



Dont Kill Religion!

DR. LILIAN STANLEY

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CONTENTS

1. Don't Kill Religion!	...	4
2. A Christmas Prayer	...	9
3. Happy New Year!	...	15
4. Keeping a Diary	...	20
5. Thought Life	...	25
6. Prayer Examination	...	31
7. Dynamic Evangelism	...	34
8. Get Dirty for God!	...	40
9. Soulwinners Syndrome	...	45
10. Letter to a Missionary	...	49
11. Sacrifice	...	54

1

Don't Kill Religion!

Religion must be full of life and beauty. Don't kill it. Our religion of the day is loathsome to the onlookers. It is not attractive; it smells not so good. They sniff at it and move off not wanting any of that stuff. They even put their hanky to their noses. Why? Why has our religion putrefied? Why don't people embrace it? Oh, why?

I think we have killed, rather murdered our religion and it is decaying. Rigor mortis has set in and it is stiff. Its eyes are no more lustrous. They are not moving. No signs of movement. Its jaws are open. No smile. Heart-beat is not heard. Pulse is not felt. It is bound in a white linen cloth with a dash of scent to tell the world, After all it is not so bad; they can fearlessly come near. The bouquet of flowers is inviting but when people come near they realise it is a funeral decoration.

This is how I became when I came to the Lord. Everything was sin to me. I became superconscious of my conscience, forgetting the grace of God which was keeping me. I lost my smile and wore a serious face. I hardly opened my mouth. I used to be a voracious joker and would send the whole class

into a roaring laughter. But now my place was hard to locate. I stopped mixing with people for fear of “corruption.” I wouldn’t come out to meet the guests but lock myself in my room. At the call of my parents I would come out, greet them and excuse myself shortly. I would not lift up my face while walking on the street but hang my head down. I took to white saris. My sister got angry with me. “Why are you looking so dowdy? My friends are asking if you had a failure.” “*Chi*,” I said. But nothing more than that, because I looked all failure and nothing in me spoke of victory to the world. Whereas in truth I was enjoying total victory and liberation and joy in Christ. I witnessed to some. They politely listened, looked at me up and down, thanked and walked away.

What was wrong with my religion? Why could not those folks understand the glory of my salvation? Because the glory was shut up. It was wrapped in dirty rags of self-righteousness. The joy was smothered. Slowly the truth began to dawn on me. My religion had no life in it. It was cold dead!

It is now an universal disease. Watch the face of the choir. So sober, so dull, so lifeless. Why is there no smile or radiating joy if we sing of a Living God? Because a deadly face has a label of “humility” in today’s religious language of believers. How often children are hushed up in a happy gathering! Telling children to shut up and sit still is as bad as asking adults to scream and run around. Imagine a world without naughty children! Nothing can be as bad as that.

There is no spontaneity in our religion. It is like a puppet show. Somebody has to stand behind and pull and push to keep us going. If the testimony string is pulled we testify. If the prayer string is pulled we pray. It does not come out bubbling of its own. If there is life will it be so?

A religious person is not supposed to play games these days. It is misunderstood. He feels guilty to hold a badminton racket. He wonders what others would think of him. O my! I wish we discard our wrong old ideas about religion.

We have lost the power of resistance against the devil. Diseases invade us and we accept them religiously as gifts from God. There is no vigour in us to fight back the devil and throw on him what he throws on us. We just float along the current. When Satan blocks our onward way we just sit there and wait for “God’s will.” A brainless amoeba knows how to turn and proceed when there is a block. If there is life will we not turn to the right or left or climb up the barricade?

There is no excitement in our religion. When a young man shares his achievement with excitement, all he receives is a grave nod. That expression is enough to put down his spirit. Such elders are probably insulated with something thicker than rubber! Such unemotional beings! He dares no more share any of his achievements. His talents get suppressed. But see in the Bible how God’s children rejoiced at a victory of a man of God. “The women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing to meet king Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. So the women sang as they danced” (1 Sam 18:6,7).

The only sign of life that our religion possesses is probably fight, fight and fight—within the Body. Body cells fighting against body cells is cancer. The ultimatum is death. Our prayers for revival is enough proof that our religion is dead. We certainly need resuscitation. Oh let God give us mouth to mouth resuscitation! Let Him breathe in us the breath of life and we shall live and really live. Jesus came to give us life and that more abundantly. Let us learn to be more alive than the godless generation. They cannot express a mouthful of laughter. Watch their flint-like face. It tells you their religion is dead.

Don’t tell youth scary mission field stories and make them run away. Let those scary stories be used to challenge them. Transmit to them the thrill of the mission field, the joy of the harvest, the glory of suffering so that even death will become life for them. Paul had such a spirit. He did not weep in all his letters from prison. Rather he invoked joy, rejoicing, gladness, liberty, challenge, so much so “most of the brothers in the Lord

became confident by his chains and were much more bold to speak the word without fear” (Phil 1:14). One reason why many youth are not enrolling themselves in the Lord’s army is that they are presented the darker side of things. Let your missionary challenge be bright and bubbling. Mothers, don’t cry when you send your children to the mission field. Garland them. Let the world know the honour of serving the Lord. Don’t melt the hearts of other mothers. When my husband resigned his job to serve the Lord fulltime, many people visited me to “comfort” me and convey their “condolence.” I devised a way to put an end to that nonsense. “No, no,” I said. “He is not resigning. He’s got a promotion.” That was the end of it.

The Bible preaches sobriety but adds to it singing; it speaks of demeanour but adds to it dance; it speaks of weeping but adds to it rejoicing. The Old Testament religion was one of festivals and jubilees. The New Testament equivalent is praise and thanksgiving. Nothing can better express what religion does in us than Psalm 30:11,12. “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever.”

Some sample smiling saints:

“Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with singing” (Psa 126:2).

“Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances” (Ex 15:20).

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me... to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness... that He may be glorified” (Isa 61:1-3).

Jesus came to give us joy abundant. Why should we choose ashes when He gives beauty? And the spirit of heaviness when

He clothes us with the garment of praise? Surely that doesn’t glorify God among the heathen.

Jesus condemned false humility and self-imposed sadness and dowdiness when He said, “When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance... when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face” (Mt 6:16,17). “Why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations: Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Col 2:20-23).

Let us all be Isaacs because God has made us laugh, so that all who hear will laugh with us! Celebrate Christmas rejoicing, New Year with thanksgiving, and Birthdays remembering the goodness of the Lord. Let your religion be full of colourful festoons. Laugh, sing, dance, play, joke; be happy, joyous, gayous!

Our joy should be so much that the mountains and hills and trees must be shaken out of their immobility to life. “For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; and the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isa 55:12).

“Thus says the Lord God to these bones: surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live... Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves... I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live... Then you shall know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it, says the Lord” (Ezek 37:5,12,14).

2

A Christmas Prayer

(Matthew Chapters 1&2)

“Oh, thank You Lord, Christmas is here again. My heart trembles with excitement. Christmas carols in every church, smashing colours everywhere, the mirth in the atmosphere, the new dresses and the flavour of variety cooking filling the air ! Everyone is alive and glowing. Though often I tell myself these are nothing, still these mundane rituals do mean something, Lord. They kindle in me the spirit of Christmas. They make me skip and dance!

“Thank You Lord for the lovely Christmas story. It is as brilliant today as it was 2000 years ago. Thank You for Your salvation without which Christmas would have been meaningless to me. But now every small event of that history is so full of meaning. Your Son made BC and AD. I am proud before my non-Christian friends that Christ is a historical figure.

“Even the dry geneology has something to tell me. It speaks of four women—outcasts—chosen to bring forth Christ into the world. It really encourages me, Lord, that even I can be an instrument to bring forth Christ to this sinful world. Thank You Lord for the Study Bible which supplies this thought. Usually

women find no place in Jewish geneologies. This teaches me Lord that You place me in places I don't deserve to be placed (1:1-17).

