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A DAILY DEVOTIONAL FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Meet THIS DAY WITH GOD

SAMSON PAUL



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Meet THIS DAY WITH GOD

(Living Stream Devotional Book Series - 23)

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Translated From Tamil

Dr. Mrs. Edriana Jayasingh

Mrs. Princess Melwin

Mr. I.C. Leslie

Mr. Patric Benzihar

Cover Design By : Wilson Paul, (Wings)

SAMSON PAUL
126, Muthaiya Muthaliar Street,
Pondicherry - 605 003. INDIA
e-mail : jeevaneerodai@gmail.com
Website : www.jeevaneerodai.com
Typesetting : Platinum Graphics, Pondicherry -1. Ph : 2220378
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Living Stream

Daily Devotional Book

Gift

Presented to _____

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Few Words with you...

Our Almighty God grants, to us the necessary grace to lead a life of fellowship with Him along with guidance from above. God has been guiding me in the efforts to receive and pass on His word to help people grow in their spiritual walk. Writing and reading a daily meditation is not like performing a daily religious ritual. The meditations must be focused on directing people on the godly path every day. The readers also must have the desire to be motivated in their spiritual walk. They must look forward to receiving words of encouragement on daily basis.

The readers read them amidst different situations in life. The meditations are prepared keeping in mind the goal of producing the guidance according to different situations. God has been enabling me so far to fulfill this goal in a satisfying way. Every time a new book of meditations is released, people have expressed that they come across fresh insights which have not been revealed to them so far. There are some who feel sad that many people are ignorant of such a book of depth while books which do not convey any solid and significant spiritual truths have become very popular.

Writing daily meditations is a hard task but finding a suitable title for the book is an equally hard work. While I was reflecting on a suitable and relevant title, God gave ***"Meet this day with God".***

Every day we have to face different situations. It is a challenge that we have to meet and we may have the question 'how? Those who live in the presence of God can meet any situation with courage and confidence and overcome them. These meditations are precious collections of word of God that are needed to face the situations. Therefore it must not be read as if it is part of daily routine but must be read with care so that we can face each day victoriously with the strength and guidance received from God.

Samson Paul

Give a Precious Gift

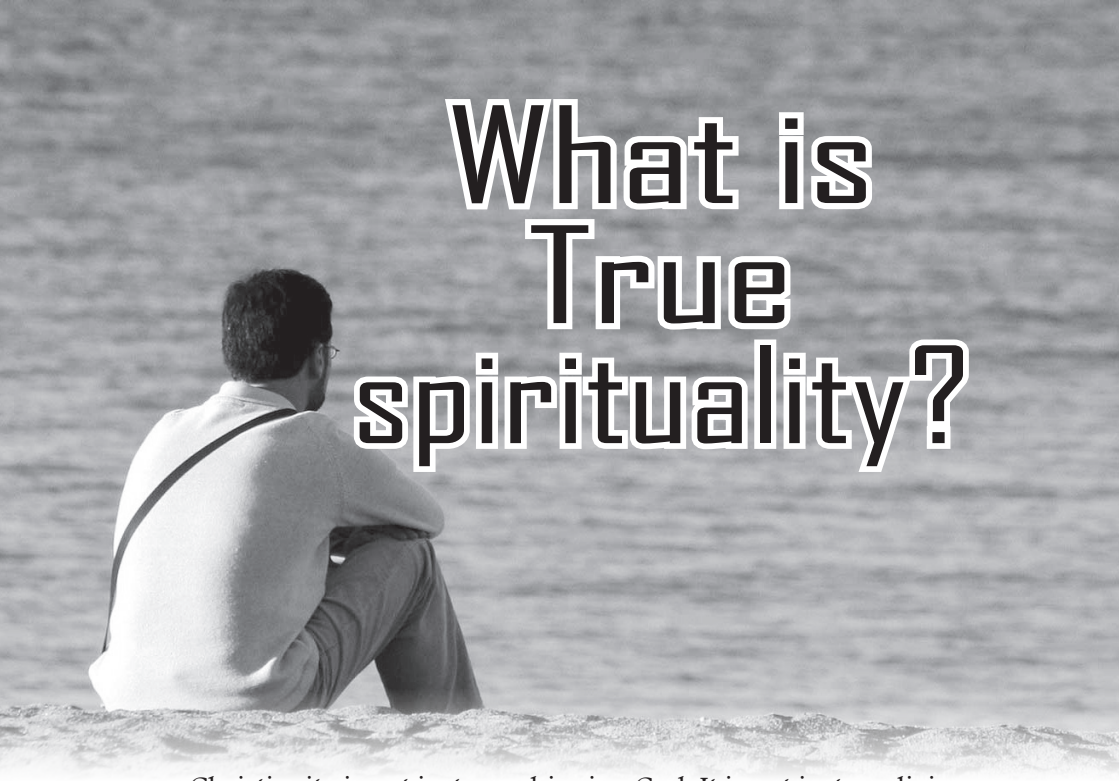


There are many who feel sad that they have not been introduced to such a beautiful meditation book. There are many who consider Jeeva Neerodai book of mediations as a precious gift to receive. All those who read this will surely get the satisfaction of having received an excellent spiritual guide. Since you are blessed by this, pass on this blessing to others. May others be introduced to this book through you.

Please come forward to gift this book to your fiends, relatives and well- wishers. If you wish to sponsor and send this to somebody as a gift, we will send to them on your behaif in your name.

Why two Bible portions haven't been provided?

This year only one passage from the Bible has been given. Till now one reading portion was from Old Testament and one from New Testament. Those who read the meditations read the Bible passages given for each day and are satisfied. The objective of the book is to place before you a good spiritual thought without defining the scope of your Bible reading. Those who read these meditations need to strengthen themselves spiritually by reading various other portions of scripture and meditate on them. The scripture potions provided daily are linked only with the thought mentioned in the reading. You need to move beyond the prescribed portions of scriptures to be really strengthened in spirit.



What is True spirituality?

Christianity is not just worshipping God. It is not just a religion of a few pious acts. The way man worships God is not so important as the attitude of the worshipper. The condition of his heart is very important.

Man is involved in various pious acts. Trusting God, adoration, visit to places of worship, prayer, praising, singing the Glory of God, reading the bible, self-denial, fasting, listening to sermons, charity and giving offering are some of the activities expressing man's piety. A person may indulge in all these with the sole purpose of pleasing God. But God watches the attitude of the man who does all these..

CAIN AND ABEL

Cain gave the offertory to get the blessing of God. But God saw anger, envy, resentment, jealousy, and bitterness in his heart. As a result He rejected Cain's offering. (Gen4:4)

GOD DOES NOT DELIGHT IN ACTS OF PIETY

The Jews, who lived during the time of Hosea, were involved in observing festivals, temple worship, prayer, and offering sacrifice.

But their attitude and the way they lived did not please God. That's why God expressed his dissatisfaction about the way they worshipped Him and even declared that He was grieved by their expressions of piety. (Isaiah 1;14)

In the days of Amos, God said that He hated their festivals and did not delight and their observance of special days. (Amos5:21). All these statements prove that God does not delight in ritualistic worship.

HOLINESS IS ESSENTIAL

God says that we must be holy as He is holy(Levi20:26). The Bible says that no one can see God without holiness (Heb12:14). Jesus said that He who is pure in heart is blessed for he will see God (Matthew 5:8).

How holy we are is of more significance than how much we worship him. It is true that we cannot receive his grace and blessing unless we are holy. Our adoration and pious acts will not earn his blessing if we are not holy.

A man's involvements in acts of piety may make him a pious man. But he needs godly traits and right attitudes to be recognized as a man of holiness who pleases God.

HOLINESS-IMPOSSIBLE FOR MAN:

Man by nature cannot lead a holy life. As long as his nature is bad, he will not be able to lead a life that is pleasing to God. Godly attitudes cannot operate within him. He might be able to show his devotion to God through some of the pious acts he chooses to perform. But he will not be able to do what pleases God.

BY NATURE MAN IS A SINNER:

Christianity says that man is a sinner even by nature. His inherent sinfulness renders him incapable of abstaining from sin. Jesus said that man is enslaved by sin (John8:34). Until he overcomes sin, his pious acts will not be acknowledged by God. Sin governs any man born in this world irrespective of his religion, caste, nationality, colour, creed and faith.

WHAT IS SIN?

