s womb, even before the world was founded. There is no one in this world who will so lovingly look after you like your parents, but the Lord who keeps you “neither slumbers nor sleeps” (Psa 121:4). Don’t misunderstand me. The idea here is not in anyway to decry our honour due to our parents but to emphasize the absolute necessity of our utmost and supreme love and devotion to God.

A few examples—

(i) One young man who repented of his sins and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ told me that he very much wanted to be baptized in water obeying the commandment of Christ but his parents would not like it. Here is where one has to decide between the two. For spiritual matters, each one is personally accountable to God. There can be no better example than the Lord Jesus Christ. He honoured His parents till the end (Jn 19:26,27). But, read the instance in Luke 2:41-52. “And He said to them, How is it that you sought Me? Didn’t you know that I must be about My Father’s work? And they UNDERSTOOD NOT what He spoke to them. And He went down with them to Nazareth, and was submissive to them” (vv 49-51). Here we find Jesus obeying His parents “IN THE LORD!”

(ii) Let’s consider the question of marriage. If your parents are also committed Christians, then they will not suggest any unbelieving partner for you. Suppose they are not believers and they propose a candidate for you who is not born again, what should you do? A believer can never be yoked with an unbeliever in marriage. The Word of God completely rules out the possibility of an unholy alliance. Explain to your parents your Scriptural conviction and pray that the Lord may change the situation. But God may not always make things easy. He expects you to take a bold stand. Jesus clearly said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not fit for Me!” (Mt 10:37).

(iii) I have sadly come across many youngsters who have backslidden after marriage. As marriage was instituted by God, marriage will only boost up one’s spiritual life and never bring it down. Then, why such sad stories? Perhaps they have permitted their partners to take God’s place in their lives. Here is the J-O-Y formula for marital bliss:

J-esus first
O-thers next
Y-ourselves last

i.e. First, to please God; second, to win souls; third, to satisfy yourselves.

(b) Friends

Someone rightly said, “Salvation is breaking and making of bonds!” Many young people have made a shipwreck of their faith because they have permitted their friends to come between them and God. Don’t hesitate to break your ungodly commitments. Follow the procedure given in Proverbs 6:1-5. Don’t delay to sever any relationship which will endanger the growth of your spiritual life. Don’t hesitate even if it is as dear as your eye or hand (Mt 5:29-30).

(c) Preachers

Hero-worshipping the preachers of the Gospel is too common these days in Christendom. One sad reason for this spiritual plague is that many preachers “seek” it. They hunt for the “praises of men.” When God blessed Paul and Barnabas with a wonderful ministry of miracles in Lystra, the men of that place came towards them with garlands and they even wanted to sacrifice for them. See the reaction of these two Apostles to this carnal act: “When the Apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do you do these things? We also are men like you, and preach to you that you should turn from these vanities to the living God” (Acts 14: 14-15). You must respect the servants of God but never idolise them. Here’s a beautiful chorus—

*Let’s talk about Jesus,
The King of kings is He;
The Lord of lords Supreme
Through all eternity:
The great I am the Way,
The Truth, the Life, the Door;
Let’s talk about Jesus
More and more!*

LOVE MEN!

Rightly Jesus said that the commandment to love our neighbours as ourselves is “LIKE” the first and great commandment (Mt 22:39). Because, “If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 Jn 4: 20). “And this commandment have we from God, that HE WHO LOVES GOD MUST LOVE HIS BROTHER ALSO” (v 21).

“Under this head, we shall consider three groups of people—

- a) Your neighbours
- b) Your enemies
- c) Your brothers

(a) Your neighbours

“Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mt 22:39). This is one of the most revolutionary teachings of Jesus Christ. From the human point of view, this commandment looks rather impossible. But with God’s new nature in us and His power, it should be possible for us to obey it, because Jesus Christ never gave any impossible-to-obey commandments. These practical guidelines will help:

(i) Deny yourself: The problem with many of us is that we love ourselves too much. Jesus laid down the

condition of discipleship plainly: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Lk 9:23). Don’t try to have everything you *want*. See if you really *need* it; Denying ourselves of certain non-essentials and unnecessary comforts is a positive step towards enabling us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

(ii) Learn sacrificial giving: Everyone of us has a definite part in the possible relief of the suffering. Apostle James strongly advocates practical religion in his Epistle. “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled; but you give them not those things which are needful to the body; what does it profit?” (2:15-16), “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (1:27). You may have the religion of the “priest” or the “Levite,” but do you have the compassion of the “Samaritan?” (Lk 10:30-33), True love manifests in giving. “God so loved the world that He GAVE!” (Jn 3:16). You can give without loving; but you cannot love without giving!

(b) Your enemies

Does a Christian have enemies? The enemies of a Christian are not those whom he hates but those who hate him, do not agree with him but oppose him or abuse him. “Love your enemies,” said Jesus. Also, “Bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Mt 5:44). This is a great challenge. How to do it?

(i) Meditate on God’s love towards your enemies: Look at the character of God. “He makes His sun to rise on the good and the bad, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mt 5:45). “Be therefore perfect, even as

your Father in Heaven is perfect” (v 48). Think on this: Jesus shed His blood and died for your enemies also; They can also come to the same Heaven by repenting and believing; You were also perhaps an abuser and enemy of God’s people before your conversion; And soon.

(ii) Meditate on Christ’s behaviour towards His enemies: We are too familiar with the prayer of Jesus while He was being nailed on to the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). In the Prophecy, the Lord Jesus Christ refers to those who wounded Him as His friends! “And one shall say to Him, What are these wounds in Your hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My FRIENDS” (Zech 13:6). Imagine how Jesus would have acted at every situation and you relate it to yours.

(c) Your brothers

Jesus said, “A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. BY THIS shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another” (Jn 13:34,35). Love and unity among God’s people has no substitute. This is God’s secret for world impact. But unfortunately we have miserably failed in this area. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in UNITY! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord **commanded** the BLESSING, even life for evermore” (Psa 133:1-3). Oneness was the secret of Pentecost. (Acts 2:1). This is the only way to challenge the forces that threaten the Church today. Here’s how you can grow in love—

(i) Love those who do not perhaps see eye-to-eye with you: I do not believe that any two believers on earth see eye-to-eye with each other in everything. That was never God's intention in creation. He has created us as individuals. But Christ is not divided and so in Christ there can be perfect harmony and oneness between believers. As believers, are we not all washed by the SAME BLOOD? Are we not worshipping the SAME FATHER? Have we not believed on the SAME SAVIOUR? Are we not going to the SAME HEAVEN? This does not mean that one should compromise on major doctrinal issues. The point is that I should not find it difficult to LOVE a brother or sister, who belongs to the family of God as I am, simply because he or she does not share my views.

(ii) Love those from whom you may not perhaps get any benefit: Jesus asked, "If ye salute your own brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the publicans do so?" (Mt 5:47). Publicans were tax-collectors. They would not greet every tax-payer but those who would perhaps give them some 'extra!' How pathetic if we are also reduced to such a cheap kind of love in our relationship with others!

(iii) Love those who perhaps are not members of your Church or assembly: There are many denominations in Christianity today. But any system that leads to SECLUSION is sinful. John the Apostle once exhibited the spirit of GROUPISM and Jesus immediately corrected him. Here is the Bible record: "John answered Jesus, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Your Name, and He follows not US: and we stopped him, because he follows not US. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a miracle in My Name, who can lightly speak evil of Me. For HE WHO IS

NOT AGAINST US IS ON OUR PART" (Mk 9:38-40). Let this philosophy of Jesus sink into our minds. Groupism had plagued the Corinthian Church. Apostle Paul sternly rebuked: "Everyone of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men? For while one says, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal?" (1 Cor 1:12,13; 3:3,4). But it's very striking that this Corinthian Church did not lack any gift! (1 Cor 1:7). Rightly Paul said,

"Though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains and have not LOVE, I am nothing!" (1 Cor 13:2).

The Ensuing Exam!

Exams are here again! You are cutting your outings and pastimes to give more time to textbooks. As the dates draw near, hearts fail. Fear and fever! Even rank students are no exception.

Here are some hints to help you in this season.

1. Don't be jittery.

Becoming nervous on the eve of the exam is quite natural. But it doesn't help. It only harms. Try to relax. Commit the matter to the Lord Jesus. He will calm your mind and grant restfulness (Mt 11:28). "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isa 30:15).

2. Do your best.

Those consistently regular in studies throughout the academic year will not find the final preparations too burdensome. In case you were negligent, don't try to pump everything into your brain within weeks. Give a general

reading of all the chapters and then concentrate on specific portions in consultation with the earlier question papers. No doubt you are taking chances but this is all you can do in the given situation. Distribute your time to all subjects. Jot down points for a quick glance just before the exam.

There are those who find it convenient to study late into the night. But in general the early hours of the day are best. You are really fresh then. Don't neglect to eat well during study holidays. Physical fitness and mental alertness go together. Go out for a stroll in the evenings. You need some fresh air.

3. Pray for wisdom.

All are not equally intelligent. Some have a photographic memory whereas others have to struggle. Don't condemn yourself. Accept how God has made you. The Divine Potter has perfect authority over the clay. But see what He has promised—

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally, and without rebuke, and it will be given to him" (Js 1:5).

4. Don't compromise.

Mass copying and such malpractices are the order of the day. Police force has to be deployed in exam centres! What a shame to the academic world! This only shows that education alone does not make one wise, isn't it? Rightly Solomon the wise said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Yield not to any temptation or pressure that will displease the Lord. It is understandable how you feel when so many indulge in copying. But God tells you, "Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be envious against those who

do that which is not right. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb... Better is a little that the uncompromisingly righteous man has, than the abundance of many who are wrong and wicked” (Psa 37:1,2,16).

5. Write carefully.

Whisper a telegraphic prayer before writing. Read the question paper atleast twice. Tick the questions you want to answer. Attempt first the questions you can answer confidently. The first impression is the best impression! Write neatly. Break the answers into paragraphs. Underline words or sentences you want to emphasize. Number the points. Minimise striking. Examiners appreciate good presentation.

If you get stuck up or confused at some point, don't be perturbed. Lean back and relax for a while. Ask God to help you. Remember, angels surround you. In such situations, I used to briefly and quietly pray in the Spirit. Invariably I have experienced a release and been refreshed. Start again. If you still have problem, leave that question and go to the next. Don't be wasting time.

Commit the answer paper to the Lord before handing it over to the invigilator. Leave the hall praising the Lord.

6. Forget it.

Don't be very anxious to check the answers when you come out. This is not that helpful. Can anything be undone? If you find you have not answered a question correctly, it only fills you with useless worry. “Who can add one mark to his paper by worrying?”

If you are totally dissatisfied over your performance of a particular paper, don't be crying. Go on with the other

papers. Follow Paul's philosophy: “One thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead!” (Phil 3:13). While finalising the promotion list, the authorities do consider whether you have done the other papers well even if you have failed in one subject. Therefore, finish well.

All the best and a Happy Vacation!



Prescription for Exam Fever!

Read these promises once everyday during the days of your examination and preparation!

- ✍ “Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you” (Isa 41:10)
- ✍ “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding” (Prov 3:5)
- ✍ “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without rebuke, and it will be given to him” (Js 1:5)
- ✍ “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7)
- ✍ “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength” (Isa 30:15)
- ✍ “And as for these four youths (Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah), God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom” (Dan 1:17)

- ✍ “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; all these things shall be added to you” (Mt 6:33)
- ✍ “My people will never be put shame” (Joel 2:26)
- ✍ “They shall not labour in vain” (Isa 65:23)
- ✍ “The Lord will command blessing on you in all that you put your hand to do” (Dt 28:8)
- ✍ “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know”(Jer 33:3)
- ✍ “The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the Lord” (Prov 21:31)
- ✍ “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13)
- ✍ “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28)
- ✍ “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor 12:9)



Failure in Examination

Failure in your school or college examination does not mean failure in life! You are always a victor in Christ whatever happens to you on the earthly scene. Jesus says, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!”

Failure is an opportunity to study more seriously and work harder. God sometimes sends temporary failures into our lives and that is just to alert us.