“But why did not Joseph inform the elders about Mary and have her stoned in public as he should have done? Oh yes, because he was a righteous man. Lord, make me as righteous as Joseph that I may cover the shortcomings of my brothers and sisters and not make them public. Joseph didn't perform any spiritual feat but just lived a righteous life. Keep reminding me Lord that You alone can judge us—on the basis of what we are, not just what we do (1:18,19).

“I wonder Lord, why Mary never tried to inform Joseph about what happened to her. Did she refuse to seek easy favour at the expense of her principles? May be she left the matter entirely in Your hands and did not lean on her own understanding. Why is it that more often I fight my own battles ? Lord, please help me to trust You completely and be still when I know I am right that You may send Your angel and speak to the other party. Let me not waste my words. Man congratulates for what I do. But You alone congratulate for what I do not do!

“How confused I become at times when I think of my problems—too confused to pray. I am now encouraged. When Joseph thought on these things the angel came. You answer even my thoughts and make matters clear to me, Lord. Keep me from making grave errors in life (1:20).

“Thank You Father for Jesus. He saves me from my sins. How the devil condemns me! How many lies he tells me to make me believe that this sin of mine cannot be forgiven. He chews me out over some trivial matter. Lord, let me memorise this, “Call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins,” so I can yell it to the devil (1:21).

“And Immanuel, God with us! Please, dear Lord, let me feel Your presence every moment. Not only when I am good, when I am bad too—warn me—Immanuel, God with me! (1:23).

“Bless me Lord with the absolute obedience of Joseph—without a word! Did he not think that people would blame him for Mary’s condition? Did he count the cost? I am surprised Lord at this man’s courage to obey You unruffled, let come what may. Help me Lord to share the blame when my own brothers and sisters in the Lord face shame and humiliation. I don’t want to show myself better than they. And Joseph didn’t keep licking his wound for your interference in his budding romance. Lord, deliver me from self-pity for whatever sacrifice You may require of me. (1:24,25).

“Enviably couple! How smoothly Mary and Joseph functioned. Sometimes I feel as if I am in a marital straight jacket. Help me relax and be cooperative for Your Kingdom sake. Yes, mighty Lord, when you join there is no joint! I wish to do so much for You Lord, but I find myself unable to do as much as I desire to do because of my family—with a demanding daughter and a busy husband. Please assure me Lord that Your will for me is not to do great things, but doing Your will is great.

“Holy Father, how far the wise men travelled to worship Jesus! And how lazy I feel on Sunday mornings to go to the church, not on a camel but in a car, not through wilderness but nice roads! Help me Lord overcome my Sunday spell! (2:1).

“Nobody is born as a king Lord, except Your Son Jesus Christ. Anyone else is born a child or at the most a prince, not a king! (2:2).

“Thank You for the prophecies fulfilled in the birth of Christ. I am deeply assured that the promises You have made concerning me shall come to pass. The best prophet of my future is the past! (vv 3-5).

“Lord, I am thrilled to know how, when the wise men didn’t know where to go, Your star appeared and led them to Your Son. I rejoice with exceeding great joy that when I grope in

darkness to find Your will, when black becomes blacker, Your Word like a star leads me in the right direction. You will never allow me go astray or end up in a cul-de-sac. (2:9-10).

“Were not the wise men embarrassed to fall down on the floor of a small house to worship a baby and that when a poor lady was watching? Many times I see non-Christians falling prostrate before their idols in naive adoration. I am ashamed at my pride. If such learned men as the maggies could fall down and worship, how much more should I? Lord, let me not be an educated fool. I thank You for our colleague who shared this thought in a devotional hour (2:11).

“Your Son was just a babe. He had not started to preach or teach or work miracles. He could not give a gift to those wise men. Yet they worshipped Him and gave their treasures to Him, because He was God. Father, how many times I look upon You just as a giver and not as God. Help me dear One to understand the Habakkuk worship: “Though the fig tree may not blossom,... (nor fruit be on the coconut trees; though my business goes bankrupt; though I cannot make both ends meet; though I do not succeed in the exam and though I fail in my love affair)... yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” Let me worship You for who You are and not for what You do or give to me.

“Incidentally Lord, thank You for the loose-leaf Bible which enables me to meditate verse by verse and write down my thoughts then and there. And thank You for the dear friend who gifted it to us.

“They saw the young child with Mary, His mother, and worshipped HIM!... and presented HIM gifts! Oh Lord, prevent me from making the fatal (yes Lord, it is eternally fatal) error of worshipping the human mother of Your divine Son and the error of idolising any human instrument you choose to bring forth (proclaim) Your Son to the world.

“It is quite possible that the wise men promised to come back to Herod. But they broke the promise. Give me courage Lord to break up wrong promises I have made in haste without wisdom. Help me Holy God to understand that it is godly to break an ungodly promise. And a dunce cap for Herod! Ha ha! I like the way You make fools of your enemies, Lord! Ha ha!

“Frankly Lord, I feel You could have protected baby Jesus from the soldiers by a miracle and spared Joseph the nightmarish escape. But I accept that You don’t always perform supernatural miracles as I often expect. More often it is by natural means that You work. Thank You for my husband from whom I learnt this truth. When bad things happen to good people it only makes them better. As Nietzsche said, That which does not kill me makes me stronger!

“Bravo to Mary ! How much mental and physical pressures she had to cope up with. The task of delivering Jesus to this world is no joke. It is hard indeed. But when I see the youngish Mary, my load seems much lighter, Lord. Thank You for her example. Make me a woman of steel nerves for Your Kingdom sake. I realise, Lord, while the cost of following Your will is great, the cost of not following Your will is greater! Thank You for this dashing line I read in a magazine.

“And Your Son Jesus Christ! Truly C is for the Christ Child, the highlight of Christmas ! The C of Christmas means, Christmas begins with Christ. Let the name of Your Son be enshrined in our hearts. Let His name become our chant. Help me not to forget the central Person of the celebration, Your resplendent gift. What a sacrifice for the Son of God to be born in a formidable manger, away from the cherubic smiles and seraphic songs. Sometimes people say I have sacrificed my education, job, reputation, etc. I feel so silly Lord to hear all that. I am just a glow-worm with Jesus in me. Help me to look down when I am up and look up when I am down.

“When I read the Christmas story, I feel, Lord, it is not just a day in a year to be celebrated, but everyday is Christmas day for me. Thank you Lord for the author of the song who captured the spirit of Christmas in two short lines—

*Lord, help me not to go astray
But to live each day like a Christmas day !”*

3

Happy New Year!

About this time a year ago many people wished you a Happy New Year. Did it come true? When you turn around to see the past year—which will never be yours again—can you, without regrets, say it was most certainly a Happy New Year? Did you cooperate with God to give it a happy ending?

Now again God is entrusting you with a gift of 365 days deposited in your account. It is entirely yours. Every day is like a cheque. It is encashed and given you every morning. You can use it profitably... But if you do not use it, it is lost forever. On the other hand it can also fetch you eternal dividends. What a drastic difference that makes! Either nothing or eternal things. It is up to you to make gain out of it or loss.

You made many decisions. At the close of the year you find almost all the threads broken off in the middle. You never reached the end. You never touched your goal.

The beginning is always exciting. You are so thrilled at your decisions and encouraged by your every day performance. But then Mr. Discouragement comes and knocks at your door.

Mr. Laziness snuggles into your bedsheet. Mr. Dullness has a long chat with you. Miss Waste of time gives a big hug and a kiss and you are out flat.

The reason for the abrupt disruption of your decisions is that you are fully convinced that you can never rise up from the initial sag. You swear to yourself that is the tomb of all your decisions. You simply cannot believe you can make it. You believe your wicked and twisted heart and say Amen to that Mr. Crooks when he keeps whispering in your spirit that these decisions are too much for you and it is foolish of you to have made them. Whereas the fact is you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you! You can make decisions and keep them and you must.