Sin can be defined as an evil force. It subdues and overpowers every human being, how to identify the presence of this evil force? Every man can recognize its presence by the way it functions. Our thinking, planning, desires, outlook, choices, nature, decisions, relationships and entertainments are not proper and right. We know that most of our choices are wrong but we do not have the strength to reject them. We succumb to the force of such sinful choices. This is the evidence that sinfulness has predominance in our life.

GODLESS VACUUM:

We are powerless to do good and resist evil. There is a power within us which acts with great force keeping us under its controle. That is sin (Romans7:18). Sin is the result of Godless vacuum. When God occupies this vacuum sin loses its grip on us.

Man can indulge in many pious acts while sin occupies the vacuum but God will not approve of them. Hence all the good acts that man perform while he is under the control of sin, are wasted efforts. That's why Christianity emphasizes the fact that man must be delivered from his sinful state first.

HOW CAN WE GET RID OF SIN?

We can't get rid of sin by our own self directed efforts, physically, cleansing, giving alms, recital of mantras, uttering praises and prayers, offering and self-denial.

GOD MUST REIGN:

If we wish to be free from the sins rule, we must subject ourselves to God's rule. Only when God's love fills our heart, sin loses its force. As long as sin stays in us, God can't come into our life. Sin blocks the entry of God. God and sin can never co-exist.

THE FIRST STEP IN SPIRITUAL LIFE:

Therefore Christianity highlights the importance of removal of sin from a man's life. when the holy God resides in a person he can be made holy. Only when he becomes holy, his acts, attitudes

and behavior will be pleasing to God. Until such a time, his pious life will not be acknowledged by God.

A SAVIOR IS NEEDED:

How can sin be removed: Christianity teaches that a man needs a savior who could save him from the authority and governance of sin. The first and chief blessing God wants to give man is a savior. Man needs this greatest gift because the main problem of man is the sin that enslaves him. That's why the Bible says that Jesus came into the world to save a sinner (I Tim 1:15). He came into the world to save the perishing humanity from the clutches of sin. He paid the ransom on the cross and the humanity got the privilege of leading a free life through the precious blood that Jesus shed on the cross.

GOD DWELLS IN THE HEART OF A MAN:

One who believes in Jesus Christ becomes free from the penalty and possibility of sin. When he is delivered from sin, God dwells with him and he becomes a new creation.

A person's pious or spiritual life begins on the day when he is delivered from sin. Only after a person passes through salvation and forgiveness of sins, God will approve of his pious acts. The Bible says that when a person accepts Christ as his savior, he becomes a new creation. His old way of life comes to an end and a life of holiness begins (II Corinth5:11).

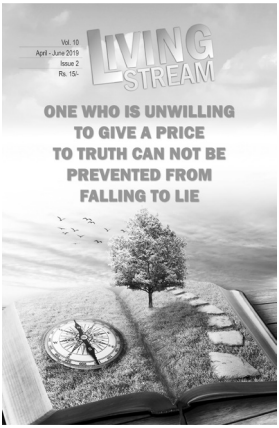
NEXT DEVOTIONAL BOOK

You may have been receiving the Living Stream Daily Devotion through someone else. Even so, you may come forward to receive it directly from us. God willing, a new Daily Devotion Book will be released next year. To receive the next issue of the Daily Devotion that will follow the current one, you may kindly contact the following address:

SAMSON PAUL
126, Muthaya Mudaliar Street, Puducherry - 605 003. INDIA
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LIVING STREAM

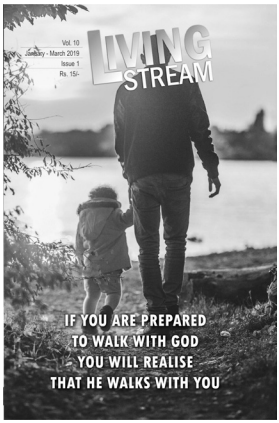
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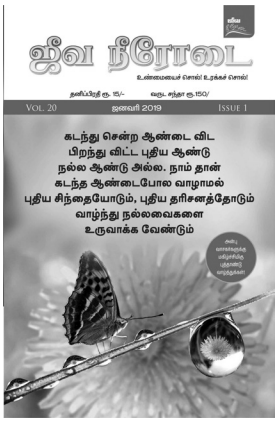
A DYNAMIC AND PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HELP YOU TO LIVE A SUCCESSFUL AND MEANINGFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE

JEEVA NEERODAI

MONTHLY MAGAZINE IN TAMIL

Editor : Samson Paul

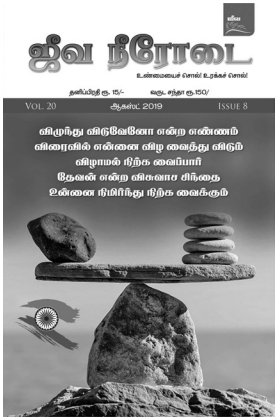
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QUESTIONS

Is it important that I should accept Jesus Christ?

Yes, you need to accept Christ. Whatever be your caste, creed and religion, you are enslaved by sin. Jesus Christ came to save you from sin. You need His help. (Acts 4:12, John 8:36}

What are the symptoms that show that we are enslaved by sins?

Lack of desire to live a pure, righteous and honest life, lack of certainty that God dwells in our heart, inability to experience fellowship with God, absence of inner peace, fear, inability to give up wrong attitudes, inability to control lustful desires and ignorance about life after death are some of the symptoms that show one's enslavement to sin. (Mark 7:21, Calat.5:19-21)

Can I try and correct all the drawbacks mentioned above?

You cannot amend your life with your own strength and efforts. These weaknesses are inherent and innate in you. The inability to lead a life that is pleasing to God is inherent .By nature; man can never give up faulty attitudes. A man who does not know swimming, can never come out of turbulent water, however much he struggled

and tried. He needs a saviour. Similarly, a man struggling to come out of his sinful life needs a saviour.(Romans:7:15-25)

I have faith and am involved in many spiritual activities. Isn't this enough?

A person can continue to be a slave to sin, while he is involved in pious activities. But if you wish to be connected with God and experience desirable changes in attitude, mindset and principles as God wishes, you have to first accept Jesus and be saved. He is the one who can deliver you from your sins. (Isaiah 1: 16; John 3:3)

What is the meaning of accepting Jesus?

If you are caught in deep water, you can not swim back to the shore. An expert swimmer alone can save you. What are you expected to do when you are in trouble? You need to co -operate with the efforts of the expert and allow him to rescue you. Same way, you need to co-operate with God, by allowing Him to do what He wants to do in your life to deliver you from the powers of evil (John 1:12, Roans 8:15)

How to activate the process of being saved?

First, you need to acknowledge before God that you are a sinner who is in need of being cleansed by Him. When the physician points out the disease, the patient has to accept that as truth. Only then, he can be healed. Similarly, you need to accept that you have sin within you. Next, you need to believe that Jesus Christ can deliver you and repent for your sins. You need to ask for Him to forgive you. While you ask for forgiveness, you have to firmly believe that he has forgiven you and that your heart has been cleansed by the blood he shed on the cross. (Luke 18;13; Eph.1:13,14 ; Eph.2:8)

Should I confess my sins, one by one, while I ask for forgiveness?

It is quite impossible to enumerate all our sins, one by one. It is not necessary either. The main cause for all our sins is our Godless state. Many sins are committed in that state. We need to repent for that. (Luke 15:21)

What will happen within me when I come forward to accept Christ?

Your sins will be forgiven and you will receive a new heart. You will receive the Holy Spirit as a sign of deliverance from sin. He will give you the desire to hate sin and to be holy. Then, you will not only become a good person but you become the son/daughter of God. (John 16:8, 3:9)

What should I do after that?

You need to first believe that you have been delivered from the enslaving power of sin. Now you will have the spirit of God in you as a mark of your salvation. Then It will be possible for you to give up your old way of life and bad qualities. Now you can have a holy life pleasing to God. You have the power to do this. You need to believe this and act on this faith. (Titus 3:8, John 15:15)

What is meant by acting on faith?

Imagine that you are appointed as a manager of a big company by the owner. You need to believe that and exert your authority. If you hesitate to use the power which the position has authorized you, then you will not achieve anything. If you command with confidence, others will obey. Same way, act with confidence believing that God has empowered you. Try to appropriate and exercise all good virtues. You can do that. (Romans 6:22, 6:14)

Is it possible to lead a good life?