Academic studies is not everything in life. One of the best missionaries of our Mission has hardly completed his elementary school! A number of Christ’s apostles were unschooled. Of course in the modern age, basic education is an absolute necessity. But you cannot do what you cannot do. Having done your best, if the result is disappointing, don’t get dejected or depressed or unduly disturbed. Remember God is on the Throne and He is in control of your life. Fall into His hands and bosom. He is your God and you are His child and He will wipe away all your tears.

Don’t bury your head in the pillow and try to escape from the world. Come out. By any amount of worrying you cannot improve the situation by an inch! Apostle Paul wrote the Epistle to the Philippians from “prison” and it is a letter of JOY! A prisoner writes to those outside, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” He further says, “Do not worry about anything, but pray and praise. Then the peace of God will overshadow and envelope you.”

In spite of your sincere efforts, if you are not able to retain the subjects and reproduce them in the exam like your friends, it is none of your fault. Accept yourself as you are made by the all-wise God. He distributes abilities and gifts to men according to His sovereignty. God’s expectation from us is only in proportion to what He has given us. When you sit again to study, hesitate not to ask Him for more wisdom, because He is a liberal Giver.

A word to the parents here may not be out of place. Please don’t make your son or daughter feel miserable by your attitude towards them. My father-in-law is an outstanding eye surgeon and he once told me he failed in the school final several times! Evangelist D.G.S. Dhinakaran often refers to his failure in the graduate class. Winston

Churchill was a drop-out from school! The famous Thomas Edison said, “Show me a thoroughly satisfied man—and I will show you a failure.” Charles Kettering observed, “It is not a disgrace to fail. Failing is one of the greatest arts in the world!” Dear parents, please don’t force on your child what he really cannot do and thus throw him into a complex. Encourage him to learn a trade of his taste or set for him a small shop. How do you explain zoology graduates working at a Bank counter, or botany graduates becoming Railway Station Masters?! The ministry of parents must be one of encouragement at times of discouragement of their children.

Dear student friend, may be you have failed more than once and you cannot understand why. The Lord Jesus Christ is by your side and you may remember what He told Peter who failed to catch any fish inspite of his repeated attempts. Now He speaks to you to try again. Trust Him and you will have a miracle. The greatest failure is the failure to try! It’s always too early to give up!

Don’t waste time worrying over the gloomy past. Look forward working towards a glorious future. God will remove your reproach and give you beauty for ashes and oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. And you will learn that failure teaches success!

(Read these references from the Bible: Jn 16:33; Rev 16:3,4; Mt 6:27; Phil 4:4,6,7; Js 1:5; Lk 5:1-6; Isa 61:3)

Another Academic Year

Dear Student Friends,

It must be really exciting to enter another academic year! Congratulations for passing the examinations. Give thanks to God who honoured your hard work. Basically all wisdom and knowledge come from Him. We must never lose sight of the loving hand of God that is on us in every detail of our life. So many even intelligent and industrious students could not sit for the final exams because of sudden setback in health. In spite of hard work but poor performance, there are several others who have failed. Sorry if you have had any such mishap. Don’t get discouraged or disheartened. Folks may insult you or despise you, but the dear Lord Jesus loves you as you are and He will not leave you. With His help you will fare better next time. Failure is not final. God can make good in His own way the loss of one year.

Some of you are awaiting the results of your competitive exams. Your anxiety is understandable. But if you have

committed your future in the hands of God, you can be assured that He will give you what He knows would be best for you. Thank God if you are able to get into the course you have been longing for. Even otherwise don't get dejected. Man's disappointments may be God's appointments.

Don't feel unfortunate if you are not able to pay heavy capitation fee to get into certain covetable courses. Quality of life is not decided exclusively by the standard of courses and the status of colleges but by the blessing of God. I was privileged to do my Master's degree in Technology in the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai, 1968-70. But as I quickly look back at the 31 years which have passed by, my testimony is what was told about Joseph of the Old Testament: "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man" (Gen 39:2).

In today's world the popularity of any course hardly stays long. Let's trust God who knows the end from the beginning. In contrast to His foreknowledge we are all toooo shortsighted. Learn to follow God's guidance. In the sixties the first preference of rank holders in Engineering Colleges was Mechanical Engineering. Electrical Engineering was next and there was no competition whatsoever for Civil Engineering. As a top ranker I could have cakewalked into the Mechanical Engineering class. But as I waited on the Lord, He impressed on me to choose Civil. I least realized at that time (1964) that God had been preparing me to become a "builder" of His Kingdom!

Adjusting to a new place if you have moved out of your hometown may not be easy. One of the riches of India is its diverse cultures. As a Christian you must love crosscultural situations, because God loves all people alike. No race is superior or inferior to the other. Be dead to casteism and regionalism and mix freely with all. But be

careful with the choice of close friends. Befriend the simple and the lowly. You must be extremely cautious during the first few weeks when you would be making choices in the new set-up. Bad company will ruin your student life and spoil your future.

For some of you this may be the first hostel experience. Being away from home, if it is a hostel with only minimum restrictions, you will feel like a free bird. The parental strictness and constant watch are no more there. Don't use this as a licence to go where you like and do what you desire, but an opportunity to learn to handle liberty. This is how you would mature. Respect the warden and the hostel rules. Don't stay away from the hostel in late evenings, especially in cities.

With all your new friends and a busy curriculum you may not miss your parents too much, but they would miss you terribly. Write to them atleast once a week. Nowadays you can telephone as and when you like, but it's nothing like writing. Developing this discipline will have a positive effect in so many areas of your life.

Hostel food may be monotonous. Nevertheless don't become choosy. You will develop deficiencies. Cut down on junk food. Soft drinks are definitely harmful.

Choose a good local Church where there's solid Bible teaching, youth emphasis and missionary vision. Don't become too involved in activities to do justice to your studies and assignments. Join the Campus prayer group if there's one in your college or hostel. Otherwise start one in a hostel room or someone's residence closeby. Invite committed Christian staff, if any, to help in your gatherings. Get in touch with Students For Jesus (SFJ, Post Bag 609, Vellore 632 006) or Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI, 10 Millers Road, Kilpauk, Chennai 600 010) to systematise

your campus ministry. SFJ is Charismatic and UESI is non-Charismatic. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses.

You may come across some good Christian families in Church services or special meetings. Visit them if invited, but don't go there too often.

These are days of stiff competition. A mere pass or even a first class is not sufficient. Aim to score high and work really hard. Be regular in attendance. Be attentive in the class. Textbooks and guidebooks may be there, but taking down notes in lecture classes is the first step in the learning process. Do the home assignments yourself. Don't take weekly or monthly tests lightly. They are meant to prepare you for the finals. Don't postpone to do everything during the study holidays. Library is not a luxury. You should know more than what will be asked in the exams.

Choose atleast one extracurricular activity, otherwise your growth will not be balanced. Sports and games are not a waste of time, but they must not rob your regular study time. If possible, learn to play a musical instrument. It will be a boon to God's work. Visit the common reading room and read good stuff. Note down new words, phrases, proverbs, quotes, etc., and use them freely. A senior in the college taught me this in 1962 and it has come in handy in my writing ministry today.

Be known for your pleasantness. Learn good manners from fellow students. Respect teachers and obey them. Be jovial but avoid coarse jokes. Don't pick up too much of slang. It will be difficult to change later on when you move into respectable societies. Don't take active part in strikes. Never ever join those who destroy properties.

Dress fashionably and smartly but modestly. Don't wear clothes which destroy sex distinction. Don't ask how short is too short or how tight is too tight. Avoid extremes. Wash innerwears daily. Don't pressurise parents to get you expensive clothing or footwear. Branded stuff is not a must. Look for comfort and presentability. Learning to live without will prepare you for future however difficult it might be. I am a living testimony to the advantage of disadvantages. Don't demand too much of pocket money from parents.

This generation is crazy after entertainments. Don't get into this trap and spoil your studies. You do need relaxation but avoid too much of anything. Keep yourself sexually pure. Maintain a distance with opposite sex. It's a myth that falling in love during student days is macho. This is a distraction to be definitely avoided, if you seek to achieve academic excellence. I am not advising seclusion but sociality with self-control.

Drugs is becoming commonplace in campuses. Beware of the beginnings! Smoking or drinking injures health undoubtedly. Why then should you do it even occasionally? Keep away from any addictive habit. Stay alert. Prevention is better than cure. Seek the help of senior Christians if you get hooked up in premarital sex or drugs or whatever. Don't hesitate to approach professional counsellors. I have answered questions youth normally ask in my book, *To Dear Students...* Get it from any of the branches of Blessing Youth Mission.

However busy you may be with your studies, don't neglect or cut short your Quiet Time with God. Begin the day with atleast 30 minutes of Bible meditation and prayer. Before retiring to bed, spend a few minutes on your knees thanking God for His protection and provision. Confess

any known sin to Him and be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Commit your life in His hands and sleep off.

Participate in a Gospel outreach programme atleast once a fortnight. Tract distribution, open-air preaching, hospital visitation and village evangelism will suit you. Above all, share the Gospel with your classmates and hostelmates. Personal soulwinning is by far the best. I was brought to Christ by my Chemistry lecturer.

Let me close with a Bible text which was the rule during my college days (1962-70) as well as career years (1971-75): “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you”(Matthew 6:33).

All the best!



Uncle Stanley

More than Studies!

A MESSAGE TO TEACHERS

The 1997 July issue of *Teens Today* had a 20 page section—*Attitude is Everything!*—in which the teens of today have raised scores of provocative questions “because they just don’t want to accept things they are told to accept; they want to have a good reason for their attitude.” I would urge every school teacher and college lecturer to go through this questionnaire to understand the generation of students they meet in the classrooms and lecture halls. Here are just two of their questions for us to ponder: “Since all the leaders ADULTS have elected are such losers, how come they don’t give us (the teens) a chance to elect them?” “If schools are meant to develop us physically and mentally, why do we have so many classes for studies and so few for everything else?”

The answer to the first question is implied in the second. Most of our national and political leaders were once students in schools and colleges. Their corrupt and silly behaviour is largely because of the values they failed to learn or to be

taught in their schooling years. As we have entered the second half century of Indian Independence, unless the teachers assume a moral responsibility to consistently teach their students life's absolute values "more than studies," there's no hope for future India.

Except for the six months of teaching assignment I fulfilled in 1970-71 in the Regional Engineering College, Tiruchy, I had never been a secular teacher. My mother was a school teacher under whom I did my first class. Both my schooling and pre-university class were done in Christian institutions, namely Margoschis High School, Nazareth and St. John's College, Palayamkottai. My graduation and post graduation were in secular institutions, namely A.C. College of Engineering & Technology, Karaikudi and Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai. These years as a student and 30 years of Christian ministry to students have given me reasonably enough understanding about the student community and what they need to be taught "more than studies." I would share here with the Christian teachers of educational institutions five important values they must inculcate in the lives of their students. You can mark them on your five fingers for easy remembrance.

1. Submission (*Thumb Finger*)

Disobedience is the spirit of the age. Rebellion is the order of the day. The Bible has predicted disobedience to parents and elders as a sure sign of the end of endtimes. "Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be... disobedient to parents..." (2 Tim 3:1,2). God views disobedience or lack of submission quite seriously. In fact, His last warning in the Old Testament is concerning this. In the last verse of the Book of Malachi, God promised that He would send a ministry which would

"turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" lest He would come and strike the earth with a curse! (Mal 4:6). Christian teachers can become an effective instrument in the hands of God to stop premature judgment falling on the earth due to disobedience.

When we were students we stood up in reverence with a word of greeting the moment the teacher entered the classroom. We would sit down only after he had asked us to do so. It is unfortunate that such an honourable custom is vanishing from our midst these days, especially in some English medium schools. Let the medium be English but let not the customs turn Western. It is common for students in classrooms in the West to stretch their legs with shoes on the desks and stay in this posture when the teacher enters the class or comes near them. We in India cannot afford to deteriorate to this level. The Bible clearly instructs the youngsters, "You shall rise before the gray-headed and honour the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord" (Lev 19:32). In India, physical postures as expressions of respect cannot be dispensed with as meaningless traditions. Insist on them in the classrooms. Teach them to greet elders the Indian way and not with a "Hi" like cowboys.

The decision to telecast the parliament sessions alive is one of the unpardonable blunders made by our polity. What do our leaders expect from the youngsters after they watch the irreverent and indecent behaviour of the Members of Parliament on the TV screen?