Why not make a decision not to break the decisions you make this year—and stick to it? Well, you can almost hear the devil retort, “Let’s see how.” He is all out on a war with you. But on the very first day of the year put on the whole armour of God, till you climb up the victory stand. You are really going to make it this year. You must know your enemy before you fight him. You must understand the tricks of the devil before you can counteract them. So sit and find out why you were not able to keep up your decisions last year.

First, your decisions were very **vague**. You had no solid idea in your mind when you made them. You said, “This year I will get closer to God.” That is not a clear goal. It is a wilderness where you can wander everywhere and get nowhere. Decisions must have definite set goals. As Paul says, “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air” (1 Cor 9:26). Let’s work it out this way. How do you plan to get closer to God? a) By reading the Bible more b) By praying more c) By working more for Him. These are again abstract. They have no target to shoot at. Focus it a little more. a) If you have not read the Bible fully once, decide to finish reading your Bible fully this year. If you have done it already, then take up a Study Bible for this year and aim to

finish the complete study of gospels or epistles or Old Testament prophets according to your taste or need. b) Fix the time and duration of your prayer. Morning 5-5.30 worship and daily needs; afternoon 2-2.30 missions; night 9.30-10 self-examination and family needs. c) Decide a target according to your line of ministry. For example, distribute 1000 tracts this year. Visit 12 non-Christian homes and become friendly with them. Start a Sunday School in a nearby slum, and so on.

Let your goals be realistic. Start small and achieve it rather than start big and faint halfway. Do not make too many decisions. Now you know what you expect out of yourself.

Secondly, you relaxed midway because you were **not accountable** to anyone. You were accountable only to yourself. So you were careless. If you are under your parents share your goals with them and seek their help. Or, two or three or a team or a family or a fellowship can join together to make the same goals and seek to achieve them. It gives mutual encouragement and enthusiasm and makes you responsible. "Daniel purposed in his heart." He did not keep his heart's decision in his heart too long. He told it to the chief of eunuchs. Now Daniel brought himself under the observation of someone that it became almost impossible for him to break his vow. Not only that, it was a team decision. The king's delicacies were no easy temptation. We all know how susceptible we are in matters of food and drink. But since they were a team they could stand together. Maintaining a diary may be very valuable to help you pursue your goals. Set aside just two minutes before retiring to bed to recollect what you achieved that day and make a note of it. Let the diary be under your pillow always. This is a discipline you impose upon yourself. "I discipline **my** body" (1 Cor 9:27).

The *third* hurdle in the race is an unexpected **break** in the routine. It may be a long holiday or a prolonged illness or a period of lethargy. When you are out of it all, you are tempted to drop the whole lot. It looks easier to lose the battle and rest than to struggle towards victory with all your weaknesses. Do

not give in to the temptation. You must persistently pursue your goals with utter sincerity. Start where you stopped and continue. If possible try to make up the loss by a little extra input. "Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all (other) things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown" (1 Cor 9:25). Never give up!

Fourthly, the problem of **failures**. God does allow failures in our lives that we may be wholly cast on Him and realise our human frailty. Failure is not the end. It is only the first step to victory. It prevents you from going the wrong way and teaches you what not to do. Tungsten was working in his laboratory to find the right filament which can conduct electricity and glow and yet not burn up. He looked up after his 100th failure. His friend sympathised with him, "I am so sorry you have not discovered anything after 100 trials." He very seriously replied, "What do you mean? I have discovered 100 alloys which cannot conduct electricity and glow!" What a lesson to us! That is turning our failures into triumphs! Failures, with all their ill-effects, give us a kick towards victory. A righteous man does not walk without falling. He falls seven times and yet rises up! (Prov 24:16). Seven failures do not mean it is not God's will or the decision you have taken is wrong (as we naturally conclude). It only means God does not want you to give up even after the seventh failure.

Finally, the enemy of **forgetfulness**. "The wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart." The root of your decision should be deep enough that the wicked one will not be able to pluck it. Give deep thought to what you decide. Write your decisions in your diary. Write a promise below that to keep you going. Write it in a small slip and keep it inside your Bible. Put a copy of it near the mirror. Place it on your work-table. Now you can challenge the devil if he can snatch it away that easily!

Keep bookmarks in your Bible, one at the beginning of your goal and the other at the end. Observe how the first progresses towards the second and do all that is possible to speed it up.

Arrange the prayer circulars you have prayed for, one on top of the other and watch the pile grow. Keep the 1000 tracts where you can daily see them and rejoice as they melt away. When you have established friendly relationship with a non-Christian family, get ice cream for your family and promise eleven more if they cooperate. It will become a family game. Children will help in distributing the tracts and drive you to your prayer closet when it is time! They will drag you to visit their non-Christian classmate's home! You'll soon discover that the target is too small for the year and you'll need a larger one next year. Have a willing heart. It makes anything easier and happier. "If I do this willingly, I have a reward" (1 Cor 9:17).

I can hear what you say, "Oh, this way it is impossible to break decisions." Impossible indeed! At the close of the year you'll have your diary and prayer circulars and marks in your Bible, and family and friends to testify to your achievements and congratulate you for the **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

4

Keeping a Diary

Memory is like a lovely studded jewel from which sparkling stones keep falling off. If these stones are not preserved and set back the jewel will lose its beauty and value. That is why God has taught His people to keep a diary.

If Moses had not kept a detailed diary we would not have the Pentateuch today! It is called the Book of Moses (Mk 12:26). The Acts of the Apostles is the compilation of Dr. Luke's diary. John kept an account of all that was happening when he was in the company of Jesus. He spent such a lot of time and paper, writing out, that finally he said, "And there are also many things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

One of God's methods of reminding us of His past mercies is by our keeping a record of day-to-day occurrences. Once He chided His disciples' forgetfulness. "Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?" (Mt

16:9,10). Now, why was Jesus so upset? Because, their failure to remember the past led to a lack of faith. “O you of little faith,” said Jesus and then scolded them for their forgetfulness. If they had recollected what Jesus had done earlier they would not have worried about bread. “The Israelites soon forgot His works” (Psa 106:13).

Does this not reflect our story? Many are the times we forget the significant past and make a mess of our present and break our heads over the future! Keeping a diary for the following aspects is very important:

a) Record any spiritual exercise. For example, if you have testified to someone, note it down. That will help you not to be casual about soulwinning and motivate you to pray for those souls to whom you have testified. “Lest you forget the things of God” (Dt 4:9).

b) When God gives you a specific instruction to obey, write it down and that will serve as a helpful reminder. God may speak in your morning quiet time or while reading a book or listening to a person. If you make a covenant with God, or a vow, keep a record of it. “Lest you forget the covenant of the Lord” (Dt 4:23).

c) The mercies and miracles of God in your life should be in your diary. Even what seems to be a minor event, like escaping an accident or a miraculous provision, unless recorded will be washed out, never to return. “Not forget the works of God” (Psa 78:7).

d) When God reveals a sin in you, record it that you may know yourself, become better and that one day you will rejoice to have overcome it. “Forgets what kind of man he was” (Js 1:24).

e) Record any valuable exhortation you come across. Any exhortation is painful. But it becomes more palatable in course

of time and our diary helps us to do something about it when the throbbing pain of sharp exhortation subsides. “Have forgotten the exhortation” (Heb 12:5).

f) Record your spiritual milestones. That will lift your heart up. Your diary should be your spiritual journal. “Forgets that he was purged” (2 Pet 1:9).

g) Write down the important events of the day. Note down the birthdays, the dates of expiry of your licences, etc., and transfer it to the new diary at the beginning of the year. “Remember the day... on this day you are going out, in the *month* Abib” (Ex 13:3,4).

Many are discouraged from writing a diary for want of (a) discipline and (b) time. Keeping your diary on your bed near the pillow with a small pen—exclusively for the purpose—solves the discipline problem. Spend just five minutes to recollect and write down the day’s events. That solves the time problem.

For our family our diary is the VIP on the New Year’s eve. We open it up and read out all important events, decisions, healings, promises, exhortations, vows, progresses, etc., and our hearts bubble over the mercies of the Lord. Many events flash back into our memories. It is good to attend a night service in the church on the New Year’s eve, but a family gathering of remembering the past and praising God must go before that.