Yes, it is but it is not dependent on your will and strength. Once you realize that you are a sinner and seek deliverance desiring holy life, God will give you Holy Spirit who will empower you to lead a holy life. What is impossible for you will be possible with the Holy Spirit's help, (Act 1:8, Phil.4:13)

What will the Holy Spirit do, when I receive Him?

He will help you establish a good fellowship with Him. He will warn you about sinful ways and help you to resist sin. He will not only pit within you a thirst for a holy life but also allow God's power to work within you. He will guide you in the right way

everyday and affirm and remind you, that you are a child of God. (John 16:8, 13)

After being saved, is it necessary to be involved in prayer and meditation on the Bible?

Yes, definitely you must do that because prayers and meditations keep your salvation alive and active. Prayer makes us aware of our relationship with God. Only then we can receive the power to lead a holy life and avoid sin. Only through prayer, we can get an assurance that God is with us and see the work of the Spirit within us. Prayers keep us connected with God. We get power to be holy through prayer. When we read the Bible and meditate on the verses, God will speak to us through the verses. We can experience His specific guidance through them. (Romans 12:12, Luke 5:16)

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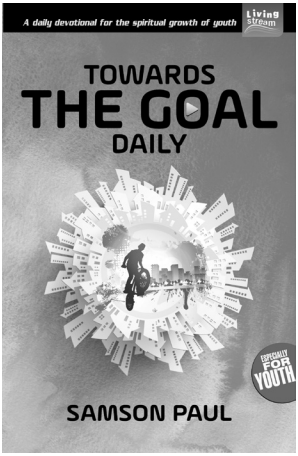
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- MEET THIS DAY WITH GOD
- IN YOUR WAYS
- THIS DAY TO LIVE
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- FOR THE HEARTS OF BLOOMING BUDS
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- GOD'S WORD'S FOR YOUNG HEARTS
- IN THE HEARTS OF BUDS
- O LORD IN THY PRESENCE
- BLESSED WORD FOR TODAY
- EVERY DAY IN HIS PRESENCE
- WALKING CLOSER WITH GOD
- EVERYDAY WITH THE EVERLASTING GOD
- A JOURNEY WITH GOD
- WALKING WITH GOD
- GOD'S GUIDANCE TODAY
- STREAM OF LIFE

INSPIRING DAILY READINGS THAT CAN LEAD THE YOUTH IN THE FAITH OF VICTORY AND JOY



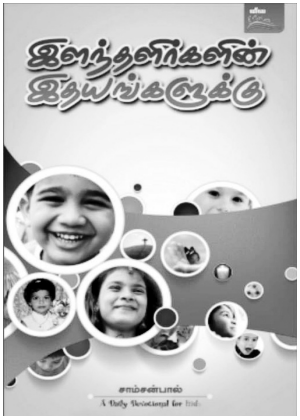
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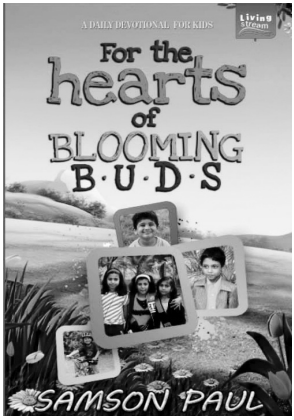
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3. வெளிச்சத்தில் வெளிப்படும் உண்மைகள்
4. வழிகாட்டும் சிந்தனைகள்
5. சிலுவையில் இயேசுவின் இதய ஓசைகள்
6. நம்பிக்கையில் சந்தோஷமாயிருங்கள்
7. பரிசுத்த வாழ்வின் பாதையில்
8. நாம் ஏன் ஜெபிக்க வேண்டும்?
9. துதி மலர்கள் ஆயிரம்
10. தேவன் அங்கீகரிக்கும் ஜெபம்
11. ஆராதனையும் அனுதின வாழ்க்கையும்
12. விசுவாசத்தின் பிரதிபலிப்புகள்
13. சிலுவையின் பாதையில் சில மனிதர்கள்
14. துக்கம் சந்தோஷமாக மாறும்
15. ஆசீர்வாதங்கள் தடைபடுவது ஏன்?
16. கிறிஸ்தவம் பேச்சில் அல்ல... செயலில்
17. வல்லமையாக ஜெபிப்பது எப்படி?
18. சிந்தையை சீராக்கும் சிந்தனைகள்
19. யார் என்னை தேற்ற முடியும்?
20. மனந்திரும்பியது உண்மையா?
21. சிலுவையில் அறையப்படும் சத்தியங்கள்
22. உண்மையான ஆராதனை
23. கலங்காதே மனமே கலங்காதே
24. சத்திய சிந்தனை முத்துக்கள்
25. ஆசீர்வாதத்தின் அடித்தளங்கள்
26. தேவனுடைய மனிதர்கள் எங்கே? எங்கே?
27. வாலிப வயதுகளில் நீ
28. துன்பங்கள் ஏன்? ஏன்?
29. கண்ணீரின் காலங்களில்
30. விசுவாசமா? வியாபாரமா?
31. சிந்திக்க தூண்டும் சிந்தனைகள்
32. ஆராதனை என்றால் என்ன?
33. காதல் சரியா? தவறா?
34. சோர்ந்து போகாதே மனமே
35. தேவ உறவினால் வாழும் வாழ்க்கை
36. அக்கினி வார்த்தைகள்
37. மனநிலைகள் மாறணுமே
38. கிறிஸ்தவன் இங்கே, கிறிஸ்தவம் எங்கே?
39. சிந்தனைத் தோட்டத்தில் சிறுமலர்கள்
40. அர்த்தமுள்ள ஆவிக்குரிய வாழ்க்கை
41. உண்மையைச் சொல்கிறேன் இது கிறிஸ்தவம் அல்ல
42. எப்படி வாழணும் கிறிஸ்தவ வாழ்க்கை
43. வாலிபத்தை பாதுகாப்பது எப்படி?
44. நீங்களும் உங்கள் பிள்ளைகளும்
45. வித்தியாசமான விக்கிரகங்கள்
46. தேவனுக்காக வாழ்வது என்றால்
47. ஆவிக்குரிய வாழ்க்கை எதற்காக
48. இறை உறவினால் வாழும் குடும்பம்
49. தேவனால் ஆசீர்வதிக்கப்பட வழிகள்
50. நான் ஏன் வாழ வேண்டும் ?
51. இது சத்தியமா, சிந்தியுங்கள் !
52. கிறிஸ்தவ வாழ்க்கை என்றால் என்ன?
53. சத்தியத்தின் வெளிச்சத்தில்
54. திருச்சபை என்பது எதற்காக?
55 மனம் திரும்புதலும் மறுபடி பிறத்தலும்
56 பரிசுத்தமாக வாழச் செய்வது எது?
57 பரிசுத்த ஆவியின் அபிஷேகம் எப்போது? எப்படி?
58 கேட்டாலும் கேளாவிட்டாலும்
59 வலிமையான நம்பிக்கைகள்
60. உண்மை கிறிஸ்தவ அடையாளங்கள்

IN ENGLISH

1. True Worship
2. Godliness for youth, why?
3. In the Times of Distress
4. Powerful Prayer Life, How?
5. Delightful family with Divine Blessings

PLAN TO READ THE ENTIRE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR

JANUARY

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	Matthew	Genesis
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THINGS TO REMEMBER

THINGS TO REMEMBER

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK?

- ☞ Reading a message a day will be helpful.
- ☞ Meditations can be read every day during the family prayer.
- ☞ The impact will be greater, if the meditation is read twice a day.
- ☞ Share with others what you learn from them.
- ☞ The objective is to help you imbibe a divine attitude and encourage your spiritual life with appropriate meditation.
- ☞ Reading just the meditation and the verses is not enough. Please read more verses and spend more time in personal meditation.
- ☞ Reading alone will not benefit. Read, reflect and follow; only then you will be blessed.
- ☞ It is not mandatory that you must read it either in the morning or evening. It can be read any time of the day, without fail.
- ☞ If you could share with me anything that impressed you, I will be much encouraged in my ministry.
- ☞ If you feel that this book is useful, please recommend this at least to one person.