Teach your students that they would be able to exercise authority, at whatever level they would be placed tomorrow, only to the extent they themselves submit to authority

today. Jesus as a boy obeyed His parents and as a man obeyed His heavenly Father in all things. Therefore no devil could ever disobey Him.

God usually chooses the obedient and the submissive for leadership responsibilities. Charisma and capabilities are only next. Skills and talents do not top the divine list of leadership qualifications. Entrust the obedient and submissive students with responsibilities and train them. I thank God for my teachers who gave me several responsibilities in school and college. This campus training came in handy when God called me to lead a Mission.

2. Sincerity (*Pointer Finger*)

Truth is slain in the streets. Honesty is the rarest commodity. Corruption is rampant at all levels of national life. India is the eighth most corrupt nation on earth. The Prime Minister says he is “helpless.” Manipulative politics, cheating business, twisting journalism, and name it—these have pushed to the back seat “whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report and are virtuous and praiseworthy” (Phil 4:8).

In a survey conducted in 1994 by *India Today*, 1365 college students from 8 major cities of India were asked, “Would you bribe?” To this 43% of male students and 34% of female students answered, “Yes!” Where are we heading as a nation? Will it take too long for 75% of students to answer this question in the affirmative? Is excelling in computer engineering and medical science the answer to the society which talks about development but is ignorant of its decay? Where shall we start arresting this trend, if not in the schools and colleges? Christian teachers, the need of the hour is “more than studies!”

A student who is not taught or trained to say a stern no to any malpractice in exams is unlikely to grow into an honest citizen. Teachers must train the “conscience” of the students to resist temptations to copy or do any such shameful deeds. In all my student life I copied only once and that was in a class test, because I had not prepared for it nor was I ready to lose my first place. But my conscience kept pricking me for six months until I apologised to the headmaster voluntarily. He encouraged me to maintain a sharp and clear conscience always. Fear of being caught must not be the primary force of restraint. The “everybody-does-it” argument should least appeal to youth. Teachers must prepare themselves for moral instruction classes as much as they prepare for a Mathematics or Biology class. It is the teachers’ responsibility to strengthen the backbone of students to stand against the devil’s majority. Peer pressure is no small matter.

Here’s an excellent truth in the writings of King David: “Mark the blameless man and observe the upright; for the future of that man is peace” (Psa 37:37). In the same Psalm David exhorts and encourages those who take a stand with the truthful minority: “Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong... Trust in the Lord and do good... Do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes... Commit your way to the Lord... He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn” (vv 1,2,7,5,6). Sow the seeds of such eternal truths in the young hearts and save them from the perishing world.

This generation of youngsters has not seen real heroes but only reel heroes! Heroes are those who refuse to compromise, for whom wrong is never right, who go by conviction and not convenience. Teach your students

heroism from Bible history. For example, how the Egyptian midwives refused to kill the male babies in spite of the orders given by King Pharaoh. Tell about martyrs and pioneer missionaries of Church history. Hitler's story doesn't find a place in the history books in Germany. The German youth are ashamed to read anything about that "mad man" in their textbooks. Illustrate through these real stories what God has said: "Those who honour Me I will honour, but those who despise Me will be disdained" (1 Sam 2:30b).

3. Salvation (*Middle Finger*)

The middle finger is the "longest" and the "central" finger which perfectly typifies the eternalness of the soul and the super importance of salvation. "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mk 8:36).

19 out of 20 who receive Christ do so before they reach 25. After 25, only one in 10,000 turns to Christ; after 35, only one in 50,000; after 45, only one in 200,000; after 55, only one in 300,000; after 65, only one in 500,000; after 75, only one in 700,000. In other words, as per this statistics, the chances of students coming into salvation experience with Christ after they leave school or college are rare. What a responsibility and privilege it is then in the hands of Christian teachers to lead the younger generation to the Saviour of the world!

Intelligence, industriousness, sports, talents, etc., can each be compared to a zero. Adding any number of zeroes makes another zero. But zeroes after the integer "1" multiply their value. Referring to eternal salvation Jesus said, "ONE thing is needful!" King Solomon, the most intelligent person who ever lived, wrote, "The fear of the Lord is the BEGINNING of knowledge" (Prov 1:7). Teachers

must not only train students for their immediate future but also prepare them for their ultimate future. Here are a few ways how Christian teachers can enable students enjoy eternal blessings—

☑ Encourage Christian students to gather regularly, atleast once a week, inside or outside the college or hostel, for Bible study and prayer. Pick up Timothys and Tituses and through them help the cells to grow in the knowledge of the Lord. Participate yourself in their gatherings atleast occasionally and encourage the students. Don't feel hesitant or ashamed to identify yourself with God's little flocks. In Christian circles there's such a lot of competition to do pastoral ministry. But students' ministry suffers from lack of shepherding care in college campuses. Dear Christian teacher friend, don't defeat God's purpose in keeping you in that school or college.

☑ Cooperate with the Christian youth ministries. Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI), Scripture Union (SU), Youth For Christ (YFC) and Students For Jesus (SFJ) of Blessing Youth Mission are some of the active campus ministries. Each organisation has its own style and emphasis. No single group can cater to all the needs of all the categories of students. Use their specialised services therefore accordingly to bless the students. Sponsor interested students to their camps and retreats. John Wesley and Charles Wesley received God's vision as students, and God used them to revive England and found the Methodist Church. Most of the nationwide and worldwide missionary movements started as campus ministries. The Blessing Youth Mission is an example.

☑ Support the students evangelistic programmes financially. Many students come from the middle or lower income groups. They cannot spare from their pocket money

for transport for outreach activities. They also need gospel tracts, booklets and Testaments. In our college prayer cell in Karaikudi we were praying for funds to purchase Testaments and Bibles for some non-Christian enquirers. A doctor's family from Thanjavur sent us a dozen Bibles. How we rejoiced that day in the evening gathering for God's miracle supply! Teachers are reasonably well-paid in India. Spending for students ministry is an investment for the next generation of leaders of the Church and the country. Be liberal.

☑ Pray for each of your students. It is not God's will that any of them should get lost (1 Tim 2:1,4; Mt 18:14). My sixth class teacher, Mr. Michael Chelladurai, had been praying for my salvation from 1956 and I was saved in 1962. Little would he have realised that he had been praying for a would-be preacher! If you keep a list of all your students and pray for one person each day, each of them would be prayed for once every two or three months. This is the minimum you can do for their souls.

☑ Make use of every opportunity to share the Gospel personally with students. You may be accused for "converting" people. But tell them that you are actually "reconverting" them. By creation all men and women belong to God. No one is born as a Christian or non-Christian. By choice we have gone away from God in sinful ways. Christ is the only way for us to "come back" to the Creator God (Isa 53:6; Jn 14:6). Before he became the President of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was a professor of philosophy in Chennai. Following his lecture on *guru-disciple* relationship, one of his students asked him personally whether he could keep him as his *guru*. To which Dr. Radhakrishnan answered, "Jesus is the ideal *guru*!" Stunned by this reply from a Hindu philosopher, that young man started reading

the New Testament and experienced salvation through Christ. He is none other than the famous preacher from Kerala, Mr. Paul Sudhakar! I was led to Christ through my Chemistry lecturer when I was a fresher in college. Remember, if you are sincere the students take your words seriously.

As teachers yours is a greater opportunity than professional missionaries. The students are a mission field which has come to you! Catch 'em young!' When an old man is saved, his soul alone is saved. But when a young man is saved, his life also is saved!

4. Sociableness (*Ring Finger*)

Students must learn the basic principles of interpersonal relationships before they leave the campus. It is told of the Boy Jesus that He grew in "favour with men" (Lk 2:52).

Campus fights and student unrest are on the increase. Politicians are using youngsters to work out their sinister schemes. Acid-throwing and stabbing have become commonplace. Rules however strict are not the answer. There must be a radical change in attitude through understanding. Use the last five minutes of a period to tell a short story and explain a moral. Quote freely from Solomon's Proverbs and the Sermon on the Mount. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "You are not a complete Hindu if you have not studied Sermon on the Mount." He carried a New Testament in his kit. "Love your neighbour as yourself" —This is the golden rule to solve all relationship problems (Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14,15).

Teach your students basic manners. To say, "Thank you," "Will you please?" etc. How to greet. The power of a smile. Making loving enquiries. Textbooks don't teach these lessons of life.

I was shocked when I once saw some young people in jeans and T-shirts washing their fingers under the dining table in a restaurant! If you don't develop in students a civic sense, they will leave the colleges as educated fools. They will spit everywhere, draw nasty pictures inside toilets, smoke in buses and trains, paste wall-posters on compound walls and even on road sign boards, throw banana peels on the roads and pavements, and so on.

Sooner a young person learns to respect the opposite sex, the lesser the chances are for him to commit adultery later in life. But with the flooding of pornographic materials and x-rated movies, there's an unprecedented breakdown in morals. In a recent survey, 48% of boys and 18% of girls say that premarital sex is not wrong. The government is also talking about "safe" sex only.

Explain to the students from the Bible how our bodies are to be kept as a temple for God and not abused by drugs, alcohol, smoking and illicit sex.

5. Service-mindedness (*Small Finger*)

No one becomes a Mother Teresa overnight. Service-mindedness and principles of servanthood must be embedded in the hearts right from youthhood. Some are naturally kind whereas most of the people need to be taught that acts of love towards the suffering are actually service to God. Jesus the King of kings identifies with the poorest of the poor so much that He says what is done to the hungry, thirsty, homeless, clotheless, sick and imprisoned is done to Himself! (Mt 25:34-40). Mr. C. N. Annathurai, one of the late Chief Ministers of Tamilnadu, used to say, "You can see God in the smile of the poor!" Did not King Solomon write, "He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord?" (Prov 19:17).

Motivate your students to involve in social work, in whatever way possible. Studies is not everything. What's the use of education if our graduates don't know how to help their fellowmen in need? Once upon a time medical work was considered to be the noblest of all professions. But now it has come down to be the most profitable of all businesses. That's what the capitation fee culture has proved. If you are a Christian professor in a medical college, keep indoctrinating your students to go as a doctor where there's no doctor, where villagers don't have even a primary health centre in the radius of 30 kilometers.

We as students kept visiting a leper colony every week with eatables purchased from our pocketmoney. We sat with the lepers, sang with them and prayed with them. What a joy for them and for us! I am not surprised that several members of that college prayer cell are involved in social welfare programmes today.

Anti-dowry concepts must be sown in the minds of students before they leave college and settle in jobs. Report from the daily newspapers incidents of bride-burning, *sati* (the practice of burning the widow on her husband's pyre), temple prostitution and the like and inspire the students to crusade against such barbarian acts. Missionary William Carey who founded Serampore University joined hands with men like Rajaram Mohan Roy and influenced the government to ban the evil practice of *sati*. We have freed ourselves from the British rule, but when will Indians be freed from the clutches of superstition?

Challenge the bright students to help those who are weak in studies. Talk to the well-to-do students to assist the poor students in the purchase of books and instruments. What we have more than what we need is what God has given us to share with the have-nots.

Conclusion

Dear teacher friends, the students spend the best part of their formative years with you. God will hold you responsible for the way they would behave as adults, and reward you. If you faithfully teach and train these young lives in the values pointed out in this article, you are laying “a good foundation for the time to come!”

11

Are sports and games a waste of time?

This question is repeatedly asked when we work among students. Some youngsters, when they become spiritually minded, start spending their evenings and all leisure time in prayers, Bible study groups and such spiritual activities only. A few others find it difficult to leave sports and games. In course of time the second groupists develop a guilt because they begin to wonder whether the time they spend for sports instead of the soul is a waste. Is there a Biblical answer to this question?

Though the Bible does not directly encourage sports and games, it nowhere condemns it. The knowledge of the public games of Greece and Rome provided the New Testament writers with rich source material from which to illustrate spiritual truths. Paul alluded to wrestling, boxing, running, etc. (Eph 6:12; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7; 1 Cor 9:24-27). The other apostles have also employed sports language (1 Pet 1:4; Heb 12:1,2; Js 1:12). Moses must have been a good boxer (Ex 2:11,12). He was

also an expert in mountain-climbing. David was skilled in shooting. He must have practised catapulting as a shepherd boy (1 Sam 17:20,40,48-50).