Here are a few excerpts from my diaries of the past six years—

“Challenged by the book *What Happens When Women Pray*.”

“Prayer for Pentecost ’81. The wind and the rain came down with a mighty force inside the room as we knelt down to pray.”

"O Lord, hallow Your Name."

"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" God answered through Jer 12:5.

"Lord, make me a woman of steel nerves."

"Thank You Lord! You talk to me daily and patiently and answer my stupid questions."

"Lord, deliver me from self-pity."

"Lord, how far is the apple tree from the juniper tree?"

"Let my heart be broken by the things that break Your heart."

"I don't want to die in my bed. I want to die in the field."

"I am willing to even shed my blood to hallow Your Name."

Cascades of tears have stained my diary. A colourful rainbow adorns the date when God gave me a beautiful promise. I relive my past with God when I go through my diary and that boosts up my faith.

Diaries and journals of John Wesley, David Brainerd and Praying Hyde are published and they have conveyed their spirit, zeal and vision to their readers. These men speak while they are yet dead. God says, "Write the Vision." Let your stifled vision deploy in your diary. Let your dreams, ideas and hopes be incubated there. Blow your explosive views and bottled-up emotions on it.

When you travel, take a small card in your pocket or purse in which you can note down your lightning ideas. These may be transferred to your diary once you are back home.

Have a list of missions, mission fields, names of missionaries at the back pages for reference and prayer. Any information about them may be noted against their names as and when you come across them.

But don't make your diary just another religious book. Include other general and medical details and informations also. For example, if you have the birthdays of your friends in your diary, when you open it up, by a quick glance over the next two dates, you can find to whom you should send greetings today. Few are those who give the world a personal touch in this mechanical age. Do not be indifferent to human affairs. Note down "THINGS TO BE DONE" on the last pages.

Do not put down delicate personal or family matters in black and white. It may fall into the hands of others. Write such things in a language which you alone can understand!

"Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and FORGET NOT all His benefits!"

5

Thought Life

Few of us give attention to our thought life as much as to our outward life. That's the reason why it is covered with dust and strangled by cobwebs. How well it will be with us if only we give heed to our inner life than spend all our time and energy dusting and decorating our outward actions. Jesus chided the religionists of His day, "Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also." God cannot be cheated by our acts or appearance because He knows our heart (1 Sam 16:7). He found in David a man after His own heart, because God's heart sought for a man's heart that could beat to the same rhythm. In other words, when God sees a man He does not first see what he is doing, rather what he is thinking.

Outwardly we are all screwed up to please our fellowmen; but inwardly we are all relaxed, because (we believe) nobody knows what's going on inside. But God knows it all. He understands our thoughts afar off before it escapes out of the heart in visible form (Psa 139:2,4). David knew it. That was why he commanded his son Solomon, "Know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal **heart** and with a willing **mind**; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the **thoughts**" (1 Chr 28:9).

We have a wrong notion that thoughts are not as bad as actions. But God weighs them equally in His balance. He deals with attitudes as strictly as with our actions. Sarah **laughed within herself**. And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh?" Sarah did what any of us would have done and gone without a jot of guilt. She denied it saying, "I did not laugh." But God said, "No, you did laugh!" (Gen 18:12-15). This interesting passage brings to light the many times we sin in our hearts and refuse to acknowledge it, the many times we do the right thing with a wrong attitude and yet deny that we were wrong indeed.

For a tree to be fruitful the root must be attended to. But our grave error is that we keep caring for the leaves and branches leaving the root unattended. If we turn our attention to our thought life we shall bear fruit—real fruit, not imitation or hypocritical ones. "Judah shall take root downward (hidden attitude) and bear fruit upward" (Isa 37:31). "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov 23:7). Our actions are the outcome of our attitudes. The heart (or mind) is the seat of all thoughts, imaginations and intents. It is the womb of evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness and blasphemies. When they are conceived and nurtured, in due time they are born through the eyes, mouth, ears, hands and feet to be seen of the world (Mt 15:19; Gen 6:5).

God does not wink at our thoughts. Our thoughts will be judged on "the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rom 2:16). "O Lord of hosts, You who judge righteously, testing the mind and the heart" (Jer 11:20). Michal despised David "in her heart" and therefore was barren (2 Sam 6:16-23). God scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts (Lk 1:51). But God honours our good thoughts. "Blessed is he who *considers* the poor" (Psa 41:1). A string of blessings follow. This man is just considering the poor. He has not started to act on his thoughts either because he has no money or he has not faced an opportunity yet. But his very attitude towards the poor is honoured by the Lord! "The mercy of the Lord... to such as keep His covenant, and to those who **remember** to do them" (Psa 103:18).

Some thoughts are not sinful but unnecessary. These could be thoughts of food, clothes or life. God commands us not to worry about these, because what can we achieve by worrying? (Mt 6:25-28). God knows our needs. Our life is in God's hand. He is the Prince of life. So even in times of distress or fatal illness quit worrying and relax in His hands. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these shall be added to you (6:33). When your thoughts are troubled and you are confused, remember the voice of the Lord which proclaims, "My thoughts are not your thoughts. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My thoughts higher than your thoughts" (Isa 55:8,9). Calm down. The disciples thought they were perishing in the storm. But Jesus thought to take them to the desired haven!

And there is the vain thought. It is useless imagination which consumes our precious time. David hated vain thoughts and spent his time reading God's Word (Psa 119:113). Vain thoughts include assumptions and guesses which spoil our mind. Some evil report comes floating in the air and we immediately say, "I know no one else but Mr. X could have spawned it"—so emphatically, so definitely. We see some mischief and conclude in our mind who could be responsible for it—then it mushrooms into an imagination of why and how he did it, etc., etc. Do not allow your mind to think beyond proven facts. Our pastor illustrated how misleading our imaginations could be. A man took shelter in the verandah of a house on a cold and rainy night. He heard a voice from inside, "Let's cut the neck." And another gruff male voice, "No, let's cut the hand first." The man, scared to death, brought the police only to find two tailors cutting a blouse!

We need to be careful about what we think since unconsciously we express our thoughts in words or deeds. We all have had bitter experiences when we bit our tongues and wished we had not uttered that word. "Do not curse the king even in your thought... a bird in flight may tell the matter" (Eccl 10:20). We should take care "not to think of ourselves

more highly than we ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Rom 12:3). If the devil cannot pull us backward he will push us forward. Even God's chosen people may stumble in their walk with God when we imagine too much about ourselves and get dissatisfied in our present estate and attempt to do what God has not called us to do. Be busy doing the things God has entrusted in your hand and save yourselves from such a snare of new and bombastic visions. "Keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov 4:23). The same heart is described as deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9). So it depends on the way we keep it.

We keep struggling to control or discipline our thoughts and always (or so it seems) end up as failures. Let me encourage you by saying that you do really very well as long as you keep struggling. A time comes when you become frustrated with all your failure (!) methods to discipline your unruly mind and whisper to yourself, "I have tried hopelessly for many years to no avail. What is the use of going on like this without victory? This must be natural for everyone. A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. So let me relax the bit and bridle"—and your thoughts go berserk. Ah! This is exactly the opportunity the devil was hoping and waiting for. Now he jumps on to your back and takes up the reins and drives your mind to gallop like the wind! Never give up the reins lest Satan takes hold of it. Keep on struggling—and you are safe.

There are some measures to develop a mental discipline. We must train our conscience to acknowledge evil thoughts as sin (Prov 24:9). Realise that we must repent even of our thoughts, confess it and seek forgiveness. Apostle Peter said to the one who offered money to get the gift of God, "Your money perish with you, because you **thought** that the gift of God could be purchased with money!... Your **heart** is not right in the sight of God. **Repent** therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the **thought of your heart may be forgiven you**" (Acts 8:20-22). God is a thought reader. Ask

Him to reveal your thoughts and intents to you. “He declares to man what his thought is” (Amos 4:13). Pray with David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.” Now do you understand why David was a man after God’s own heart?