Meet THIS DAY WITH GOD

A DAILY DEVOTIONAL FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

JANUARY 1

SEEKING GOD DAILY

Matthew 6:7-21

Give us today our daily bread.
Matthew 6:11

There are people who attend the church on the first day of a new year seeking God's grace and favour. This they do with great fervour and devotion and pray that God's blessings should flow into their life in the New Year. But, it is very interesting to note that they seek God again only on the first day of the following year. Some, who are very particular in receiving the blessings of God on the very first day of the year, grab the promise verse of the year with great expectation but strangely their enthusiasm fades as days go by, until it vanishes completely.

Why does this zeal that surface on the first day of every year, dwindle and disappear? It is because we seek God's blessing on yearly basis, whereas God makes it available for us on daily basis. That's why Jesus asked His disciples to pray, "Give us today our daily bread." We need to remember that we need God every day of our life. We need to seek His blessings day after day. It is literally impossible to devour one year's food at a time. Similarly, we can not receive one year's blessings all at one time.

'Today' alone is ours. 'Tomorrow' is in God's hands. If we are given the privilege of entering 'tomorrow', we can pray for that day's blessings. His grace is fresh every day. Hence every day, we are expected to seek His grace, fellowship and guidance with renewed vigour and fresh expectation. The way we seek Him, must disclose our dependence on Him daily and show that our existence depends on our relationship with Him. Our total reliance on Him must be expressed in words and enacted in deeds everyday.

Some of us, even on the first day of the year, try to predict whether the year will be good or bad. The prospects of the year depend on our attitude to God on the first day and every ensuing day. Every day is important to make the year good or bad. May God guide us in the days to come.

To Ponder

Live up to God's expectations,
to receive what we expect from God.

JANUARY 2

BIG CATCH

Hebrews.13:1-14

Be content with what you have…..
Hebrews 13:5

A man, who went fishing in a small boat, happened to catch a big fish in his net. But it was so difficult for him to manage that huge fish which was struggling in the net. He was very keen on taking it home because it was very big. But though he tried very hard, he could not continue.

Finally, he wanted to save his life and so threw it along with the net into the water. He reached the shore without the troublesome catch. He had to lose what little he could have caught. In order to own the big catch, he lost the little fish which he could have enjoyed.

Sometimes, impossible dreams and big desires occupy our heart and become unmanageable burdens. Smaller goals and desires get blocked and finally perish because of these huge vain pursuits.

Lot was expected to walk in the way shown by God, with Abraham. When bigger dreams found their way into his heart, his relationship with Abraham became strained.

As a result of this grievous burst of relationship between the kinsmen, Lot could not retain his possessions and riches. Moreover, he had to spend his last days in absolute sorrow and anguish.

The devil planted a huge desire in the heart of Eve. The crazy desire, to become like God, made her lose all her blessings.

Greed for money and desire for popularity very often creep into people who lead a happy life. They eventually turn out to be intolerable burdens that destroy their happiness as a result of which they lose all other blessings they already possess.

The sudden greed that overwhelmed Gehazi not only deprived him of his good position but also made him a prey to leprosy. Desire for promotion and enhancement, by itself is not an offence to be condemned. But, such desires must not be motivated by excessive greed.

To Ponder

Let us be patient till others recognize our goodness, but hasten to remove the evil before others spot it.

JANUARY 3

WHAT SPIRIT DO WE HAVE?

Philippians 3:10-21

Their mind is on earthly things
Philippians 3:19

A small boy was playing with two balloons on the sea shore. The balloons escaped from his grip, while he was careless. One balloon began to float upward while the other one was rolling on the ground. Why was it that when one went up, the other was wallowing in the mud? The balloon that was filled with hydrogen gas went up while the one that was filled with ordinary air lay on the ground.

What kind of spirit dwells within us is important. It is vital to ask this question to determine our commitment. Instead of asking whether we believe in the Lord or not, we need to spend time looking within us to discern the kind of spirit that dwells in us. Only that decides the level of our piety. Some people appear very religious but we may discover that their goals, conduct, and behavior are low and worldly in nature. Though they may speak about heavenly matters at length, their desires pertain to the world.

Abraham and lot were on their spiritual walk. Abraham's focus was on heavenly things. It was an upward look. Lot's eyes were riveted to the richness and fertility of the soil. Abraham's choice as well as outlook was directed by the Spirit of God. So, his look was upward. But, Lot was directed by self. That's why though he was accompanied by godly people; his gaze was fixed on the earth.

Some people are involved in numerous religious activities but their thinking is linked to earthly matters like material possession, pleasure, fame, status, prestige and position. Though they seem to be pious, their basic interest revolves around materialism. It is because they do not possess the spirit of God. That's why their thinking is powerless to take wings and go upwards. Unless the desires are empowered by the spirit of God, they can never be concerned about lofty heavenly matters. They will descend downward, instead of soaring upward.

To Ponder

If man does not seek what is good,
Undesirable elements will pursue him.

JANUARY 4

CHICKEN OR EAGLE?

Isaiah 40: 13-31

They will soar on wings like eagles.
Isaiah 40: 31

Once, a shepherd boy came across the egg of an eagle along the mountain side. He got it hatched along with some chicken eggs. An eaglet emerged from its egg along with other chicks. The eaglet growing with the chicken did not consider itself quite different from the rest. Along with its companions he was seeking grains in the garbage.

One day, the eaglet saw an eagle which was resting on the ground after soaring high in the sky. He was struck by the similarity of appearance and wondered why then he could not fly. He tried to fly like the other one of his species and succeeded.

The awareness that we are children of God has not dawned within most of us. We never realize that we are not expected to lead a mundane life like the people of the world. We have not understood the fact that we have been called to lead an exalted life by exercising our faith. As we have got used to be satisfied with the limited experiences in life, we do not venture to go higher.

When we read about Paul, Peter and John in the Bible, we praise them for their saintly and devoted life. When we go through the biographies of William Carrey, Hudson Taylor, David Livingston and George Muller we commend the Godly men and are amazed by what God did in and through their lives. While we stand awe struck by the lives of such saintly men, why should we be leading a mediocre existence?

God has given the same power, Holy Spirit and fellowship to us also. Why then are we wasting our time in the midst of garbage like the chicken, instead of flying in the sky like the eagle? Though we have become aware that we are eagles created to fly high, we hate to give up our chicken existence. God is calling us to fly like eagles.

To Ponder

Victory should not be a memory of the past, it must be sought and possessed today.

JANUARY 5

IS IT BAD TIME?

Psalm 102: 1 – 28

And I am like a sparrow alone…
Psalm 102: 7

Lonely days are bitter in life. Yes! It is sad when you are made to stand all alone without any comfort in spite of having friends, relations, acquaintances and church members. The times, when you felt that God could have sent someone to comfort or console you, are really painful ones. When God does not send someone to comfort me in times of troubles, in spite of my praying day and night, I feel desperate and dejected.

But the truth is that God makes us to face these tough times because He wants us to depend only on His grace at all times. It is at times of loneliness and helplessness, we come to know that God alone is our help and comfort. It is not our bad time but our good time. It is at this time of crisis, we gain the hope that God can be confidently trusted to give us rest at all times under all situations.

I still remember the days when I longed for someone to comfort and console me but I could not get anyone to help nor comfort me. I thought that those days were the worst times in my life. But it is not true! Soon I realized that they were the best days of my life.

Yes, It is those tough days that confirmed to me that the fellowship and support of my Lord Jesus was more than enough for me and I would be able to stand up till the end of my life through His fellowship. My dear brother and sister! You may have no place to rest your head but I can assure you that you can always lean on our Lord Jesus Christ and live with hope and happiness at all times in your life.

Yes, Joseph and David also had such bad days but it is those lonely and desperate times that enabled them to get a place in the list of faith-warriors. Yes! Are you unable to find anyone to help you in your troubled times? It is not your bad time but good time. Behold! He is watching over you to comfort you!

To Ponder

Never leave the presence of perfectly-loving Lord and do not seek the half-hearted comfort of your dear ones.

JANUARY 6

RIGHTS OR GOAL?

Genesis 13:1-18

Let us not have any quarrelling...
Genesis 13:8

The residents of a village found it very hard to cross a river. Some of the men came forward to build a small boat. The task was soon over and the boat was ready for use. While the people were eagerly looking forward to the day when they could use the boat, a question arose as to who would manage and maintain the boat. Those who gave the idea claimed that they should do it, as it was their brainchild. Those who gave the wood said that they should do it. Those who constructed the boat wanted to have that responsibility since it was they who gave a shape to the idea.