Sports and games have many positive effects on the participants. A good sportsman is known for the discipline of his body, that is so vital to Christian life (1 Cor 9:24-27). Then there's obeying of the rules. In Christian ministry also, it is not "what" but "how" that matters (2 Tim 2:5; cf 1 Cor 3:10). Nowhere else do we learn the importance of team spirit than in games. How sadly we lack this in Christian circles! Perseverance is another character developed in the field of sports (Heb 12:1,2; Acts 20:24). Sportspersons aim for the medal. They won't settle for anything less. Because this spirit is missing in the Church, very few Christians do their "utmost for the Highest!"

Churches and ministries must motivate their young people to participate in sports and games. I always believe that a Spirit-filled doctor will be a better doctor; a Spirit-filled architect will be a better architect; so also a Spirit-filled player will be a better player. Did not Prophet Elijah run faster than the chariot of King Ahab when the hand of the Lord came on him? (1 Ki 18:44-46). Did not Evangelist Philip overtake the fast Ethiopian chariot when God's Spirit propelled him? (Acts 8:29,30). It was like a cross-country race! With the favour of the Almighty God on them, Christian athletes can be "ten times better" than their non-Christian counterparts (Dan 1:20). Why not? (Rom 9:16). David boasted, "By my God I can leap over a wall" (Psa 18:29). High-jumpers and pole-vaulters, please note!

For the last many years India has been returning emptyhanded from the Olympics. Just a bronze medal

for our big nation from Olympics 2000 has not removed the shame. Will the Indian Christian young people accept the challenge to turn away this reproach? Who else can? When Christian players testify to their faith, it has a convincing appeal to the younger generation.

How shamefully some of our top cricket players have recently behaved! Only those who are dead to covetousness and corruption can restore dignity to this game in India. Will Christians take up this challenge?

In these days of stiff academic competition, parents tend to discourage their children from all extra-curricular activities. This is bound to affect their wholesome growth. Jesus grew not only in "wisdom" but also in "stature" (Lk 2:52). If youthful energy is not channelled into profitable activities, it will flow into sinful avenues. As a student I took active part in Literature & Debate Society, National Cadet Corps, Scouts, Drama, etc. None of these things has gone useless in my ministerial and leadership responsibilities today. But I was too concerned about my academic excellence to spend enough time in the playground. Until this day I have not even learnt swimming!

I advise young people to maintain balance. There's a time to study and a time to relax; a time to pray and a time to play. Don't neglect or overdo any one thing. All the best!

Whom to Follow?

In an age of compromise and corruption, both in the secular and the religious worlds, young people are thrown into the wilderness without role models. God's method is not that each one should find out for himself what is right and what is not. The shepherd leading the sheep is God's way for all generations. It's the mutual responsibility of the leaders & followers, teachers & students, preachers & people, and elders & youngsters to fulfil this plan of God. The leaders should not tell the people not to look at them but at Christ (1 Cor 11:1). At the same time the people must not be hunting for "perfect" leaders (Phil 3:12-14).

To serve as a general guideline to the followers and a challenge to the leaders I have listed here ten qualities to be expected from anyone in leadership. Though a leader may not excel in all these ten areas, unless he takes a conscious effort to improve in each of these he is not a safe person to follow. Remember the warning of Jesus against the blind leading the blind?

1. Is he SINCERE?

The one thing that Jesus condemned repeatedly in the leaders of His day was hypocrisy. He showered woe after woe on hypocrites (Mt 23). When Evangelist Billy Graham was leaving the hall after briefly addressing the British Cabinet members, Winston Churchill remarked, "There goes a sincere man!" Integrity and honesty both in private matters and public affairs are basic to leadership. Apostle Paul challenged the Ephesian Church leaders about the "manner" in which he "always" lived among them (Acts 20:18).

2. Is he SIMPLE?

Pomp and show is alien to Christlike leadership. Luxury was unknown to the Carpenter of Nazareth. Some leaders justify their extravagant lifestyle saying they are serving the King of kings. But they forget that this King was "lowly and riding on a donkey!" (Mt 21:5; Zech 9:9). Horse-riding belongs to "future" glory (Rev 19:14). Abandoning of simple lifestyle has led many a servant of God into financial dishonesty and manipulative practices (Phil 3:17-19).

3. Is he SPIRITUAL?

A leader is known by his spiritual authority and not administrative position. Fullness of the Holy Spirit was a basic qualification stipulated in the early Church for any level of leadership (Acts 6:2,3). Institutional strength or people support is no substitute for spiritual power. No man is greater than his prayer life. It is safe to follow a leader who is able to understand the mind of the Lord and interpret it practically (1 Cor 2:10,11,15,16). Spirituality of a leader is also reflected through solemnity, serenity and sobriety. His family life is another index.

4. Is he *SCRIPTURAL*?

Because only that work which is founded on God's Word will stand the fires and the floods, it is necessary to ascertain the leader's commitment to the Scriptures before following him (1 Cor 3:9-15; Mt 7:24,25). In these days when spurious revelations and sensational experiences are elevated to prominence, you will be misled unless your pastor or leader gives preeminence to the objective truth of the written Word of God (Psa 138:2b; 1 Cor 4:6; 2 Pet 1:16-21). Does he practise what he preaches? (Mt 23:2,3).

5. Is he *STEADY*?

Sadly many preachers and leaders deviate from their original vision and initial emphasis. They forget their calling and keep changing their message and ministry according to the popular demand (2 Pet 1:10; 1 Cor 7:20). Those who are supposed to develop God's people into maturity and stability cannot afford to be carried away by every wave and wind of doctrine (Eph 4:11-15). Beware of ministers who leave their parent organisations as rebels or money-lovers! They are "wandering stars" who serve only themselves (Jude 11,13).

6. Is he *SELFLESS*?

It is sickening to see how so many believers are simply "used" by preachers for their own empire-building. People are taught to be harmless as doves but they are not trained to be wise as serpents. According to Ephesians 4:11,12, the ministry of every minister is to make every believer a minister! Selfless leaders are good at raising secondliners. A father never feels threatened by the growth and development of skills in his son. Oh for more fatherlike leaders who will be ready to sacrifice anything for the good of those under their care! Selfless leaders are dead to favouritism and nepotism.

7. Is he *SERVANTLIKE*?

The leadership principles outlined in the Bible are at times diametrically opposed to the secular concepts and techniques. Jesus told His disciples, "Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant... For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mk 10:43-45). Titles and designations least interest servant-leaders. They hate to go after name and fame. They are sympathetic and practical in their concern for coworkers (1 Tim 5:23). Except to commit sin they are not ashamed to do any work. They are never too busy to help the suffering and the needy.

8. Is he *STRICT*?

Discipleship void of discipline is fruitless. Though disciplinarians are not popular, they are the ones who produce quality disciples. Christian work in India is known for its shabbiness. The leaders are to be blamed here because Paul-like leaders are few who teach God's people to do everything "decently and in order" (1 Cor 14:40). Don't accuse strict leaders of dictatorship and legalism. As long as your liberty in Christ and the Spirit is not crushed, it is safe to be under strict leadership. You will become diligent and systematic in all you do.

9. Is he *STUDIOUS*?

A leader who has stopped learning is handicapped to be learned from. Evergrowing pastors alone can lead the people to evergreen pastures. Jesus kept on receiving words of life from His Father so He could serve fresh food to His disciples everyday (Jn 17:8). In fact He had an excess stock when He came to the end of His earthly ministry. He left them with the next Leader who would come after Him! (Jn 16:12,13). It's appalling that many preachers have

run short of preaching material and they go on serving the stale stuff. No wonder so many believers backslide (Heb 6:1-6). Only if a leader keeps on reading and studying he will bless you with fresh manna. When asked how he would prioritize his life if given another forty years, Billy Graham answered, “I will preach less and study more!”

10. Is he SECTARIAN?

Beware of preachers who exclusively emphasize any one particular truth instead of teaching the “whole” counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Overemphasis of any one facet of doctrine invariably leads to eccentricity and causes imbalance (Prov 25:16). Pastors are to diligently watch over the flock but they must not overcontrol the people. The sheep must have the freedom to go “in and out” to find pasture (Jn 10:9). No single preacher or denomination has all the truth. We need to learn from each other. Make sure your leader embraces other men of God and encourages spiritual unity and ministerial partnership. The passionate longing of Jesus for “one flock and one shepherd” must be our goal to work towards (Jn 10:16b).

As a minister of God’s Word I pray, “Lord, Enable me to be a leader after Your own heart to equip Your people fulfil Your will in their lives!”

From Colleges to Villages!

It is observed worldwide that over 50% of the missionaries first become interested in missions and evangelism between the ages of 15 and 24 years. This is what happened to a group of students of the colleges in Karaikudi and around in Tamilnadu between 1963 and 1970. Of the only six Engineering Colleges in Tamilnadu at that time, the one in Karaikudi was least attractive to the youth. The place was dry and the town underdeveloped. As God’s usual method is to choose unknown men from obscure places (Mic 5:2), God threw His fire on us in the Karaikudi campus.

About a dozen of us from the colleges of Engineering, Arts, Teachers Training and Physical Education gathered daily from six to seven-thirty in the evening for self-examination, Bible meditation and group intercession. The Lord by His Spirit planted a burden in our hearts for the unreached, untouched and unchurched. Reading of missionary biographies added fuel to fire. A passion for

“other sheep” (Jn 10:16) and “other places” (Lk 4:42,43) gripped us. We realised we must do more than just praying. We chose village evangelism as our main activity. The following observations about the villagers inspired and invited us to them.

1. Villagers are simple in their thinking and lifestyle because they are not affected by the sophistication and complexity of urban life.
2. Villagers in general are less hypocritical than city-dwellers. Their response is not formal.
3. Indian villagers are known for their loving hospitality. Even the poorest of the poor will come forward with “water for feet and oil for head!”
4. Because 80% of Christian money and manpower is spent in cities and towns which hold only 20% of the country’s population, villages are a virgin soil. Therefore the harvest is always better.
5. Less educated and less civilized people get easily excited about the Good News (1 Cor 1:26,27).
6. Villagers have more free time than their urban counterparts. Therefore they listen to the message more leisurely.
7. Children in villages come flocking to listen to the visitors! Visiting urbanites are respected as educated and wise.

Our first job was to gather basic informations about the surrounding villages. We made enquiries with the people and collected Taluk and District maps from government offices. After all India lives in villages. Whichever direction we went, there were villages on either side of the highways. We used these informations for prayer and planning.

As students with all our laboratory work, workshop practice and home assignments, we could think of only weekends for outdoor evangelism. We therefore set aside Saturday and Sunday evenings for the same. During the prayer gatherings on the working days, we specifically interceded before the Throne for the weekend ministry. We also used to have fasting prayer on Sunday afternoons. The Lord stirred and strengthened us through His promises.

Because Christ has commanded us to go into “all” the world to preach to “every” person, we didn’t wait for an E-Mail from Heaven as to which village we should go. But the prayer preparation kept our hearts sensitive to spot guidances when we set out to go.

Unless otherwise there was a valid reason, we would never cancel the weekend outreach in villages. Regularity is indispensable for any fruitful ministry.

Some of us had our own bicycles and others hired. My bicycle was the oldest which daddy had got for me for Rs. 45/- in 1963. He could get it so cheap because it had been so badly damaged in an accident that the two wheels could never be aligned! We carried Testaments and tracts in shoulder bags and bicycle baskets.

Bicycling or walking to villages for evangelism is still most effective. No doubt we can cover more villages and save time if we use fourwheelers. But this gives an impression in many villages that we are foreign-funded agencies. We advise our missionaries to leave the vans on the main roads and walk to the villages as far as possible.

Jesus “walked” to the villages and towns. He walked even on water! He taught His disciples some of the profoundest truths about the Kingdom while walking through fields and by seashores. Youth should not be

addicted to motorised vehicles. Save yourself from the curse of the comforts of this age. At the command of the Spirit, Evangelist Philip “ran” to overtake the chariot of the Ethiopian official in the Gaza desert. For his return journey, the Holy Spirit gave him a free flight! (Acts 8:26-40).

We made a megaphone out of tinsheet because we could not afford a battery-operated one. Our musical instruments were a drum, a tambourine and a pair of cymbals. None of us was a musician!