God’s Word is the discerner of our thoughts and intents (Heb 4:12). Test with the help of Scriptures if your thoughts are right or not. Face it honestly. Train up your mind to think according to the Scriptures as you grow up in God. When you were a child you thought as a child (1 Cor 13:11). But when you grow up to be a man to the stature of Christ think as Christ. Let the mind of Christ be in you (Phil 2:5). Graduate in love. Love thinks no evil (1 Cor 13:5). Keep God in all your thoughts. I remember how when I was a student the moment I left home for college, God would slip out of my mind. Once back home, suddenly I would remember Him. I tried hard to keep God in my thoughts throughout the day. So in every note book and text book I had a Bible verse written to switch my mind back to God. “God is in none of the thoughts of the wicked” (Psa 10:4).

Make a covenant with the organs of your body not to violate their code of ethics. “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I **think** upon a maid?” (Job 31:1). Forsake evil thoughts (Isa 55:7; Zech 8:17). God does not give impossible commandments. If He has asked you to do it He will also give you the grace to do it. Never be discouraged. It is literally a warfare. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down **imagination**s, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every **thought** to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:4,5).

Do not allow the world to pour its filth into your mind through your eyes and ears. Avoid such books, TV programmes, and conversation. Do not express your evil thoughts (Prov 30:32). That way you can prevent the full growth of sin. Take notes while listening to sermons whether you need it or not. Carry good books or a pocket New Testament to read during waiting hours or journeys.

Finally let your outward actions be committed to the Lord. “Commit your works to the Lord, and your **thoughts** will be established” (Prov 16:3). Be busy. Never be idle. Let your every day prayer be that of David, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my **heart** be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord” (Psa 19:14).

You shall dwell in the holy hill and abide in God’s tabernacle if there is truth even in your thoughts (Psa 15:2). A book of remembrance is written before Him for those who **meditate** on His name (Mal 3:16). God will rightly guide your thoughts if your motive is pure (Acts 10:19; Mt 1:20). In the multitude of your **thoughts** within you God’s comforts shall delight your soul (Psa 94:19). A good formula to be memorised to help rectify your thought process is Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praise-worthy — meditate on these things!”

Are you discouraged **thinking** at this seeming impossibility? Take heart. “He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or **think!**”

6

Prayer Examination

1. Are you happy about your prayer life ?

Do you pray as much as you think the Lord requires of you? Can you testify to others about your prayer life and challenge them to follow your pattern?

2. Do you try to improve your prayer life ?

Have you given up trying to be better in your prayer life assuming this is all you can do? Have you made an attempt to find out the exact cause of the problem? Is it time or lack of interest or sleep or wandering thoughts or a besetting sin? Do you make an effort to overcome the located cause?

3. Do you give excuses for your withered prayer life ?

Do you have a false hope that since so many pray for you, that is enough? Do you say that you have tried so many times and failed, so God cannot possibly find fault with you? Do you assume God is leading you in a “different” way? Beware!

4. Do you kneel and pray ?

Do you excuse yourself that nobody does it in your place? Kneeling is a Biblical posture. There could be lapses in a person’s life when he/she cannot kneel down—like a sickness, travel or emergencies. But this can never become the set pattern. Pray walking, sitting, working; but all besides kneeling. If you do not kneel and pray it is quite possible you do not pray at all. It may make you complacent by giving you a false feeling that you are “praying always!”

5. Do you really converse with God in prayer ?

By that I mean, when you have ended a session of prayer, are you able to realize you have had a talk with the great God?

6. Do you have regular times of prayer ?

I mean the serious, systematic, matter-of-fact prayer like David and Daniel. Having set times of prayer in the morning, noon and night keeps us God-conscious throughout the day. A spirit of prayer prevails.

7. Do you pray then and there for everything whether great or small ?

When there comes a sudden problem or an unexpected event, do you habitually look Above? Learn from Nehemiah and Paul. Such telegraphic prayers will give you the necessary guidance and confidence. Tell God the tiff you had with your friend, the way your spouse treated you, the unpaid bill, the irking neighbour’s child, your inability to forgive and so on and so forth. The more details you tell God, the closer you get to Him. Prayer is like talking to a friend. “*What a Friend we have in Jesus... Everything to God in prayer.*”

8. *Do you pray in the Spirit ?*

For example, praying in tongues helps you bypass your mind or intellect and blend your spirit with God's. If you have this enablement, how faithfully are you using it in your private prayer? Do you lean on the Spirit's help in intercession and allow Him to intercede through you ?

9. *Do you claim God's promises in prayer ?*

Keep the Bible open before you when you pray. Develop the habit of reading out Scriptures in prayer or putting your finger on a verse and praying over it.

10. *Are you interested in high-flown language while praying or do you just want to talk like a child to the Father ?*

Try to use simple but reverential language while talking to God.

7

Dynamic Evangelism

The dynamism of Evangelism lies in the little word, "EVERY." It means "total." It is to a soulwinner what capital is to a businessman. The more you invest the more you reap. The small word causes an oceanwide difference between today's evangelism and that of the apostles. The greatest multiplication factor of the early church was "every." It is a climate-proof, health-proof, work-proof, money-proof word! Let's look at a few examples of this concept of totality.

Every Christian

Unless every born-again Christian throws himself / herself into the task of evangelism, India can never be evangelised. God needs every one of us. Every Christian should reach every non-Christian. It is a total involvement of the Church. Every Christian is a missionary and every non-Christian a mission-field. In the early church the scattered ones preached the gospel (Acts 8:4). Even women were a threat to Saul (8:3). God wants you for a soulwinner! Don't think it is impossible for you to evangelise India. When did God ask man to do a possible thing? He always demanded the impossible. He

expected the stammerer Moses to speak to Pharaoh. He sent the young David to kill Goliath. If we have to do what we can do, we don't need the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to us so we can do what we cannot do.

You think you are a muddy stone? That's what you and others may opine of you. Let me tell you who you are. You are an uncut diamond. If you stop believing you are useless and yield yourselves in the hands of the Master-Craftsman, He will start cutting you and you will come forth as a glittering diamond scintillating the glory of God! Are you foolish, are you weak, are you a poor despised one? Very good. Then you have a calling. "For you see your calling, brothers, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not" (1 Cor 1:26-28).

Everyday

Next comes the everyday thrust. Time is like a well-greased wire that slides through your taut fingers. You can't hold it. Christians must be on their toes if they really care for souls. Don't dream about tomorrow, do it today. Today is ours. Never forget to add a sentence to your morning prayer, "Lord, give me a soul today." Then act on it. We pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" and then cook our meals. That is faith in action. After praying for a soul a day, be on the look-out for an opportunity or create one.

Souls were added to the early church "daily." But for us soulwinning has become a sentimental Sunday affair. Jesus was a "daily" man (Lk 19:47); and so were the apostles (Acts 5:42). Their church was a daily ministering church (Acts 6:1). What was the outcome? "Churches increased in number daily" (Acts 16:5). Daily witnessing by individuals leads to the daily

growth of the Church. The addition of Acts 2:47 leads to the multiplication of Acts 6:7! Note how the daily principle evangelised the whole of Asia in just two years (Acts 19:9,10). No wonder Satan is singing a lullaby in our ears! An one horse-power engine running continuously can do more than a forty horse-power engine standing idle! Start working today—with your one horse-power!

Everywhere

Then the everywhere push! If you claim every promise in the Bible you must claim Acts 1:8 too. You too can go to the uttermost parts of the earth. The doubting Thomas is proof. Your limit is the uttermost parts of the earth. In the New Testament Church every problem was a blessing. Those who were scattered by persecution went "everywhere" preaching the Word. When someone was martyred, the one who kept the clothes was converted. If thrown in prison the prisoners were converted. When dragged before authorities the authorities were converted. The temple and the synagogues were their haunts. Paul in jail was as great a force as Paul at large. Anywhere and everywhere, unrestrained witnessing was the key to their success.