Some others claimed the honour since they alone knew how to row. In this context, the claim of each group was right and indisputable. Each group had the rights. Because of these legal and reasonable claims, the dispute became intense and complicated. As a result the boat lay idle, the dream of the people was shattered. Sometimes reasonable individual claims can damage good goals if they are not sacrificed for the sake of common good.

Some families get wrecked though the husband and wife have their own reasonable and justifiable personal claims to individual rights. In a family the husband may have very reasonable expectations and the wife also may have similar rights. But the peace of the family can be shattered because no one is willing to give up his/her stand.

Since each one is convinced about his/her rights and is passionate about defending that, good results are thwarted. Abraham was humble enough to accept Sarah's suggestion in Hagar's matter and thereby allowed God to act in his life. David did not fight for what he considered to be his right. When confronted by Saul he gave up his right. That's why God's plan was fulfilled and David was honoured. When personal claims are sacrificed for public good, God is glorified and the individual who gives up his right, will be blessed and rewarded.

To Ponder

When a person sacrifices and gives up his rightful claim, God will honour him in the midst of his humiliation.

JANUARY 7

WHO ARE WE?

John 7:11-24

Some said, "He is a good man."
John 7:12

Once a hermit was walking with his disciple. On the way, another man met him and praised him to the heavens. He said that the hermit was a god. The hermit did not show any response. There was no expression of elation on his face.

They walked on and were met by another man. He just abused the hermit using very harsh words. He went to the extent of calling the hermit Satan. The hermit was not at all disturbed. There was no trace of resentment on his face.

The disciple asked, "Master one man commended you and another condemned. How come, you were neither elated nor dejected? You maintained equanimity in both these cases." The hermit replied," Both those people do not know me. One said that I was a god and the other condemned me as Satan. But I know who I am and know myself very well. That's why I remain calm and unmoved."

Some may view us as gods and some may consider us wicked devils. The way we appear in the light of God only matters. If we have understood ourselves properly, we will not be excited when others praise us. Neither will we feel bad about ourselves when others discredit and denounce us.

There were times when people praised Jesus highly when He lived as a man in this world. There were times when abusive words were hurled at Him. But he was neither elated nor depressed by any of them. He maintained a balanced attitude.

He knew before God who He was. Therefore nothing could throw Him off his balance. He was not moved either by extreme happiness or total despair. Sometimes people might praise us excessively or condemn us too much because of their total ignorance about us. If we could learn to have a right understanding of ourselves in the presence of God, we will move on, undeterred.

To Ponder

If our actions centre around what God thinks of us, we will not worry about what people think of us.

JANUARY 8

GROWING IN GOD'S FELLOWSHIP

Ephesians 1:9-23

**May God give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation,
Ephesians 1:17**

It is easy for us to learn to worship and pray to Him. We can be trained to delight in Him and can be guided to be involved in ministry for Him. But, it is hard to be taught to live close to Him. No lesson we receive can help us to be connected to God. The desire must spring from within and be reinforced by experiences.

We may be involved in all external spiritual exercises. But, unless we master the art of living in close fellowship with God, we will not yield fruit of the spirit.

Abraham learnt to be rooted in relationship with God and so he lived as a man who possessed virtues that pleased God. Even in those days when Bible teachings were absent, Joseph was able to overcome sinful temptations because of his vibrant relationship with God.

Churches and ministers can help us to grow in prayer and Bible knowledge. But, only when we seek God in a personal manner, we can grow in relationship with God. Only then, we can yield spiritual fruit.

It is easy to ask others to grow in relationship with God but it is hard to teach people such experiences. It is not easy to teach children how to grow in their relationship with the parents.

The children need not be taught to enjoy the parental love. Their inner feelings and intuitions alone can train them without external reinforcement.

When a person receives Christ within him and learns to look at God as father, he will enter into a relationship with God. He must have the desire to build the relationship further.

Then God will reveal Himself within His heart and the relationship will become lively and enjoyable.

To Ponder

**Vast knowledge about God is useless,
until God is received in one's heart.**

JANUARY 9

HOW IS HAPPINESS?

Philippians 4:1-9

Rejoice in the Lord always…
Philippians 4:4

A man was sitting sad. In his hands he had a book titled, 'How to be Happy?' Another man, who saw this asked him, "How come you are so sad, while having this book, 'How to be Happy?' in your hands" That man said, "This book has intensified my sorrow". The other man asked how was it so, for which he answered,. "I bought this book when I was very sad. But the ideas in this book are of no use to me. So I am sad that I bought this book and read it in vain"

There is no dearth for books related to happiness. But, many books are full of good ideas but do not give any good result. A man, who has sickness in his body, cannot be cured merely by reading plenty of books related to health.

Not by many counsels, but by speedy treatment alone his sickness can be cured and he can be healthy. Happiness of the heart is not learning to make ourselves happy. To receive a happy state of mind, first of all, the stains of sin that are sticking on to our heart should be removed.

Secondly, we need to keep our mind away from sin and have the ability to nurse pure and clean feelings. Noble desires and righteous thoughts should be brought into the mind.

Only when the heart is healthy, happiness will occur. Unless we remove the sin that enslaves us, our heart will not have happiness, no matter how many other deeds we may do. We cannot by ourselves keep our heart clean. God's presence alone gives us the ability to keep ourselves healthy within.

King Solomon was living with so many comforts and filling it by seeking plenty of pleasures. But, finally he said that everything was a grief to the heart. But David, who lived his life seeking the presence of God, said "In Your presence there is fullness of joy"

To Ponder

If you are concerned a bit about others' worries, most part of your worries will dissolve.

JANUARY 10

WHO CAN BE TRUSTED?

Isaiah 54:1-10

Though the mountains be shaken
Isaiah 54:10

A friend of mine was skeptical about everything. He never gave a good certificate to anyone without a microscopic analysis of the person. But, he held one particular person in high regard. His high esteem was based on many evidences. But he was totally devastated when he heard something bad about him. He was desperate because the one and only person he trusted was a person of dubious character.

Yes, it is difficult to find a trust-worthy person in this world. Invariably, something happens to shatter our trust in individuals. In 2008 recession in the USA, some of the popular trust-worthy banks lost their credibility. People began to wonder which bank could be trusted.

Yes, mountains can be shaken and the hills will be removed. Even strong foundations can break. Nothing in this world can be trusted. Nothing is permanent and lasting; only the trust we place in God is lasting. Peter and other disciples said they were ready to give their life for Jesus but He did not rely on their verbal assurance. He relied only on the Father who said He was with Him always.

The four hundred men, who supported David, later opposed him. Only then, he realized that his dependence on people's support would not help him out. He realized the importance of trusting God. In the absence of any other support, he learnt to cling to God alone. That dependence and trust did not let him down.

It is not good to be skeptical about everything. Neither is it wise to believe everything. Let us learn to trust God. We must not depend on wisdom, riches, and human help. Only God is dependable. Only God is constant and unchanging. Those who depend on him will never be forsaken. They will stand firm.

To Ponder

If we fail to nurture genuine honour, deception will usurp our honour.

JANUARY 11

THOUGH ONE KNEW

Luke 12:35-48

That servant who knows his master's will …
Luke 12:47

Three students rode on their bicycles in the opposite direction on a one way road. A police man stopped them and conducted an enquiry. Among the three, one was a Christian. The police man asked him whether he read the Bible. He said that he read daily. The police man warned and sent away the other two boys. But he wanted the Christian boy to pay fine. He said, "If you, who read the Bible committed such an offence, you can not be sent away, without any punishment"

Those who did not read the Bible were not punished for the offenses they committed. The Christian boy may have wailed commenting on the fact that he who was reading the Bible daily had to be punished. God is compassionate on those who sin without knowing the truth but His anger burns against those who know the truth and do not follow that. It is so because much is expected from those to whom much is given.

I have watched that committed Christians face more problems and trials than those who are not pious. I have also heard them lament that their piety does not reward them. Why is it so? They have the privilege of knowing God and possess the power to discern which is wrong and which is right. Though they are God fearing, they do not act according to the truth they know. Therefore God is grieved and does not show any compassion.