On arriving at a village, we would divide ourselves into two by two and each pair would take up a street. A loving smile and simple enquiries about their welfare usually brought the villagers out of their hesitation to converse with us, strangers. If an old person or a sick man was lying in the verandah or open air, we would sit by his bed and make loving enquiries. This was usually a starting point to talk to the entire family. “How is the harvest this year? How about your cattle? Where do your children study? Do you have a hospital here?” These are matters which villagers are interested in. We found the conversational type evangelism most effective. How naturally Jesus developed the subject of Living Water for the Samaritan woman! (Jn 4).

One team would visit the village headman (Mt 10:11). On several occasions these headmen invited us to preach from temple courtyards! Community binding is strong in villages. We must not dilute our message to please men, but at the same time we should not antagonize anyone. In our enthusiasm at the beginning we sometimes tried to preach the “whole” gospel to the “entire” village in the “very first” instance. But this didn’t work. We then learnt to do the job in stages. The first one or two visits could be just to establish contacts and build rapport.

In most of the villages there was atleast a handful of people who at one time or other had listened to a gospel broadcast. Such folks were delighted to see us.

After about an hour of door-to-door visitation in the streets, we would gather in a common place and start singing simple gospel songs. We avoided songs about “Zion” and “Jerusalem” and Hebrew words like “Hallelujah.” These would be Greek and Latin to the non-Christian villagers! We nearly always had good gatherings, especially from the families we had personally visited.

Instead of singing all the seven stanzas of a song at a stretch, we broke in between once or twice and preached short sermons of three or five minutes. The ultimate message was—

We are lost;
Jesus is the Way.
We are in error;
Jesus is the Truth.
We are dead in sin;
Jesus is the Life.

For college students, it was rather difficult to speak a simple and colloquial language. But in course of time we improved. We found that people understood the message better if we used simple illustrations. Sometimes we played skits. Sunday School roll pictures were useful.

When one of us started to preach, others would close their eyes and be murmuring prayers. We later found that the villagers were not comfortable with this practice because they thought that we were chanting some *mantra* to cast a magic spell on them! We therefore stopped this “superspiritual” practice and kept our eyes open and faces pleasant towards the audience, and appeared normal and natural!

After proclaiming the Gospel, we would call the people to lift up their hands or come forward if they were willing to receive Jesus. Sometimes the response would be encouraging and many times it wouldn't be. But we would remind ourselves of Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 and go on labouring. We are not called to Christianize the world but to evangelize it!

We would then invite the sick for prayer. If we found them hesitant, as was the case mostly, we would go near them offering prayer. When they watched what and how we prayed, they would relax.

Demon-possession was common in villages. Being totally inexperienced, we the collegians at first were quite hesitant to deal with the demonized. But as we studied how the seventy disciples of Jesus were taken by surprise when demons obeyed them, we ventured. The Lord honoured the frail faith of us "babes" (Lk 10:17-24). We realised that God had not given us a spirit of fear but of power (2 Tim 1:7,8).

When we left a village, several people with folded hands would request us to visit them again. Youngsters would come with us as far as to the main road to send us off. If we found keen candidates who could read, we introduced a Bible Correspondence Course to them. As students we had our limitations, but we did as much follow-up as we could. We visited certain responsive villages frequently and introduced the seekers to the nearest churches.

We also came across a group of lepers and committed ourselves to visit them once a week. We used to buy eatables for them from our pocket money. These outcasts became our good friends. Some of them regained the lost sensation on their dead flesh after prayer. One elderly Christian told

us, "Because as young people you are so lovingly ministering to these untouchables, God will bless your future with great rewards!" Now after about thirtyfive years, each of us from that team can testify to the accuracy of those prophetic words.

As far as I can remember, Seminars on Evangelism or Soulwinners Training Camps were rare in the 1960s. But the Lord in His rich mercy and sovereign grace chose us and trained our hands and fingers for His work. True we made mistakes, but we learnt by doing. Most of today's activities of the Blessing Youth Mission were carried out spontaneously in a miniature scale by the Karaikudi student teams in the 60s, eventhough the Mission was founded only in 1971. "Who can despise the day of small things?" (Zech 4:10).

If you are Called ...

Dear young Friend,

Congratulations for your instant response to the missionary call! Hundreds and thousands listen to the missionary challenge. But only a sparse number volunteers to commit for the missionary cause. You are one of them!

Never think you came forward just emotionally. It is God who actually plants holy desires inside us (Phil 2:23). The stirrings in the heart when you read or hear the Word must be taken seriously. That's how God begins to speak. These two Scripture verses explain this truth—

“Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out... The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart” (Prov 20:5,27).

Numerous respondents to the missionary call go back vague, not knowing how to proceed. I want to take you

through four simple steps to materialise your call. They form an acronym, **C-A-L-L**.

C-onsecrate

A-sk

L-earn

L-eave

Consecrate!

God is not looking for great vessels but clean ones. Sanctification is the primary preparation to enter God's work (2 Tim 2:21).

When God called Abraham, He said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless... I will make you exceedingly fruitful” (Gen 17:1-6).

There was an emphasis of personal holiness in God's call of Moses to ministry. God spoke symbolically to him, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground... Come now, I will send you” (Ex 3:4,5,10).

Following the miracle catch of fish, Peter confessed, “I am a sinful man, O Lord!” Jesus encouraged him, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men” (Lk 5:8-10).

The commissioning message to Paul through Ananias was, “You will be His witness to all men... Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the Name of the Lord” (Acts 22:15,16).

Dear friend, search your heart before God. Make honest confession of your sins. Reconcile with the wronged. Restitute matters wherever necessary. A clear conscience before God and man is indispensable to Christian service (Acts 23:1; 24:16; Rom 14:17).

Ask!

God has called you but you must find out what exactly He wants you to do and where. The Lord will guide you specifically when you like Paul ask Him, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

Don’t expect instant answers. It may be necessary to wait on God for a few weeks or months to know His mind. Have seasons of fasting prayer. Claim the promise: “If anyone wants to do God’s will, he shall know!” (Jn 7:17). It was during a period of fasting prayer and worship that the Holy Spirit gave directions to the first missionary team (Acts 13:1-3).

Both Peter and Paul were called to be missionaries, but their prime target groups were different. Peter was to minister mainly among the Jews, whereas Paul was to go to the non-Jews (Gal 2:9). God’s will for you may be to stay in a particular region to concentrate on one people group, or to be a travelling missionary. We need Church-planting Missionaries, Campus Missionaries, Medical Missionaries, Bible Translators, Missionary Teachers and so on. Find out your aptitude and burden. When there is unconditional yielding, there will be no conflict (Psa 37:5).

Keep your heart open before God sincerely. He will make irresistible impressions on it through His Word and His Spirit. He may further confirm it through the unbiased counsel of friends and elders. God also speaks through dreams, visions and prophecies.

Ask God to anoint you with the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not let His disciples go out as His witnesses until they were filled with this power (Lk 24:47-49; Acts 1:8).

We now move to the third step—

Learn!

The entire New Testament was written by missionaries. The Acts and the Gospels will be of special interest to you. In the Old Testament the biography of Abraham, the conquest of Canaan, etc., have highly practical lessons for a missionary career.

Read atleast a couple of missionary biographies at this time. The step of faith and the spirit of sacrifice in the stories of David Livingstone, William Carey, C.T. Studd, Adoniram Judson, Hudson Taylor, Mary Slessor, Amy Carmichael and Ida Scudder will thrill you (Heb 12:1).

Go through the periodicals of missionary organisations. Attend missionary camps and conferences. Visit mission fields. There’s nothing like seeing. “When Jesus SAW the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them” (Mt 9:36). He urged His disciples, “Lift up your eyes and look at the fields” (Jn 4:35). Missions arrange outreach programmes for non-fulltimers in mission fields during vacation. Join one of them. A number of missionaries in Blessing Youth Mission received specific guidance during such field exposure.

Be active in soulwinning and evangelism right where you are—in the Campus, in the neighbourhood, among patients and prisoners, and so on. Charity begins at home. There’s no substitute for this kind of training. God does not take lazy bones to regions beyond.

Learn bicycling, driving, swimming, cooking, first-aid, etc. Improve your spoken English. If you are a South Indian, learn Hindi. Finish your college education. The learning of Moses and Paul was handy in their ministries. Short-term courses on Discipleship, Bible Introduction and Missions are conducted by various ministries. Make use of them.

Dr. Warren Webster, a missionary in Pakistan for 15 years, says, “The test of time has demonstrated that those with graduate training are generally more flexible, better able to cope with changing situations, and better equipped to rise to positions of leadership. Well-trained people usually have a basic orientation to life that is necessary for a lifetime of effective work. They’ve gained the tools for learning on their own. They’re more likely to continue to read, to study, and most importantly, to grow mentally and spiritually.” To this I add, Amen!

Finally,

Leave!

It is said, “The first step to becoming a missionary is taking the first step!” This is a crucial step. It is one of faith.

Don’t expect a blueprint from God for your future. He simply places the compass in your hands and shows you one step at a time. Abraham the first cross-cultural missionary obeyed the voice of God and “went out, not knowing where he was going” (Heb 11:8).

Not many parents will send their son or daughter happily to the mission field. Tell them firmly but politely of your decision. If you love your parents or family folks more than the Lord Jesus, you are not fit to be His disciple. Though difficult you will have to allow the “sword” to cut through the cozy domestic arrangements, and free you for God. You should not be surprised if well-meaning family members become your worst enemies (Mt 10:34-37).

This step also involves material sacrifice. No doubt God will faithfully supply you the “daily bread” and necessary clothing (Mt 6:11,31,32). But you cannot have the luxurious comforts of a secular employee (1 Cor 4:9-13). Nevertheless God will reward you duly, in His own way, for all the comforts you forsake (Lk 18:28-30).

Delay complicates matters. A man wanted to stay back until his aged father died, so he could conduct the last rites before stepping out to serve God fulltime. But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead” (Mt 8:21,22). This simply means, “There will always be people around to bury the dead! Duty to the living is more important than duty to the dead!” If you keep waiting for a favourable situation, you will never move (Eccl 11:4).

If you are in the marriageable age, seek a partner who has a kindred missionary vision. Drop-outs because of wrong choice in marriage are too many.

Collect the brochures of missionary organisations and study their objectives, activities and doctrine. Prayerfully choose one organisation and send an application. If you are not able to choose a Mission by yourself, write your details to India Missions Association (48 First Main Road, East Shenoy Nagar, Chennai 600 030) for help. They will guide you. Meet with Mission leaders and have a chat. Resist the temptation to be a freelancer. Team work and recognized leadership are for your own safety and effectiveness.

Missionary work is strenuous. If you have a serious ailment, do consult a doctor for medical fitness. You must not become a liability to the Mission you join.

Talk to your pastor to arrange a send-off meeting for you in the Church. Share your testimony with the congregation and request regular prayer support. Have the pastor and elders lay their hands on you and “separate you for the work to which God has called you” (Acts 13:2,3).

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you as you GO!

Why we Do what we Do

(A team of youth interviews the author during the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Blessing Youth Mission in 1996.)

RAMESH: Annan, we deeply appreciate all your efforts to raise nextline leaders. We youngsters greatly admire the revolutionary acts which you and the other top leaders of BYM are performing. But at times we don't understand the philosophy behind certain practices. If you tell us only "what," you are just disciplining us. Only when you teach us "why," you are disciplining us. If the "why" is not answered, our movement in course of time may become a monument. We thought that the Silver Jubilee Celebrations was the right occasion to ask you some questions on behalf of the thousands of our supporters and friends. Seated here with me are ten young friends representing the future generation of leaders for this Mission. They are Duke Jeyaraj, Helen Alice, Godwin Kingsley, Sumangali Sasirekha, Mohana krishnan, Sylvia Shanthakumar, Samuel Pragasam, Christina Anne, Alfred Ebenezer and Cynthia Johnson. Each one has a question. Let's begin with Duke.

DUKE: *Uncle, when I entered this campus up the Sitteri Hills, I noticed something quite unusual. I saw the dedication tablets of three buildings. In each of them, the purpose of that building is clearly stated. But on none of them is the name of the person who dedicated the structure inscribed. The same is the case with our headquarters buildings in Vellore. I'm sure these buildings must have been declared open by prominent servants of God. Why are their names conspicuously absent?*

STANLEY: First of all I must appreciate your power of observation. Rarely do young people pause for a while in front of a building to read the dedication tablet before entering in. Your keen sense of observation is one of the indispensable qualities for leadership. Thank you for the question.