Everywhere means where? Don't fish in other men's dish. Go out quickly (not slowly) into the streets, lanes, highways and hedges to the poor, maimed, lame and blind and compel them to come in (Lk 14:21-23). Mark it out in your Bible. This is where we are supposed to go. In our own language—win souls under the tree, in the bus, in the train, your door step, verandah, bus-stand, railway-station, schools, colleges, hospitals, offices—anywhere, everywhere! "And they went out and preached everywhere" (Mk 16:20). If the Church had stayed in the upper room, today we'll be in the deepest gloom!

Every House

The apostles knew the advantage of leading families to Christ. Lydia was converted with her family and so was the jailor. Barnabas' sister's house was used as the prayer house

(Acts 12:12). Houses became churches (1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15). The apostles' target was "every house" (Acts 5:42).

Have you ever entered a non-Christian home to share the gospel? "Knock and it shall be opened to you." We talk of closed doors before knocking. Closed doors are not necessarily locked doors. The moment you knock it opens. Mark out an area as your target and knock at every door within a set date. Let each unknocked door be a challenge to you. Do not assume negatively before you knock. Assumption is a quicksand. Paul's method was the house-to-house method (Acts 20:20). Get to know the non-Christians in your locality. Befriend them. Visit them. Win them.

Every Creature

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). How did the early disciples accomplish this? They spoke to any one they came across, be it lame, blind, children, prisoners, Jews, Gentiles, beggars, lepers, kings! Historically Christianity is a person-to-person religion. Jehovah Witnesses put us to shame. Jesus said, "You shall be witnesses to Me" (Acts 1:8). We received power but we are anything but witnesses to Him. We must be like live wires conducting the power of Christ to anyone who comes in contact with us. Habitually I ask a question to my copassengers, "Have you heard about Jesus?" If so, I ascertain if they are born again. If so, I talk to them about baptism. If baptised, I tell them about the Holy Spirit. If they are Spirit-filled, I keep feeding them soul-burden and try my best to make them soulwinners. I believe every person we meet is by divine appointment.

"Go for souls, and go for the worst," said William Booth. It is an awful fact that so many Christians are not born again. Confront the regular church-goers. Ask questions. Risk offending. Don't let life-time church-goers go to hell just because they were never confronted. Christ is wounded not at the sinner not hearing the gospel but at the saint hearing the gospel repeatedly and not taking it to the sinner.

Everyway

Paul said that he became all things to all men that he might save a few. Adopt as many methods as possible to bring souls to light. Be regular in your family prayer that the members of the family may be converted. Visit unsaved relatives whenever and wherever possible. I know of a godly family which arranges a family dinner annually as a get-together for all the relatives, and invites an evangelist to share the Word of God on that occasion. Start distributing good tracts. Concentrate on gaining many non-Christian friends. Attend their weddings and funerals. Be friendly with all, irrespective of caste and creed. Wear a smile all the time for the rich and poor, young and old, learned and illiterates. Have a friendly word for anyone. Stop condemning and criticising teenagers for their mod hair style and fanciful dresses. Rather extend a broad smile and a warm hand-shake. Gather the neighbourhood children in your house and teach them songs and Bible stories. Invite friends to gospel meetings. Visit the nearby hospitals and console the sick and pray for them. Carry your tape-recorder to the villages that they may listen to some good music and gospel message. Invite people to sit and watch your Bible videos. Write letters to your friends sharing your testimony. Circulate good books. Sell good books and gospels door to door. Preach, sing, teach, write. Do not hesitate to lend a helping hand to the vegetable vendor struggling to lift his basket. Help anyone anywhere. Keep thinking of novel methods and don't hesitate to practise it when God gives an idea. Be ready to spend some money. Collect old clothes and give to the poor. Somehow win some souls. Be versatile. Don't be crying and praying for spiritual gifts all the time. Keep doing things for God and the gifts will manifest.

Sayings for Soulwinners

- R Don't weep for the whole world—Do something around you!
- R Don't get your foot into today's cannibalism, scratching and clawing and mud-slinging. Keep yourself off religious politics. Mind your business—that is soulwinning!

- R Do not be indifferent to human affairs. Be as human as possible.
- R You are not dressed for the day until you wear a smile!
- R Within each of us lies a sleeping giant waiting to be awakened!
- R If you win souls you are wise; if not otherwise!
- R Undertake something that is difficult, it will do you good. Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow!
- R Many brilliant brains are wasted because people believed there was no hope and thus gave up trying. Others have been content to wring their hands of the whole problem. You better act!
- R Do not fear persecution or death. We are called to 'Go!' We don't have to come back!
- R Failure or opposition should never deflate your confidence. Never give up!
- R Clear vision and tenacious faith can take you far into the field of evangelism!

8

Get Dirty for God!

A personal testimony

Trot! Trot! Trot! Crinch creech, crinch, creek, stop. "*Kala dharumanga andavare, yamma dhana punnianga andavare...*" The chant of the beggars' song wafted through the early morning air. I peeped through the window and saw five lepers trekking along the road and halting in front of our gate. "I must send them away before they place their ulcerous hands on the gate"—was my immediate thought. I quickly fished out some coins and threw them into their tin. —Trot, trot, trot... again the song—"*Kala dharumanga andavare...*" They moved out to the next house, push-cart and all. Slowly the sound of the song moved over to the next street and gradually died away.

"Poor fellows!" I thought. "I must give them something more. What can the few coins get them?" It was next Saturday and the same song again. This time I gave them a rupee note and their faces lit up and their screwed-up lips softened into a thin smile. I didn't have the courage to smile back at them. I pretended as if I didn't notice their smile and turned away. Third Saturday, when I emerged out of the house they all in unison folded their hands in the Indian style of greeting. Am I supposed to greet back lepers? I wasn't so sure. But as days passed my heart softened towards those unfortunate ones. I learned to smile at them and greet them.

One day it struck me that these people too have souls—and I am not feeding their souls. I am feeding their bodies and sending them to hell ! So I started sharing the love of God with them. Neighbours' glances and passers-by bothered me. Sometimes they would stop to see what was happening. After a few weeks I didn't know what to tell them. So I resorted to the *Children's Bible*. Starting from creation I went chapter by chapter. Now they listened with more interest and crowded closer to see the pictures, and there was expression in their faces. Sometimes I played the tape-recorder for them. But they were not 'saved' as I expected. They fought among themselves, lied to me and murmured.

Time rolled by. I discovered that one of them could read and gave him a gospel portion. I didn't think much of it until one day one of our Deborah Team members (An outreach team of laywomen who use their spare time for God) informed me she saw a group of poor under a tree. One was reading a gospel and the others were attentively listening. It revived me. God is not unjust to forget our work and labour of love which we have shown toward His name (Heb 6:10). I gave them a full Bible.

I increased the alms I was giving them but I was still not satisfied. I remembered what Jesus said, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not invite your friends, your brothers, relatives, nor your rich neighbours, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just" (Lk 14:12-14). This kept playing in my mind like a scratched LP disc and I invited them for my birthday lunch. An unexplainable joy filled my soul as they ate the chicken and rice, with sparkling eyes, sitting in our garden.

How can I help these poor ones ? I should generate some funds exclusively for them. The one tenth we set apart for the poor from our income vanished in no time. That day as my fingers fiddled over the keyboard of the piano my mind was

running through the Bible, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Mt 6:19,20). That's it. It was God's voice for me. How often I had to clean and dust and flit my piano to keep the moth off the felt ! And I hardly had time for the piano. But it was no easy joke to give away my piano. It was like a member of our household. So I threw the fleece. I wanted confirmation if I had to sell it.