We are privileged indeed to own a Bible and it is a blessing that we can read the Bible verses daily. But there is a great danger too in this privileged position. Acting in ignorance is sin too but God will be compassionate when He deals with those who sin out of ignorance. Refusing to follow God's word when we possess full knowledge of the expectations of God is stubborn disobedience. God will definitely punish this head strong resistance.

To Ponder

He who reads the Bible becomes pious,
but, he who loves it becomes holy.

JANUARY 12

WORLD AND ITS PEOPLE

I Corinthians 5:1-13

In that case, you would have to leave this world …
I Corinthians 5:10

Some people do not have any relationship beyond their church contacts. They isolate themselves from the worldly relationships like the ascetics who renounce everything and reside at the foot of the Himalayas. Leading an isolated life is piety according to them. So they don't participate in any functions beyond the church circle. There is another group of Christians. They just attend the Sunday service and apart from that, they do not identify themselves with the church. They are immersed in the life of the world.

Both these approaches are unacceptable. We need to keep away from sin but need not distance ourselves from sinners. Identifying ourselves with the people of the world and living as they do is bad but being friendly with them is not wrong. Loving the world is not liked by God but loving the people of the world is not condemned by Him. Jesus was known to be the friend of sinners. Can a doctor avoid sick people? Can a pastor shun contacts with sinners? God sent His only begotten son into the world because He loved the people of the world.

Mixing with people of other faiths, befriending them, participating in their joys and sorrows and taking part in their celebrations are not sinful. But wherever we go and whoever we meet, we must act like salt that changes others. We must not permit others to influence and change us. We are the light of the world. Light has more work in darkness. We must hate the world, and its approaches and not the people. If we want them to observe our integrity and power of our faith, we must go closer to them.

We must not avoid them if we want our life to impact them. While we go closer to them, we must not allow these relationships to disturb our Christian principles. Our stamp and sign of Christianity must not be destroyed by such contacts and friendship.

To Ponder

He who hates the sick, cannot be a doctor,
he who hates sinners cannot lead a life of testimony.

JANUARY 13

WHY FORGIVE?

Ephesians 4:17-32

**Be kind to one another, forgiving each other,
Ephesians 4:32**

Charles and Mark were engaged in the same business in New York. Mark schemed and resorted to some evil strategies and as a result, Charles' business crashed hurling him into severe loss and debt. Charles became so irritated that he was seeking ways to kill Mark. But at one point his attitude changed and he decided to forgive Mark. His friends could not digest his decision to forgive.

They said," Why do you want to forgive him who has committed a serious crime against you? " Charles replied calmly, " As long as I remain unforgiving, I will be the loser. He destroyed only my business but the anger I have nurtured within me, has been destroying me. Ever since I planned revenge and decided to kill him, I have been allowing all my other talents to rot and rust. My only aim in life was destroying him and in that process I was about to destroy myself. Hence the only way to save myself is by forgiving him."

Of course, we may be exposed to great misfortune by the harm that others do for us. But, at the same time we may have to face other serious consequences if we allow this hurt to rankle. A person who was a victim of another's wickedness, went to the offender and said,' I forgive you with all my heart." The other one replied indifferently, "I don't want your forgiveness.' The victim said calmly, " But I need to forgive".

We will suffer more if we allow resentment to linger in our heart. It will spoil our peace and block the flow of God's grace into our life. On the cross Jesus prayed that His offenders be forgiven. They did not regret their wrongs and repent. Why then he prayed for them? Jesus opted to do that. The hurt others inflict on us is like a wound. If we remain unforgiving, we will be poking the wound again and again making it worse. Hence let us forgive others if not for their sake, at least for our sake.

To Ponder

**If your love for God is not true and complete,
your love for others will be incomplete.**

JANUARY 14

GOD OR PREACHER?

Acts 14:1-18

We too are only men, human like you.
Acts 14:15

A famous Hollywood actress approached a young powerful servant of God and told him that she wanted to marry him because she could not trust any one who was not spiritual.

She considered that all the men who were outside the spiritual world were wicked. So she preferred a man who was in ministry.

The servant of God said "Let us discuss marriage later. There is a person far better than I. He is very good. He is Jesus Christ. Will you first accept Him as Lord?" She replied, "Now all that I need is a good man. I can not limit my life by accepting a God." Saying this, she left.

Many people are like this lady. They are ready to receive servants of God but hesitate to accept God. They will organize great revival meetings and make many great preachers speak.

But, will not receive Christ who longs to speak in their heart. They will be happy and proud to identify themselves with famous preachers but will not like to identify themselves with Christ.

Master is greater than the servant. Hence, we need to honour the Master first. One may ask if all the things mentioned above can be done without love for Christ.

We can organize great meetings just to get cheap popularity or to get a satisfaction. This kind of love is seen only in the thought level. Real love for God is seen in the way one lives according to His commandments. He, who loves Him, walks in His way. (I John.2:6)

Let us thank God for our relationship with good servants of God and good people. But we need to be connected with God. Except for our fellowship with God, no other relationship will continue to be good and desirable. Hence, let us give top priority to enjoying fellowship with God.

To Ponder

The strength we receive to hate the sins of the world, is in proportion to the extent we love God in our heart.

JANUARY 15

HOW TO RECTIFY?

Colossians 3:1-15

Whatever grievances you may have against one another.
Colossians 3:13

A believer in a church used to meet his pastor once a month and share with him the defects and shortcomings of his wife. Though the pastor counseled the wife, the situation did not improve. The husband's grievance also did not stop. One day the pastor asked the husband, "You have been complaining all these days. Have you done anything to correct her mistakes?"

The man remained quiet. When some people see the failures and mistakes of others, they consider them as opportunities to harass and torture them and so take great delight in pointing out the mistakes. They do not want to correct them.

The opposition party observes every move of the ruling party, so that they could find fault. Their intention is not to correct them and make them function better. The mistakes committed by the ruling party are used as weapons to attack by the opposition group.

This approach is not healthy in family life and church fellowships. Blaming others damages relationships. Our aim must be, not to blame but to correct. When Nathan came to know of David's sin, he met David not to condemn and blame him but to make David aware of his sin.

A husband may be worried about the mistakes his wife commits and a wife may be grieved by her husband's defects. Consequently there may be cracks in their relationship due to the resentment. The couple may want to point out the mistakes and hurt one another.

But how many would want to speak gently and try to correct the mistakes so that there can be more harmony and love between them? Our approaches must always build and correct others in family and church.

To Ponder

Mistakes are the wounds that hurt our life,
Refusal to identify them makes the wound permanent.

JANUARY 16

LISTENING WITH COMPASSION

Matthew 14:13-21

When Jesus saw a large crowd, he had compassion
Matthew 14:14

Many years ago when I was facing lot of problems, I approached a God's servant with the desire to share my burden with him. But he acted as if he was very busy and his face betrayed his total lack of concern for my state. His body language showed his indifference to my mental agony. Now and then, he was looking at his watch. On the whole, he seemed to say, "I am in a hurry. Tell me briefly what you wish to say". I could not proceed and therefore I cut short my sharing. His total lack of sympathy broke my heart.

We may have many things to do and we may be hard pressed for time. But when somebody craves for our attention and wishes to pour out his worries, we need to listen with real concern and compassion. Some people might approach us so that they could share their pain with us. At that moment, they might wish to receive comfort. We may not be able to offer money or other material help but they will be highly satisfied if we listen to them attentively. If we just listen with convern, love and compassion they will be comforted.

Even in the midst of His busy schedule, Jesus received with warmth the people who came to him with love and spoke to them. He never considered them as nuisance. On hearing about the sickness of the daughter of Jairus, He hastened towards his house.

But on His way, many people longed to receive His blessings. He did not rush to the destination unmindful of the needs of the people on the way. Jesus, gave time for the people who needed His touch and love even while He was going to heal the sick child of Jairus.

When a woman who was suffering for many years, touched His garment, He did not get annoyed. He stopped to ask who touched Him, appreciated her faith and healed her. Only after that, He left the place. He did not disregard the needs of others. Neither did He consider those who interrupted Him, as nuisance.

To Ponder

If our love for God is not great and genuine, our love for others can not be effective and real.

JANUARY 17

BIRDS ON BANYAN TREE

John 6:48-71

You have the words of eternal life.
John 6:68

Many birds are seen hovering around a huge banyan tree of luxuriant growth. They find shelter in the tree and are seen chirping happily. They do not choose to settle there, out of any concern for the tree. When the tree withers and sheds its leaves, no bird can be seen in its vicinity.