Many buildings, especially in the religious circles, are abused because people forget the original vision and intention with which they were built. The Jerusalem temple is an example. Jesus had to remind the abusers that it was meant to be a house of prayer. There was anything but prayer when Jesus entered it. Therefore we think that the most important information on a dedication tablet is the purpose of the respective building. The name of the person is secondary.

If we have the practice of engraving the names of persons, we will have to be looking out for celebrities and dignitaries to pray and open the buildings. Statistically speaking, most of those who are rich in faith are the poorest of the poor or the very ordinary people. When such persons pray and cut the ribbon or open a door, there would be a greater blessing on the occasion and the structure. We are also blessed with such godly donors, whether individuals or

families, who would not desire their names found anywhere in the buildings. The opening ceremonies of buildings are becoming more and more formal, losing their meaning and significance. It may surprise you to know that some of the government buildings up this hills were declared open by certain ministers and politicians who didn't even see these buildings! The dedication stones with their names were taken to public meetings elsewhere where these dignitaries "opened the veil" of the tablets on their tables! The stones were then brought to site and embedded in the buildings.

HELEN: *Many pastors find our magazine and books a great blessing. They use them in their sermons also. I personally feel that your understanding of the life and ministry of a church is much deeper than many pastors of today. Why should BYM not start establishing churches, even if there are other churches, so we can demonstrate Biblical patterns?*

STANLEY: This reasonable suggestion has come from several men of God. Once there was not a single English charismatic assembly in Vellore and a senior preacher made to me the same suggestion to cater particularly to the needs of the growing non-Tamil medical staff community there. But we decided not to deviate from God's calling concerning us. Our original vision was stated as, Revival among youngsters and Evangelism through youngsters. It was very specific. In the sixties and early seventies, the youth in the Church were the most untapped potential. There were keen young people with latent talents and dormant gifts in every church. Except perhaps a weekly hourlong youth meeting following the Sunday service, there were not many activities and programmes for the youth to utilise their energy and channelise their zeal. In order to challenge and address these young people of all churches, we needed an interdenominational platform. After 25 years we still

find that the youth in our Churches are not sufficiently addressed or challenged. Very few evangelists and organisations minister among youth. One reason could be that the revenue in this field is poor.

Ideally speaking, the existing local churches must take care of all pioneer evangelism. But except in the first century, churches worldwide have failed here. Most of the cross-cultural missions, national or international, which had been used of the Lord in planting churches in the remote areas, have been interdenominational. There are too many issues involved in pioneer evangelism in distant places for local churches to handle. It needs cooperative efforts. The days of para-Church organisations are not over yet. These transdenominational platforms serve as a scaffolding. Only after the building is completed, the scaffoldings can be dismantled.

We in BYM are also called to be a prophetic voice not just to one church but all the churches which constitute the Body of Christ. We can fulfill this calling fearlessly only if we stay past denominational barriers and boundaries.

At the same time we do not want to give the slightest impression that para-church missions are superior to local churches. The former are just an extension arm of the latter, to function as a supplement and not a substitute. That's why it's a firm policy of BYM not to hold any regular local programme on Sunday mornings where there are churches. People should fellowship with their respective Churches.

GODWIN: *Why did you change the name of our organisation from Full Gospel Young Men Association to Blessing Youth Mission? Some people say that we have come down from our earlier*

convictions. I myself wonder whether we are Pentecostal or non-Pentecostal!

STANLEY: Thank you, Godwin, for this delicate question. I'm happy you asked that.

When we named this ministry at its inception as FGYMA, the words "Full Gospel" had a reference to the content of the message we were proclaiming. We picked up these words from Apostle Paul's words in the Epistle to the Romans: "When I come to you, I shall come in the FULLNESS of the blessing of the GOSPEL of Christ" (15:29). But in course of time, the words "full gospel" picked up a denominational connotation. The words "full gospel" and "pentecostal" became synonymous. Being interdenominational, a name change therefore became a necessity.

The word "Blessing" became a better substitute which is found in the same verse quoted above. The promise of the Lord to the founders of this ministry when they had been waiting before Him in 1970 was, "There shall be showers of Blessing!" Our magazine was called "*Blessing*" and our programmes as Blessing Retreats and Camps. The double promise of God to Abraham—"Blessing to you; Blessing through you" (Gen 12:2)—was appealing to us very much.

The women's wing went by the name the Full Gospel Young Women Association. For administrative reasons, only the FGYMA had been registered with the government, but the FGYWA was functioning as a sister organisation. By introducing the word "Youth" instead of "Young Men" and "Young Women" we could conveniently integrate and coordinate the activities of both groups. And the word "Mission" appeared more dynamic than the word "Association." Hence in 1987 we became "Blessing Youth Mission."

You have raised a question regarding our "earlier convictions." We are Biblical in doctrine, Pentecostal by experience, and Interdenominational by stand. There's no change in this. But as we grow and mature, our understanding of any doctrine or experience deepens and broadens. Take for example, the question of speaking in tongues. In our early enthusiasm we had condemned people who did not speak in tongues. Not so now. We still encourage folks seek the Lord for this beautiful devotional gift when they are baptised with the Spirit, but we never judge anyone as not filled with the Spirit just because he or she doesn't talk in tongues. "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Cor 13:11).

Our position is somewhat difficult. The non-Pentecostals are afraid that we might steal their sheep. On the other hand the Pentecostals are angry that we don't supply them sheep from other folds. We are like a drum beaten on both sides, but we bless both sides!

SUMANGALI: *I am a reader of the Blessing magazine for quite some years. I find that the appeal for funds in this periodical is minimum. People say that it's because we are heavily funded from abroad. Is it true?*

STANLEY: It's quite appropriate that you've asked this question before this audience which has a wide cross-section of our supporters.

One of our deep convictions is that when we faithfully sow spiritual blessings on people, we will bountifully reap material benefits from them. Both in our magazine and meetings, maximum space and time are allotted to impart

spiritual blessings and teach Biblical truths to people. Most of our partners are those who have been blessed, in some way or the other, through our ministry. We are taught by our Lord that we must seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness. He has promised that the material blessings would naturally follow.

You must be quite aware of the high pressure appeals made for funds in religious periodicals of the day. All sorts of schemes are invented to trap the innocent and ignorant. This brings dishonour to the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Christ is “wounded in the house of His friends” (Zech 13:6). In Christ’s time, only one out of twelve was an Iscariot. But now eleven out of twelve seem to belong to that tribe! We want to steer clear of this religious commercialism.

One of my saddest observations in international conferences is the hunt by foreign agencies for Indian ministers who would supply them with regular photographs, and the search by Indian ministers for foreign agencies who would send them regular funds. In the name of partnership, many indigenous ministries have sold their birthrights. We accept overseas offerings only if no strings are attached and our freedom in Christ to move with the Spirit not curbed. The Christian Aid Mission of USA and Indienhilfe of Germany are the two overseas agencies who are working with us happily on these lines. But over 80% of our support still comes from Indians.

No contribution is too big to be carefully spent and nothing is too small to be appreciated. But we would rather have 100 persons give Rs 10/- each than one person give Rs 1000/-. Moneywise both are the same, but in the former you have the involvement of 100 persons whereas in the latter you have the involvement of just one person. Till

date we don’t have a single fulltime promotional worker to mobilize funds. It’s all done by volunteers sitting here before us. Three cheers to them!

Whether you say that the cup is half-full or half-empty, both are the same. But the first statement leads to praise and the next to prayer. Praise is more heavenly than prayer, isn’t it? True we have many needs but we highlight what God has given rather than what we still need. Because we acknowledge more and ask less, we need not fear that people would mistake us and reduce their giving. The contrary is true.

Am I clear?

(In the Silver Jubilee Celebrations we were so engrossed in praise to God that we forgot to take any offering. But on return to the hq office in Vellore we received two drafts from a South Indian family for Rs. 3,00,000/- each without designation. Jehovah-Jireh!)

MOHAN: I have come across in our Magazine the solicitation for funds for capital expenditures like buildings, vehicles and equipments. I have noticed that sometimes it takes a year or more to raise enough money for these projects. Why don’t we go for bank loans and make the facilities available quicker to accelerate the ministry?

STANLEY: Anything can be purchased these days with bank loans. Banks are looking for prospective loanees so they may earn huge interests. Here lies a subtle temptation for Christian ministries to miss God’s will for them. When there’s money, we will pay; when there’s no money, we will pray! A facility that’s good for one ministry may not be God’s perfect will for another. It is therefore necessary to resort to a season of prayer for what we feel we need rather

than rush to a bank agent for discussion. Anything we acquire without divine sanction will become a burden rather than a blessing. It will turn out to be a white elephant consuming our time and resources. We cannot easily dispose it of either. Buying is easy but selling is difficult.

God's delays are opportunities for our development. What we give our daughter Evangeline now we refused some years ago when she asked for it. God does answer prayers but not always instantly. Our Heavenly Father knows not only *what* we need but also *when* we need them. He delays until we are mature enough to handle the blessing. Therefore waiting in prayer for a year or more for a van or a building is not wasted time. We must learn the "patience of Jesus Christ" if we are to really work for His Kingdom (Rev 1:9).

Deficit spending is an addictive habit. If you borrow money for one project, your first thought for the next project would be again for a bank loan. When you are not able to clear the loan in time, you are in trouble and you go to the people with sympathy appeals. Preachers who habitually operate their projects on bank loans invariably become beggars on TV screens, magazine pages and crusade platforms. Ironically these are the ones who specialize in "faith" teaching. This Western culture is spreading to India also. God is not responsible for our acts of presumption in the name of faith. We are taught by our Lord to count the cost "before" building or battling (Lk 14:28-32).

SYLVIA: *Why don't we enroll as missionaries all those who respond to the missionary call in our meetings?*

STANLEY: Hi, I remember you responded to the missionary call in one of our missionary conventions. Perhaps you legitimately worry whether you would not be absorbed in

BYM after your studies! Your question however brings before me several basic issues which I would like to explain.

To be a faithful Bible teacher, one must rise above his denominational or group interests. The Holy Spirit who bestows on us the anointing to preach or teach will be grieved if we minister with any ulterior motive. All these years I have never given a missionary call specifically for people to join BYM. It has been always a general call to go fulltime for the expansion work of the Kingdom. It is similar to the call for water baptism—which is not a call to be baptized by a particular preacher but to obey God. We therefore share the lists of missionary call respondents with other Missions also. After all we are not building empires for ourselves but a Kingdom for God! All the gains ultimately go to Him who is the Owner!

The Blessing Youth Mission has a two-fold vision: Revival and Evangelism. Revival precedes evangelism. Missionary evangelism is actually the outcome of revival. Revival begets evangelism. We do not want to change this order. Several other missionary organisations in India are primarily focussing on missions and evangelism. This may be their call. But as far as BYM is concerned, our first commitment is to work for Holy Spirit revival in the churches and then challenge and channelise the Christians into missionary involvement. Our revival activities include Revival Camps, Outpouring Rallies, Study Seminars, Training Programmes, Literature Publication, etc. If we keep on increasing the number of church planting missionaries, we will lose the balance between the two sides of our calling. Churches would be deprived of a solid revival ministry to them. Unless the existing churches are revived, we cannot preserve the fruits of pioneer evangelism. If we are just statistically minded, we will neglect revival activities, because unlike the quantitative church growth the qualitative church growth cannot be measured.

The BYM is essentially called to be a lay movement. In fact we had no fulltime worker during the first three years. Enrollment of fulltimers was a later development for the needs of remote places. Otherwise we are primarily concerned to make every Christian a soulwinner and an active neighbourhood evangelist. Eventhough we now have only 250 fulltimers, I am afraid most of the BYMers are spending too much time in mobilising prayer and funds for missionary work and too little time in personal evangelism. This is unhealthy. To get back to our original emphasis, we are ready to sacrifice anything. The amazing growth of the early Church was due to every-member-participation in direct evangelism. When leaders of a Mission drain themselves with the needs and problems of the fulltime missionaries, they are left with little freshness for revival ministry.

There's another crucial point to be noted here. The Bible speaks of the "measure" of faith and grace to each man. We must not go beyond this. In my opinion, 150 to 200 missionaries are a manageable size for an average Mission. Already Missionaries suffer from a lack of pastoral care for them. I would vote for five BYMs with 200 missionaries each rather than for a single BYM with 1000 missionaries. Those who don't appreciate this view now will understand it later.