Shortly we heard Brother Bakhtsingh was preaching in Vellore and we went to hear him. I passed on my Bible that he might autograph it. He wrote some unfamiliar references below his few shaky lines. When I opened the Bible to read them... oh... can this be true? Gal 2:10... "Remember the poor !" There was another snag. What will my husband say ? But he gave a willing nod. It was as if God was nodding His head too when the Principal of nearby school (just a hundred metres away) offered to buy it for the school. So out went my piano and in came Rs. 10,000/-. We invested it in a Finance Corporation and the monthly interest of Rs. 125/- goes to the poor. The capital is earmarked for them. Nothing brings in nothing. But I believe in investing for souls. Recently as my husband suggested we designated all the coconuts from our five trees for the poor.

I learned some shocking truths. The man on the push-cart had been paying someone Rs. 1.50 everyday as rent for the push-cart. So we paid Rs. 250/- and bought him the cart. To get their two paise coins (which people liberally gave (!) but shop-keepers refused to accept) changed to currency they were sending the bag of coins to Chennai. Who was the good Samaritan who did that job for them? I wanted to know. But it was a broker who collected a good commission in bargain !

Once while on outreach with my friend we unknowingly passed by their abode—a banyan tree. Two figures darted from out of the shade and took us by surprise. "Here, *amma*

has atleast come to our home. We'll be back in no time." They rushed and bought us two drinks. My friend looked at me and then at their distorted fingers clutching the soda bottles. I gestured to her to take it. But she politely refused. My hand stretched out as if by instinct. I couldn't refuse their love. I drank it to their cheer!

The harvest was past, the summer was ended but they were not saved. I learned their names and prayed for them. Sometimes hopes surged to dizzy heights and then plummeted. Sometimes I sent the alms through someone and at other times I excused myself with a good excuse that it was breakfast time and I needed to take care of my family. Was it worth it to leave my more important works and spend time like that? My devotions were disturbed. But the story-telling and sing-song continued. Visiting professors lectured to them (of course they are no others than my relatives and friends who happened to be in our house on Saturday mornings). Four summers passed.

I had almost given up hope when suddenly this year (1987) there was a noticeable change in them. They had confessed their sins. There was a change in their conduct and behaviour. They wanted to be baptised! Oh joy! Now they were seven. I waited for a few weeks to confirm. I discouraged them saying they wouldn't get any extra benefit after baptism. Yes. They were firm in their desire. I approached the local pastor, and the day was fixed for their baptism.

It was a sultry sunny afternoon. Anxiously I quickened my pace to the Church. Supposing they did not turn up? What a shame for me! Oh, no. There they were, having arrived before me and waiting under a tree—all seven of them. Praise God! As they were helped into the baptismal tank it suddenly struck me that I had not told them what the pastor would ask and what they should reply. How foolish I had been! Will these illiterate ones understand and answer properly? Supposing they fumble? My heart was beating wildly as the pastor asked his usual questions. The answers were most unusual, simple, child-like. "Of course, I know my sins are washed away. Have I not

confessed them?" "How can I come for baptism without believing that Jesus will come again to take me?" I was thrilled to the core. The thrill of soulwinning. These "brothers!"

Raman was now regularly missing. What happened to him? I sent word and Raman came. He was ashamed to beg, having come to know Christ. He looked so different, wearing a full-sleeves shirt, a wrist watch, turban and a towel over his hands. He was hiring a rickshaw and riding passengers in the night. Daily he had to pay Rs. 5/- to the owner of the rickshaw. He was trying for a bank loan but the bank refused to trust him. So we purchased a rickshaw for him through our Mission, and now he is earning his bread.

Now I have given them a first standard book and the one literate person teaches the rest, so they all can read the Bible themselves. They have taken a few tracts and gospels to be given away to others! One of their friends is reading a gospel portion now.

The latest is, I am planning a Bible Study for them. Not that I'm going to hire a class-room. But they would study one chapter from the Bible every week starting with the first chapter of Matthew. I would ask them questions and reward them with a sweet for every correct answer. Pray for these brothers.

Do you hear a voice? A drowning voice? Hush, listen... yes it is there... echoing as if from the deep of a well—

"No man cared for my soul!" (Psa 142:4).

It is the cry, not of the 'lost' but the lamentation of those who pass under your very nose everyday without hearing the gospel!

Soulwinners Syndrome

The Soulwinner's Disease is a multisystem disease. It is an infection and it derives its importance from the fact that it is found on the increase in this century. It affects all age groups. Acute and recurrent attacks are triggered by camps, books or contacts. The severity gradually increases. It usually lives with the patient till his end.

Historical Aspects

Though the Soulwinner's Disease was apparently known to the ancient Hebrews by 3000 B.C., it was in the first century A.D. that a clear description was given by Dr. Luke from the clinical study of a patient by name Paul who died of this incurable disease. Since then many cases have been reported but not much thought was given to it. At the wake of this century stray cases were reported in Kerala, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra and other States. Many countries have reported similar cases.

Etiology

This illness is caused by a large number of agents. The primary agent appears to be the Bible.

Contributory Factors

For reasons poorly understood, susceptibility to Soulwinner's Disease is caused by keen spirituality. A visit to an endemic area precipitates the disease.

History

Invariably all the patients give a history of a recent encounter with Jesus. It is almost always a crisis experience. A period of euphoria sets in, followed by sobriety. Often a history of contact with the disease is elicited.

General Examination

In Type A, the patient is lean, excited and fidgety with a cheerful face. He is an extrovert, often talkative and cares little about his surroundings. In a long standing case the knees may be callous and tear glands swollen. Skin is sun-tanned.

Type B is better known as Forced Soulwinners Syndrome. This patient is quiet, shy and nervous. They are not a problem since they rarely infect others. But experiments prove that they can turn out to be the explosive infective A Type.

The signs and symptoms develop very slowly after an indefinite incubation period.

Cardio Vascular System

There is mild tachycardia. B. P. is generally in the upper border of normal. The heart is typically described as the "Bleeding Heart." Heart sounds are banging. On auscultation a low rumbling murmur could be made out, of the sound of saying, "Give me souls or I die; give me souls or I die." The patient is paralysed from his regular duties by the frequent attacks of chest pain which trebles him up on his knees, head low groaning.

Central Nervous System

Frequent dreams and visions are common. Dreams are usually of large crowds walking over the edge of a precipice into hellfire. Visions may be of world map or of persons calling for help (as in the case of Paul). Profuse sweating is a typical sign due to their listless nature and frequent wanderings. Unexplained breakdown and cryings are reported in some cases. Sleep is usually good because they go to bed very tired.

Gastrointestinal System

Usually they have good appetite but acute cases complain of anorexia. It is a strange coincidence that many of these patients have peptic ulcer. But research has shown that clinically they are unrelated. The cause is the untimely meals they are addicted to.

Respiratory System

It is usually normal except for frequent sighs.

Prevention

Since treatment of this disease is very difficult all the so-called believers must be given periodic shots of ASSV (Anti Soulwinners Syndrome Vaccine). It is a culture of "I-cannot" virus. Regular inoculation every six months usually protects anyone from contracting this illness.

Treatment

Treatment should be continued till the disappearance of the last symptom. Though researches have been futile the following course of treatment is rewarding.

1. Create in him a desire to work overtime and earn more.
2. Divert his interests on harmless pastimes like good books,

educational programmes in TV, decent song cassettes, sports and games and hobbies. Encourage him to attend all possible evangelistic meetings to taste sermons.

3. Do not give him strong meat. It exacerbates. Put him on a strict diet of milk.

4. Constant reminders of his physical ailments with suggestions of ample rest do a lot of good.

5. One tablet of fear and 5 grains of nervousness dissolved in an ounce of shyness to be taken daily morning before food. Persecution PRN.

6. Discouragement once a month is enough to keep down the signs and symptoms. Large doses have been found curative in many cases.

7. A psychotherapy to make him feel his status is too high to stoop down to personal soulwinning is found helpful. Show him masses of sinners and keep telling him, "It's no use talking to one person."

8. Liberal application of sin ointment arrests the disease abruptly in resistant cases.

9. Never forget to put him in the DTL. (Devil's Target List).

10. Stir up problems in the family. Getting the unmarried ones married to unbelievers allays the rapid progress of the disease.