Similarly, if a person has position, status and money many people flock to him and respect him. We need to keep in mind, that love and respect are shown only to the position and possession. Once these things are lost, respect also dies down.

Job was a wealthy man but when he lost all his wealth, even the servant scorned him. When a person occupies a good post, many people will dance to his tune but when he loses everything, even when he calls not many will respond.

Some people want to acquire wealth so that others would respect them. But people should earn respect by their good conduct and character. The general opinion is that the affluent are respected and the good natured people are dishonoured.

The respect we get through noble virtues will be lasting and is of a higher nature. Jesus asked Peter if they also wanted to leave Him. Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68)

Jesus did not have any material wealth and position. But, He had a Godly way of life and words of eternal life. Not many were attracted by Him but a small group stuck to Him.

Though we might be surrounded by a big crowd, a small circle of friends who love us genuinely is far better than the big group.

To Ponder

Praises of many do not prove our goodness, condemnation of many will not make us bad.

JANUARY 18

FAULTY UNDERSTANDING

I Timothy 4: 1-16

Physical training is of some value but godliness
I Timothy 4:8

A devout Christian in Canada goes about barefoot, dressed in sack cloth. A few days in a week he fasts and covers his head with ash. Recalling the sins he had committed in the past, he whips himself once every day.

The people in that area call him a saint. There is no doubt that he is a holy man but the Bible does not say anywhere that a man can become holy by resorting to such harsh penances. How much of pain we are willing to bear is not the question.

We are not purified by submitting ourselves to tortures. It is important to consider if God has asked us to undergo that. While God has shown us the easy way, by choosing the hard way, we are not going to attain extra holiness.

The extent of holiness and devotion for God does not depend on the extent of torture endured. It can only be measured by our efforts taken to overcome the situations that try to prevent us from displaying God's love and the virtues that He loves.

Neither the churches that teach people against taking medicines or wearing jewels or pastors getting married or following certain dress code are superior nor the people who follow these teachings are holier. Something which the Bible does not say is not a sign of holiness. Holiness is not subjecting ourselves to some hard and fast rules. Holiness can be found in people who yearn for good relationship with God.

Holiness is possessing Godly attitudes. Yes, the evidence of holiness is possessing love, humility, others-centeredness and denial of self. Some struggle a lot to show them as holy and pious yet may not possess the image of God.

To Ponder

Spirituality is not seeking God for blessings and benefits
It is being connected with God and living for Him.

JANUARY 19

SIGNIFICANCE OF HOLY COMMUNION

I Corinthians 11: 20-34

Do this in remembrance of me.
I Corinth 11:25

In the modern world, communion has become a mere ritual and has lost the depth of its meaning. Many people are convinced that if they participate in the communion, they will be blessed. They also think that it is a sin not to take part in that.

Many people take special effort to be present at that time so that they will be blessed by that. But, while Jesus spoke about that on the first day of communion, he said that they should do it in remembrance of Him. It is not to be blessed by a mere ritual.

By following such a ritual, our eyes must be lifted up and we must remember Jesus and what Jesus did. What did He mean when He said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

What does that command imply? His love, sacrifice and fellowship must be remembered. We need to remember how He died on the cross for our sake. He exhorted us to love each other. That commandment must be remembered and honoured. What will happen if we remember all these?

We will definitely try to answer the following questions that will be raised in our mind. 'Are we experiencing the love of God?

Are we enjoying the salvation that He purchased for us, by shedding His precious blood on the cross?

Do we really like the concept of loving one another? Have we received the holiness that comes through Jesus?"

Next time, when you participate in Holy Communion, do so to remember Jesus Christ. Be aware of the fact that taking part in the sacrament of Holy Communion without repentance and salvation is sin.

To Ponder

The world sees what you do,
God sees why you do it.

JANUARY 20

NOT BEAUTY BUT MEANING

Isaiah 60:1-13

Arise;shine, for your light has come.
Isaiah 60:1

Many beautiful paintings were displayed in a painting exhibition. One particular painting attracted the attention of all the visitors. A single candle that gave out a feeble light was surrounded by total darkness. The artist could have drawn so many things in the dark area. But he had left it absolutely vacant. He had wished to communicate a significant thought and he was not concerned about displaying his artistic skill.

Total darkness had engulfed a large area, but the small candle was doing its best to brighten a small portion. Some people's life is crowded with all kinds of luxury, comfort and extravagances. Their life sparkles and shines with riches, education, glamour and fame but their life which looks blessed and attractive, does not convey any meaning.

The life of John, the Baptist was not attractive but was highly meaningful. He was not a sun that gave light to many countries. He was a little light that shone bright in the limited area that was assigned to him.

He did not enjoy the comforts and luxury which modern servants of God boast about. He was a true witness among people who were far removed from truth. He was a model for guileless purity among people who were hypocritical. People could see meaning and not beauty in his life. God wants us to lead a meaningful life. There should be something which others could learn from our life. Others must be able to see something different in us.

We may not be called to shine like sun, but we can all be small candles giving light to the small area that surrounds us. Like the candle we can expel the small patch of darkness. Meaning is more important than beauty. Do people see some meaning in our life?

To Ponder

What is received from God is in proportion, to what one learns from God.

JANUARY 21

LET US ACCEPT CRITICISM

Psalm 19:1-14

Who can discern his errors?
Psalm 19:12

One can be an experienced person or a renowned scholar, but need not necessarily be free from defects. Even if a person is exceptionally efficient in doing things, there will be something which needs correction. A picture drawn by an eminent artist was appreciated by many. One person, who could not relish this, took upon himself, the task of finding some defect in the picture. Finally he succeeded in finding a very small defect and gave a wide publicity to that.

The artist knew very well that it was an outcome of his jealousy. Yet, he accepted his defect and corrected the mistake. As a result, the picture was all the more perfect, won more appreciation. He remarked, "The other person's jealousy discovered the defect which my eyes failed to notice and thanks to that, my picture has become the best one." It is very hard to accept criticism.

In general, criticism stems out of jealousy and hatred. But we can not come to the conclusion that all criticism is baseless. What our eyes might miss, the other person might find out easily. Even if the origin is jealousy, we need to correct the mistakes that have been located, after a laborious search. Our eyes will be opened to our defects more by the criticism of our foes than by the blind appreciation of our friends.

I too have felt that people point out the defects in my writings, out of spite. Yet, I have been benefited by that because I was able to rectify the mistakes. Hence, though we might detect any wrong motive for such exposure of our defects, let us not deny them or oppose the critics.

Let us come forward to check if the criticism is true and correct the mistakes. God may open our eyes to our defects, through the criticism that is rooted in jealousy.

To Ponder

You can either accept or deny the truth,
there is nothing to bargain or compromise.

JANUARY 22

HAVE WE UNDERSTOOD?

Job 29:1-25

So that we may be able to comfort....
2 Corinthians 1:4

The pastor of a large assembly has studied theology and has earned many degrees and honours. He reads many books on Bible and does researches everyday. Yet, he had many questions about how much of the Bible can be true, scientifically and historically. But a servant in that assembly had studied only up to seventh standard. He also reads the Bible every day, but he will be happily singing all the time. One day the pastor finally asked that servant, "I have read so many research books on the Bible, yet I have not understood it properly. But you read only the Bible. So what do you understand?"

"Sir, I read the Bible and understood that I am a sinner and only Jesus could save me from my sins. The Word of God helps me everyday to understand clearly the path my life is taking and to correct if I am on the wrong track." The pastor realized that he lacks an understanding that the illiterate servant has.

Many pay attention doing in research in the Scriptures and in learning the Biblical philosophy. But the Word of God is a Light. And the most pressing need is to see who we are in that Light. It is important to research the Bible, but looking into ourselves in the Light of the Biblical truth is much more important. When a light is burning in darkness, we should make use of the light; instead, if we spend our time researching how the light is burning and what are the scientific principles behind that, it is not a prudent thing to do.

Through the Word of God, we can discover that we are sinners and can receive deliverance from sin. From the Bible, we can obtain instructions to lead our lives. It is important to know how a boat works. But it will be unwise to pay your attention completely to the laws governing how a boat works and not reaching the other shore. If people spend time researching the Biblical truths, but not in introspecting in the light of the Word, they can increase their knowledge; but they will never be able to attain holiness in their lives.