SAM: *Annan, why did you stop Blesso, Revivo, Summer Bible Study and such major annual programmes in Tamilnadu? I feel that unless we restart them, our support base will be weakened.*

STANLEY: As a businessman no wonder you are concerned about the financial needs of the Mission.

The Tamilnadu Blesso and Revivo Camps were occupying us fully for atleast six months in a year because

we left no stone unturned to make these programmes most useful to the delegates. When we also had the Study Programmes in Summer, we were left with very little time for such revival programmes in the non-Tamil States. This partiality was not justifiable.

When we had launched out these programmes in Tamilnadu in the seventies for Christians here, the Pongal holidays meant Blesso and the Pooja holidays meant Revivo. Anyone who desired to be baptized in water and in the Spirit and to get his spiritual batteries recharged, immediately thought about these camps. But so many ministries have come up now which conduct similar 3-day or weeklong revival programmes. The Tirupathur meetings are an example. Thousands are water-baptised and Spirit-baptised there and catch a spirit of prayer. Praise God for this.

But a number of Christian leaders are concerned that solid Bible teaching is absent in most of these camps. One of them said that weeds started growing fast in Tamilnadu after the Blesso and Revivo camps were stopped. This may be true, but with only twelve months in a year we wonder what we can do in this situation. The exodus of our senior leaders to non-Tamil States started in 1987. When Lilian and I decided to move out in 1988, there were several calls and letters from well-meaning friends requesting us to reconsider our decision. One of their apprehensions was the concern you have raised regarding finance. But the fact is that the financial support from Tamilnadu did only increase after we left the State. More and more lay leaders have been raised during the last 8 years. Our tradition not to have fulltime promotional workers was further strengthened. In other words, our Tamil partners who had been enjoying the privilege of being blessed have realized their responsibility of becoming a blessing. This is what missiology is all about!

God's will for mankind since the beginning has been expansion by decentralisation and distribution. Babel was a plan against this purpose of God. That's why He shattered their work. The Jerusalem Church didn't move out into all Judea and Samaria until the Lord scattered them by persecution. In a country like India, it is quite unsafe to keep just one headquarters in one place for any Mission. We know not when and wherefrom the enemy's bomb-shell will be thrown on us. We must have several headquarter-like units in the country. Do you know that all the Generals of an army don't stay together in one place or travel by a single vehicle?

Unless we plant ourselves in diverse cultures, we will become too regional instead of being national or global. The Tamil blood is good but we need also the Bengali blood to get poets like Tagore and the Punjabi blood to get apostles like Sadhu Sundersingh. Without such infusion in our bloodstream, the ministry will become undimensional and lack variety.

I urge you young people to seriously consider the non-Tamil States for your future. Tamilnadu is already congested!

CHRISTY: *The Blessing magazine is such a blessing. Why not make it more attractive? Why don't we print the photographs of the authors of the articles?*

STANLEY: Except for one or two special issues a year we are unable to go for four colour print for economic reasons. With the skyrocketing prices of printing materials, it's almost impossible to run a magazine on subscriptions alone. We do not desire to draw too much money from the contributions received for ministerial activities either. So many Christian magazine publishers are in debt and several

have discontinued their periodicals. One reason is that they spent too much money on colour and cover. The *Blessing* magazine is now published in ten languages and it's quite a commitment. The Lord has endorsed our economic policy in magazine production and enabled us to send out this periodical regularly month after month all these 25 years without any break. Praise Him!

There's nothing wrong in printing the photographs of the authors. In fact the readers can visualize some personalness when they see the author's photograph. But we are sick of the crazy Hollywood trend in Christian magazines. I started reading *Herald of His Coming* as a student from 1962. It had neither colour nor cover, but its rich content far excelled the scores of magazines I received from the West. For many years I longed to see a photograph of this monthly's editor and associate editor, W.C. Moore and Sarah Foulkes Moore, but in vain. Another person whose life influenced my thinking greatly was Amy Carmichael. At her deathbed she desired that only a bird bath be erected where she would be buried and no tomb built. She would never like her photograph to be published or displayed anywhere. Instead of learning from such truly "great" men and women, how sad we are copying the cut-out culture of politicians and cine stars!

If you have carefully observed, even when we publish photographs of our meetings or activities, the focus is on "what" rather than "who." Dear young friends, when you click group photos of a class or seminar, be revolutionary in the seating arrangement. It is not necessary that the teachers and leaders sit at the centre. Mix up everybody and make the picture look natural and normal. Crack a joke when the camera is about to be clicked. Don't become frozen-stiff before the camera!

I share all these bits with you because I see a number of you as potential writers, editors and photographers for the publishing ministry of BYM. Duke is already editing our *Missionary Kids* paper. Sylvia is doing B.A. in English literature and Cynthia M.Phil. Remember what I say and the Lord will give you wisdom in all things.

EBY: *Why don't we introduce the leaders and speakers more elaborately in our meetings? I had brought one of my friends to a Blesso Camp in which as usual you were the theme speaker. After the 3-day programme was over he asked me, "Did Brother Stanley attend the Camp?" Ha, Ha!*

STANLEY: Son, there's too much of theatrical performance in religious meetings these days. Earlier, in Churches, the focus was on the pulpit, but now on the stage. In the Old Testament temple, the priests were facing the altar, but now the audience. Previously it was worship but now a performance. We are camera-oriented! In the early Church it was neither an altar nor a stage, but a table around which they gathered to emphasize the centrality of Christ. C. H. Spurgeon warned of this present trend even in his times. But people belittled him as an alarmist. It is perhaps as an open opposition against the current practices, we in BYM have gone to the other extreme which is also not right. Thank you for pointing this to us. Hereafter we shall introduce our leaders and speakers appropriately.

Not only the speakers or leaders, but also the influential and affluent people are not given prominence in our gatherings. Except for age and such considerations, everyone is treated alike. In fact many professors, pastors and senior government officials who attend our programmes are happy that they are not treated different so they could sit with everyone else and receive maximum benefit from

the ministry of the Word. I'm sure you are aware of apostle James' warning that we must not give special treatment to "a man with gold rings and in expensive clothes" compared to "a poor man in rags" (Js 2:1-6). I am not against rich people, but during my 30 years of ministry I have found that the poor are more reliable and dependable than the rich, barring a few exceptions. We also don't waste time with that boring item called "vote of thanks!" The moment you say it is time for vote of thanks, people understand it as the time to get up and go! Our vote of thanks normally takes the form of a prayer like this: "O God, reward in public all those who prayed, laboured and contributed for this programme in secret. May the delegates become a blessing to others. Amen!"

There's another related matter I would like to mention here. The two laudable purposes of any meeting are the worship of God and the fellowship with people. Any- thing that may disturb these two objectives must be avoided. For example, it's a practice to play loud music or songs during intervals and after the meeting is over. People just cannot talk and fellowship with each other. This must be avoided. The Church should not learn from the world, but the world must learn from the Church.

CYNTHIA: *Uncle, just one more question! Why do you call this ministry as Blessing YOUTH Mission? Now you have greyed almost completely. Are there plans to change the name of the ministry again to suit the old generation?*

STANLEY: Very interesting question! In the first instance this ministry was started *by* young people *for* young people. Eventhough the founding leaders are ageing, we still maintain the youth emphasis. The core of this ministry it not the adult elders who contribute liberally to it but the

energetic youngsters who enthusiastically participate in its activities. Paul, Peter and John were quite “aged” when they wrote their Epistles, but they never failed to address the young people.

Older people will happily attend youth programmes calling themselves “young in spirit,” but which youngster will be interested to attend a programme meant for old people?

We also desire that leadership should be on the shoulders of young people. We are ready to hand over if you are ready to take over. That’s why I have spent so much time with you all this afternoon to explain to you *why we do what we do!*

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Free in Fire!

Dear student friends, let me introduce to you a youth team in the Book of Daniel. This was not a big team in age or number; for they were just four and young (1:6). But they did a great job, and we have a lot to learn from these young men.

1. They kept themselves pure.

No blemish was found in them. They kept themselves so clean that even the presidents and princes, when they sought to find an opportunity against them concerning the kingdom, could find no fault. Daniel, says God’s Word, “was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him” (6:4-5). It was not that they led a sinlessly perfect life, but were constantly guarding their purity by claiming forgiveness through confession of their known sins. (9:19,20).

Your school or college knows that you are one for God and their eyes are always on you to catch you and accuse

you. Same was the plight of these young men. “Certain Chaldeans came near and accused” (3:8). These Chaldeans were their learned peers who were jealous of them. They may even device a situation to draw you to trouble. But keep yourself spotless, faultless and errorless. Make it a regular habit to confess your sins then and there and claim cleansing by the blood of Christ and His promises for victory over sin.

Many religious youth are not studious. This is because they have not realised the importance of education to serve God. God could honour the four young men because they laboured to be “skillful in all wisdom, and knowledge, and understanding science.” Their readiness to learn the Chaldean language made them effective witnesses among the heathen and won the King’s favour (1:4). So God could use them. Neglect of your studies is loss to the Kingdom of God. God honours faithful ones and adds talents to them but the “slothful” He condemns (Mt 25:26,30). When you fail in the exam you can never throw the blame on God. Because it is He who gives knowledge, and skill in learning and wisdom (1:17). If you are faithful in little He will entrust you with much, because He knows what diligence you apply to your studies the same He can expect from you in His service.

2. They took Scripture-based decisions.

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” (1:8). The “But” speaks of the abundance of material available to defile them. In your student days you are exposed to all the vices of the world. It could be movies, novels, cigarettes, sexual sins, drugs, spiritism, lying, stealing, idolatry, etc. But determine in your heart that you would not defile yourself with the portion of the Prince of this world. “How can a young man cleanse his

way? By keeping himself according to Your Word” (Psa 119:9). C.T. Studd (1862-1931) in his old age was found to be turning the pages of his old Bible with the help of a lantern. When asked by a friend what he was doing in the dim light, he answered “I am searching if there is yet any commandment which I have not taken care to obey.”

It is not the mechanical a-chapter-a-day plan but a systematic study of God’s Word that will open your eyes of understanding and keep you from sin. Use a good system of Bible reading to read the Bible once every year. As you meditate let the following questions linger in your thoughts relating to that portion.

Is there any commandment to obey?
Is there any sin to confess?
Is there any promise to embrace?
Is there any moral to learn?
Is there any warning to note?
How is Christ revealed in this passage?
And so on

Mark your Bible and memorise verses. May be as a team you can sit around and recite portions together. As compared to the eight hours or more we spend for text books, God’s Word should hold equal and even prominence in your life. Jesus gave this illustration: “The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not for it was founded on a rock.” And this rock is God’s Word (Mt 7:24,25). The young man Daniel was so thorough in the Scripture that he understood even the number of the years spoken by prophets what today we discard as “hard to understand” (9:2). That led to revelations.

3. They enjoyed mutually submissive fellowship.

These four youngsters were pulled away from their own safe haven and thrown mercilessly in pagan atmosphere. But the close tie they maintained among themselves was the first secret of their victory: It was not 'I' but 'WE' (2:36). They shared their secrets and maintained a bond by praying together (2:17). They functioned as a nucleus for the good of the pagan kingdom. They prayed for the pagan wisemen to be saved! (2:24). They were one with others yet different from them! In other words, they were not secluded but separated. They were in the world "but not of the world." Let love be your motto. Be on the look out to help your unbelieving friends. For a victorious Christian living join a sound fellowship in your school or college. If there is none, start one. Even as God chose Daniel as the leader of the team by His divine wisdom He chooses the leader for a group. Daniel was concerned about the promotion of his team members and considered him one with the group (Dan 2:36,49), while the team members submitted themselves to the authority of their leader and stood par with him in faith.

The snare in fellowships is jealousy when one is blessed with gifts. Here we find the fellow prayer warriors in unison with the leader while the leader blessed with gifts acknowledges, "This secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any of my fellows," thus humbling himself as one in the team (2:30).

The team was not known by its odd ways and manners, nor was branded as eccentric, but it submitted itself to the authority of the rulers. Revolt is shearing today's student world. But a believers' team should be known for its submission to teachers and authorities. The young men were so pleasing to the authorities that the King loved and honoured them (6:14,20,23) and promoted them (3:30).