Lucifer Laboratories Ltd. are in feverish research to find a cure for this devastating disease. The future seems bleak though they are working day and night !

10

Letter to a Missionary

FROM

Lord Jesus Christ,
Right Hand of the Father,
Heaven.

TO

Mr. Missionary,
Unreached Area,
Earth.

My beloved brother,

You may be surprised to receive this letter from Me. I think it is high time I write you lest you sink in despair. There is a note of anxiety in your letters. Why?

First of all, my brother, I want to assure you I am not far away from you. It is your own imagination. Don't believe the lies of your Evil Neighbour. He tries to put down your spirit.

Whether in darkness or in daylight, sickness or health, reception or persecution I am by your side. Have I not told you that I will never leave you nor forsake you? Why do you doubt then? It is true I did not send a money-order as soon as you asked Me, nor heal you the moment you cried to Me, nor commanded instantaneous deliverance in problems. You are worried about your today only. I am concerned about your future also. So I have to carefully plan My every action for you. I have to train your arms for war, build you up in faith, train you to walk by faith and not by sight, train you to accept 'no's' from Me, train you not to be afraid of darkness and storms. You are no more a baby. You have to grow out of your childishness. So now look ahead and march forward casting away all your fears and doubts. All these things work together for your own good.

Of course I understand your problems. I myself have suffered all these things. Why do you grumble about your wheat *chappatis*? You left rice and eat *chappatis*, but I left My heavenly manna and angel's food and ate *chappatis* on earth! I did find it difficult to swallow. But did I ever once complain about it? For you it is only a change of temperature. But I never knew the slightest discomfort till I came down to earth. But, for the sake of saving you, I put up with everything.

Do not worry about your children now. You have obeyed My voice and sacrificed your children. Are they not My responsibility now? You just do to them what is within your means to the best of your ability and leave the rest to Me. Your children are My children.

It is true you are finding it difficult to make both ends meet. I have all the riches you want. But I do not want you to be very rich. My enemy deceitfully gave riches to some and led them astray. They have forgotten the mission for which I deputed them. They are praising Me for their blessings which have become a curse for them. Brother, remember I became poor, so I was within the reach of common people. You must know the sufferings of common man and maintain their status

so that your heart can reach out to them. That's why I am withholding from you certain things. Soon, all that I have will be yours. I have told you to be content if you have food and clothing. So don't desire more. Why do you always keep worrying about your health? I am your Healer and I am directing the hands of the doctor who treats you. You are in My hands. Can you add one day to your life by worrying? So quit worrying. The present sufferings are nothing compared to the future glory.

Don't worry about the man who is giving you all this trouble. He is an agent of Satan. I will deal with him in due time. Let not fear overtake you. I am watching his every move. I have kept many angels around you to guard you. I am aware of everything that's happening to you. I am silent because I want you to trust Me blindly and not be fretting at every situation.

Also don't be discouraged at the barrenness you see in the field. Fast often, pray more and labour more. Keep on sowing the seeds. I am about to send a heavy shower when all the seeds will spring up. If you are discouraged now and stop sowing there will be no harvest for you. For some of my coworkers I never commanded a harvest. They just sowed the seeds and slept in peace. They will awake in eternity to receive their rewards though the world may give no credit to their "fruitless" labours. Carry on. The day of harvest is not far. I will fulfill the desires of your heart.

I am sorry in your despair you criticise your leader. I only appointed him over you. His heart is in My hand. I turn it as I please. He cannot do anything of his own. I promote and I demote; I transfer and I settle. He simply carries out My orders. Certain things may be very disturbing to you. But I want you to stand the trial. The devil is pointing to it and whispering in your ears to quit. But beware! The devil can see your future. I have a glorious future for you when you cross this hurdle. That's why the devil feels threatened and is trying to mislead you. I am holding your right hand. I recognise your

labours for Me. I appreciate your faithfulness. I give you credit for your honesty, labour and truthfulness. What more do you want? Only on this earth somebody can steal away the credit that belongs to you. But My record is perfect. No one can cheat Me.

There is another thing I want to write to you. I am not satisfied with your standard of holiness. I keep constantly speaking to you through My Spirit and your conscience. The devil keeps telling you are too negative and sensitive. No, it is not so. It is My voice. Don't try to muffle it. Heed My plea and run away from evil. Would you betray me for a moment of passion? Would you choose another master for a few more rupees? Would you speak lies to please your earthly leader and displease your heavenly Master? Would you keep what does not belong to you, in the name of ministry? Beware, My brother! You must not be ignorant of the devices of the devil. He knows your weak point and I know that too. He kicks at it but I support it. Lean on My side. It is safe for you.

And why do you harbour bitterness against your coworker? Many times I am unable to bless your work because you don't even pray together. You keep asking Me to bless you after tying My hands tight! Don't ask me to bless your work before first getting reconciled to your brother. Were not Peter, James and John My colabourers? When I spoke of My plans, Peter said "No." I scolded him but harboured no bitterness against him; because I knew it was not he but the devil that instigated him. When I spoke of My suffering James and John were demanding glory. I worked with Judas. I knew he was a thief but I was not jittery. I treated him as My friend. You are not having worse companions than these. You have your weaknesses and they have theirs. So be at peace with them. Forgive them as I have forgiven you.

Never give in to the temptation that you can fare better in another field or another ministry or independently. I don't want you to do great things. I want you to just do My will. Many

were cheated by the devil to forsake the specific humble tasks I assigned to them to a “glamorous” ministry. Trust Me and work together joyfully with the team I have put you in. Let not the devil make you believe you are unique. Everyone is equally precious to Me and you must go, grow and glow together.

It is real fun for me to watch you from up here. You are behaving as if you don’t have a God and a Father. Stop acting that way. What will the heathen around you think of Me?

Let me close this letter with the reassurance that I shall be with you even to the end of the age.

With My loving kisses,

Your Brother,
J. Christ

11

Sacrifice

- When thousands of voices are praising your masterpiece and one voice criticises it and if you can acknowledge that voice humbly—that’s sacrifice.
- When an enquiry is made of a blunder and you are the culprit, if no one knows it is you and there is no way finding it, if you can lift up your hand—that’s sacrifice.
- If you can willingly step down from any honour and privilege in order to follow the will of God—that’s sacrifice.
- If there is a secret about your enemy which will degrade, defame and crush him and if you can keep it to yourself—that’s sacrifice.
- If you make a big mistake and are rebuked sharply, if you take courage and attempt to do it again rightly—that’s sacrifice.
- If you can do a thing very well and yet if you are being instructed like a zombie and if you can take it in silence without getting irritated—that’s sacrifice.

- If you have done a very great help to someone and that has to be kept a secret, if you don't even hint about what you did — that's sacrifice.
- If you have counseled someone and he has refused to listen; if he suffers on account of this and comes back to you and if you do not say, "Did I not tell you?" but embrace him—that's sacrifice.
- If you see your brother in sin and go and warn, taking the risk of earning his ill-will—that's sacrifice.
- If you leave a prosperous situation to preserve your purity—that's sacrifice.
- If you are on the right but grossly misunderstood, if you can hold your tongue from saying, "Eternity will prove it"—that's sacrifice.
- If no one gives you the credit for something remarkable you have done, if you can keep from saying, "I did it!"—that's sacrifice.
- If you know so-and-so has greatly harmed you and he refuses to accept it, if you can still forgive and love him—that's sacrifice.
- If one loves you very much and you think that love is turning to lust and if you refuse to show him your love just to save him from sin—and for that you are grossly misunderstood—that's sacrifice.

12

Handling Hurt

When I was a baby I cried when someone hurt me.

When I was a toddler I bit the offender revengefully.

When I was a child I threw a temper-tantrum when hurt.

When I was young I learned self-control and said,
"The Lord deal with them. Vengeance is the Lord's!"

When I grew up I trained myself to ignore the hurt.

When I became a man I said, "Father, forgive them,
they know not what they do" and turned my other cheek.

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