4. They had a systematic prayer life.

The key to the success of the young men was prayer. When a problem propped up its ugly head they did not immediately sit together to simply discuss it but knelt together to dissolve it. 2:19-23 reveals that any problem dropped them to their knees; 6:10 that no problem would shake them off their knees; 9:2-19 that the more they searched God's Word the more they prayed and understood the heart of God. If you do not steal hours for prayer the world would steal your prayer hours. Set fixed times to pray. David's prayer programme is ideal, i. e. three times a day (Psa 55:17). A good plan to follow is—

Morning — Praise, adoration and worship

Noon — Intercession for yourself, family and friends

Evening — Intercession for the nation, the world, missions, etc.

5. They were bold in witnessing.

You have a great desire to testify and bring many into the saving knowledge of Christ. But you are curbed with doubts, fears, trials and temptations. These four young men were proof that God honours those who honour Him. Their Bible meditation and prayer life served as a spring board for their bold plunge.

Your first doubt is that when you fall in sin how you can testify. Because of your failures you hesitate to testify. Your failure to testify slides you back further more into sin and so the vicious circle goes on. But as Paul admonishes, forget those things which are behind and press forward for the high calling of God (Phil 3:13,14). Bold testimony makes you from sinning difficult.

Secondly, the fear of men paralyses you. You go well prepared to talk to someone but your throat chokes, and

you stand there like a dumb doll. This is every soulwinner's problem. Remember these young men. In front of such a big audience, amidst the mockery of their enemies they declared their faith. They were obliged to the King for their promotion (2:49), yet they budged not to please him when it was a question of obedience to God! (3:16-18). Read the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:28-33. Your parents or teachers may be against your Christian faith but stand firm till the end.

Thirdly, the bigness of the sinful world awes you. But remember the only way to reveal Christ to this sinful world is by testifying boldly. "Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mk 8:38). Our problem is that we are ready to testify boldly to well-behaved, kind boys and girls but not to the tough ones. Take up the challenge.

Fourthly, your personal ego or prestige prevents you from stooping down to your fellow students. To follow Jesus, first of all you must deny yourself (Lk 9:23-26). If Jesus could lower Himself to save the sinful you, can you not stoop down to save your fellow men?

Finally, life's trials stagger you and sweep you off your feet. It is the most powerful of the devil's devices to shut your mouth. When I am so downcast how can I testify? When I suffer from this disease how will my testimony appeal to anyone? A good principle to abide by is, "Our God whom we SERVE is able to deliver us.... Even if He does not..." Whether He delivers or not we will serve Him (Dan 3:17,18). Many times you cry why God allowed a failure or a trial in your life. But remember, God whom you serve is on the Throne!

When the young men Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were thrown bound into the fire, the fourth Young Man—even Christ the Son of God—joined them to make them walk FREE IN FIRE! (3:25). Here is God's promise for you too: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you; when you walk through the fire, you will not be burned!" (Isa 43:2).

Whom to Marry?

Young people are lost in the wilderness due to lack of counsel and guidance in choosing their life partners. The two opposite cultures of East and West confuse the youth in India.

The first marriage was God-arranged. He is deeply interested in this lifetime affair of each of His children. One wall-text reads, *Marry in haste and worry at leisure!* No one can reverse the wrong choice. There are hundreds and thousands of young men and young women who deeply regret their decisions which excluded God and godly counsel.

“Marriages are made in Heaven!” This saying is not absolutely true. Man is given a free will and he is responsible for his decisions. God’s will cannot be found without being sought. “Seek and you shall find.” The emotional element in the marriage affair must be safeguarded by God’s help lest one jumps headlong into

an affair not ordained by God. It is true God is able to restore the loss due to wrong choice, but the process is painful and consequences serious.

I can think of at least seven factors anyone should consider in the choice of the life partner.

1. Spiritual Status

A Christian believer under no circumstance can marry an unbeliever. God's Word is crystal clear on this point both in the Old Testament and the New. "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together" (Dt 22:10). "What part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Cor 6:15). Believers are God's children and the unbelievers have the Devil as their father (Jn 8:42-44). If you a believer marry an unbeliever you will have a tough time with your father-in-law!

Unbelievers are always a majority (Mt 7:13). Leave the unbelieving boys and girls for unbelievers. God has His man or woman for you in His minority. They have God's seed in them. Don't fail to inherit that blessing. There are young people who marry unbelievers with the justification that they are thus winning them to Christ! The fact is there are thousands who have lost their joy of salvation due to such unholy alliance. There may be a few cases of unbelievers married to believers who got saved after marriage. This cannot be generalised.

Also one must beware of conversions *for* marriage! These are generally sham conversions. Jacob was willing to work for even another seven years because of his love for Rachel. It is possible for a boy or a girl in love to go through the ceremonies like Baptism without a real conviction and repentance. Do verify with the local believers and Church elders the spiritual condition of the person proposed to you.

Even if the person is born again it is wiser to find out his or her interests in life. You may be missionary-minded but if the partner is money-minded you are finished. You would desire to go to Gujarat for God and souls but she to Gulf for gold and silver!

2. Physical Appearance

It is not wrong but quite natural to look for a handsome boy or a beautiful girl. Abraham's wife was "a woman of beautiful face." Isaac's wife was "very beautiful to look." Jacob's wife Rachel was "beautiful in appearance!" Christ is going to marry "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph 5:27). But mere physical beauty may be deceptive. "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain" (Prov 31:30).

It is important you check whether the girl is healthy or not. No one is 100% healthy all the time but it is definitely not advisable to marry someone who has a heart disease or a kidney problem. Early rising, child bearing and rearing, domestic responsibilities and all demand good health and strength. Read Proverbs 31:13-25. A knowledge of the medical history of the family to rule out insanity and such hereditary diseases is desirable. Don't marry near relatives like cousins or nieces or nephews. Medical science, based on statistics and research, strongly discourages such consanguinous marriages. Congenital diseases are common among such marriages. Let not our children suffer because we obey some grandmother's wish!

Height is not a major factor but there are boys who develop a complex later if the girl is taller or too short.

A note of warning here: If you keep physical appearance alone as the ultimate deciding factor, you may miss many a godly boy and a godly girl! Remember, beauty is only skin-deep!

3. Educational Qualifications

The Bible takes for granted that the husband is responsible for the decisions and the wife to learn from him (1 Cor 14:35). Wisdom and academic education cannot be equated but one must avoid problems of inferiority or superiority complex to arise between the spouses. Intellectual compatibility is definitely important. There are young men highly educated who marry girls who have not even completed high school and get into the difficulty of communication. The partners are not able to meet at any level to discuss things and issues of life. Finally they start ignoring the spouse and functioning independently. The partner feels miserable that she is an unwanted and useless person. Young man, do pray for a “wise” woman who can build your home!

At the same time, when girls are highly educated, most of them find it difficult to be at home as a housewife. God’s ideal for women is to be house-keepers, being available with all freshness at home to love their husbands and children (Tit 2:4,5). But the economic pressures of the day drive the woman to seek an employment outside home to supplement the husband’s income. In this situation the children are the usual victims. Also the husband who comes home from work seeking a relaxed atmosphere usually doesn’t find it. Irritations and tensions are the inevitable result.

4. Financial Status

It is advisable to look for a girl more or less of your financial status. If the girl is from a very affluent family, she may find it difficult to be happy with your standard of living. Too many demands by her will create unnecessary tension.

The bride and groom and their families giving gifts to one another out of love is commendable. Abraham sent lot of jewels through his servant to the bride of Isaac. Jesus got gifts from His Father for His Bride the Church, and He comes back with rewards to take her home. But the dowry system prevalent in India is both unscriptural and illegal. In one of the recent national telecasts, titled *Brides are not for Burning*, it was clearly pointed out that most of the bridal suicides are due to dowry disputes. Again most of the transaction in the dowry system is with black money. There are many godly girls and their parents in tears because the matrimonial market is so demanding. It is not right for young men to throw the entire blame on their parents. There are many who are poor economically but rich spiritually (Js 2:5). The Biblical fact is that among those who are called to be God’s children there are “not many mighty, nor many affluent” (1 Cor 1:26).

God’s children with a vision for the lost cannot spend extravagantly for the conduct of marriages. A simple marriage in the presence of “Jesus and His disciples”— God and His people — is commendable. Jesus manifested His glory in a marriage ceremony where the parties were perhaps too poor to provide sufficient wine to the guests!

5. Cultural Background

Casteism is a plague both in the country and the Church. “There is neither Jew nor Greek; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28; Rom 10:12; Col 3:11).

In India a marriage means more than two persons coming together. It includes families. Therefore one cannot ignore the possibilities of clashes and misunderstanding arising purely out of cultural differences. We certainly don’t advocate that everyone should marry cross-culturally, but

rejecting a proposal solely on the grounds of so-called caste difference is definitely wrong. I call this the backward mentality of the forward community, so-called.

6. Age Difference

Adam was older than Eve! This makes submission, obedience and dependence easy for the wife, and love and understanding for the husband. Abraham was older than Sarah and she called him, “Lord!” Equal age may be alright but it is not advisable for a young man to marry someone elder to him. There will be problems if she is too young also.

It is advised that boys marry before they are thirty and girls before twentyfive. Medical science does not advise a woman to bear child after she is thirtyfive. This is a rough guideline. Due to certain family responsibilities sometimes one has to marry late.

7. God’s Will

Except point number one, the rest are not the commandments of the Lord but counsel based on observation and experience. “I think I also have the Spirit of God!” (1 Cor 1:40). It is not always possible to find a partner to perfectly satisfy all the requirements stated above. Young people may use these as general guidelines. “Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things” (2 Tim 2:7).

The Bible gives you freedom to “marry whom you wish, only in the Lord” (1 Cor 7:39). Let anyone make a proposal but no one is to tell you this is the person God wants you to marry. Don’t go by the so-called prophecies! Commit the matter to the Lord and wait on Him. He will bring it to pass. You must have a personal assurance of the Lord in

your heart before you take someone’s hand or give yours. This is a matter of life— and death!

Avoid undue anxiety. Isaac was out in the fields for “meditation” when the servant had gone on the mission to find him a bride (Gen 24:63). When someone is proposed to you, after the main factors of consideration are sorted out, resort to a season of prayer. Get the other party also praying. See if there is peace in both your hearts over the matter. Meet with the candidate once or twice and talk over. Don’t get emotional. Avoid physical contact before marriage. Have a formal engagement in the presence of parents and elders. Start corresponding with each other and prepare yourselves for marriage.

And come to the Church on time!

God and Man

- ❑ Man cannot lift us to a place where God has not taken us, nor can man bring us down from where God has kept us! (Psa 75:6,7)
- ❑ The best effort of man cannot earn salvation; God alone can save a man! (Mt 19:25,26)
- ❑ Man can be against us only to the extent of killing us and nothing beyond, but it is God who promotes us to Heaven or punishes us in Hell! (Mt 10:28)
- ❑ Man condemns, but God justifies! (Rom 8:33,34)
- ❑ What God speaks is absolutely and always true, but man mixes up truth and lie! (Rom 3:4)
- ❑ Man is concerned about and he judges by the external appearance, but God looks at the heart! (1 Sam 16:7)
- ❑ We are not to please men or seek honour from them, but please God and be satisfied with the honour that comes from Him! (Gal 1:10; Jn 5:44)

- ❑ We are not to trust the mortal man, but put all our confidence in the living God! (Isa 2:22; Jer 17:5)
- ❑ Hero-worshipping of man is strongly condemned. God alone is worthy of our worship!(Acts 14:15; Rev 19:10)
- ❑ The final step of imparting a truth to our spirits is done by God the Holy Spirit and not by any man!
(1 Jn 2:27; Jn 14:26)
- ❑ God does not lie or change like a man! (Num 23:19)
- ❑ Man forgives, but God alone can forget our wrongs. “To forgive is human, and to forget is divine!” (Jer 31:34)
- ❑ The punishment from human fathers served a temporary benefit, but the Heavenly Father chastises us for the eternal blessing of partaking of His holiness!
(Heb 12:9,10)
- ❑ Man may quickly forget the kindness and favour we show to him, but God never! It’s all in His Book of Remembrance and Rewards! (Gen 40:14,23; Heb 6:10)

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