To Ponder

Today's need is not those who explain the light, but those who burn and shine as the light.

JANUARY 23

LET US EXPRESS LOVE

Matthew 22: 33-46

Love your neighbor as yourself.
Matthew 22:39

One man asked another, "Do you believe that God loves?" The other man replied, "I do not know whether God is loving or not. I don't like to research on that, but I know that you are a loving person. I see compassion, concern and humanitarian consideration in you." On hearing that, the other man remarked, "All that you see in me, I received from God. Otherwise, I would have been a very bad person."

It is not enough to tell others that God is love. We need to express that love, through the way we live. It is better to express love than to explain it. We can write or speak about love but if others do not see it in our life,

what we write and speak will be just a lifeless advertisement. Love was manifested by Jesus in a concrete way, so that others could see it. He was keen on expressing love in action than on speaking about the concept of love. That's why He said ," anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn.14:9).

Today even though people speak eloquently about the love of Jesus, they do not have qualities like compassion, humility, helping tendency, patience etc., which are in fact definite reflections of God's love. In the absence of such good qualities, Gods love remains only in words. One can even speak of love but not all can show it. Only those who are close to God and enjoy the warmth of His love can express it to others.

Some people's love is highly emotional and does not last long. It flutters for a while and dies shortly. We can not love just to fulfill the requirement and do it as prosaic obedience to a commandment. Love for others must flow as a consequence of our finding it in God. Before attempting to love others, we need to live closer to God so that we are filled and replenished with His love.

To Ponder

One may do good works without being good,
but one can't be considered good, without any good works.

JANUARY 24

FORGIVING GOD

Ecclesiastes. 8:1-17

When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out…
Ecclesiastes 8:11

A warning sign carrying the picture of a skull was found near a transformer. The warning was about the danger due to the passing current. A school boy who passed that way several times used to touch the box to check whether there was any sign of the passing current. As he did not feel anything, he concluded that the warning was an empty threat. One day when he carelessly touched the box, he experienced a severe shock as there was a leakage and he was thrown off resulting in his death.

The Bible repeatedly warns us that our wrong ways and attitudes will bring about the wrath of God on us. But, people treat this very lightly and just ignore this. Since, many times people who commit offenses against conscience and God are not punished, they begin to ignore such warnings and live as they like. They throw caution to the winds and do not hesitate to commit mistakes.

Though the Bible talks about the punishment of God, we know that God is a forgiving God. He is full of compassion, abounding in grace and ready to forgive. Though what we did in the past qualifies us for condemnation and punishment, God has not punished us.

Though we have sinned repeatedly, we have been forgiven liberally and generously. God gives us several opportunities to repent and get reformed. He wants us to lead a reconstructed life. He does not want to condemn us but wishes that we correct ourselves.

We must not wrongly conclude that God has ignored our sinful ways just because we have escaped unpunished. We must not think that God ignores our unprincipled living because He has been quiet for some time. This period of grace might come to an end all of a sudden if we continue to harden our hearts. If we do not heed the warning we will be hurt by the wrath of God and suffer consequent punishment someday.

To Ponder

Acknowledging our sinful state is honesty, attempting to correct and change is wisdom.

JANUARY 25

FINDING FAULT

Colossians 3:1-13

If anyone has a complaint against any
Colossians 3:13

A friend of mine is very open hearted. He won't hide anything in his heart and will reveal everything. As soon as he hears a sermon, he will tell the preacher immediately about all the faults in that sermon. After giving him good food, if you ask for his opinion, he will point out some fault or the other.

If someone does something, he will call attention to the mistakes in them. Because of this, many are deeply hurt. If someone asks, "Why do you find fault with everything?" his reply will be, "I don't lie. If something is wrong, I can't hide it." That is true, because the faults he points out will be surely there. When we see faults and flaws in others, ignoring them or just considering them in your heart is not the proper thing to do. At the same time, in everything there will be some defects. In everyone there will be certain weaknesses. And we should be able to accept and tolerate some of them at least. At times, we point out others' mistakes because we do not have enough tolerance to accept them.

We also should learn to keep quiet depending upon the situation. If we do not point out the mistakes properly according to the situation, that itself will become a mistake.

When we read the Bible, we realize that the disciples of Jesus Christ did have certain drawbacks, weaknesses and character flaws. Jesus did not keep pointing out those mistakes again and again. Instead because of the love He had for them, He accepted them as they were and tolerated their weaknesses.

But some look for faults in others because they are intolerant and they consider others' faults as reason to degrade them. We may say that we are openhearted and we do not know how to hide the truth. But none of those reasons are true. More than the faults, pointing them out without enough patience and proper wisdom is a bigger fault.

To Ponder

Point out the mistakes at the proper time.
Till that time comes, learn to be patient.

JANUARY 26

PERSEVERANCE REQUIRED

James 5:1-12

We consider blessed those who have persevered.
James 5:11

A person wanted to find the meaning of an English word and referred to Webster's English dictionary. When he could not get the exact meaning he got irritated and flung the dictionary away. Noah Webster took 35 years to compile the dictionary. He had preserved for so many years to accomplish the arduous task and had to wait patiently before the final work was recognized by the world.

People of the modern generation want to complete tasks instantly just by pressing buttons. The manufacturers of a computer take many years to create a good computer but the people who operate that are so impatient that if there is a delay after a command, they go to extent of smashing the computer along with the mouse.

Once upon a time people had to wait for 5 or 10 years for getting a landline telephone connection in India but now people get terribly upset if they don't get it within a day. They apply for connection in India in the morning and if they don't get before the evening they get very upset.

Patience is a noble virtue. Perseverance is an amiable quality. Impatience leads to many problems. Saul fell a victim to God's wrath because he could not patiently wait for Samuel. The Israelites could not reach Canaan because they were impatient. God moulded Moses for 40 years so that he could learn patience and humility which were the virtues that He wanted Moses to possess. The Israelites, who could not wait until Moses came down from the mountain, had to face punishment because they made a golden calf.

The mentality to have things done' at this moment is not good. Sometimes we need to wait patiently for situations to change. We may have to be patient for a long time before we could see desirable changes in others. We need to be careful because our impatience might induce us to take wrong decisions.

To Ponder

Wrong attitudes rush to dwell in the one,
who gets all that he wishes for.

JANUARY 27

SHARING WITH GOD

I Samuel 1:1-19

I was pouring out my soul to the Lord
I Samuel 1:15

People, who suppress their feelings within their mind and appear to be calm and composed, consider such an act as an expression of their skill. They feel proud of their achievement. But suppression of emotions may lead to serious repercussions. It is natural for anyone to think that sharing of problems will offer great consolation and relief. A shared agony is pain halved. Our mind when in distress always looks for somebody who can listen to our agonized cries, disappointments and sorrowful outpourings.

POne man used to sit on an old, broken boat on the sea shore occasionally and he used to talk to the sea. When somebody asked him how that act of his, helped him he said that the very fact that he was able to express all his woes and grief gave him some solace.

It is true that we are comforted when we pour out our heart to those who are concerned about us. We find an outlet and get comforted. They can only listen with empathy: they cannot reach our heart, heal our hurts and calm the storm that rages within. We must get used to talking to God. We must get accustomed to sharing our crushing burdens and pressing problems with Him. He does not just listen to us. As we keep talking to Him, His mighty presence will penetrate into us and remove the trepidation, tremor and fear.

Prayer is a speech therapy .Speaking to the almighty God whose presence permeates through us to heal us, is an act of spiritual healing. Though He may not remove the situations that hurt us immediately, our mind and spirit will be experiencing gradual healing while we continue to speak with Him. During the process, the cool breeze of His consolation will start working within us and the heat of all our pains will gradually subside. Job was comforted when he went on pouring out his agonies to God. Because he had the habit of speaking to God, he was comforted and was able to walk through his pain victoriously.

To Ponder

The lessons we learn through the paths of hardships, are the weapons we pass on for others to win.

JANUARY 28

CONCEALED CRACKS

Luke 19:41-48

Now it is hidden from your eyes …
Luke 19:42

There was a big crack on the wall of one house. The owner of the house was pained whenever he saw the crack. Those who happened to see that expressed their concern about that. The man covered the crack with a wall paper. Now, the defect was hidden under beautiful scenery. The onlookers also were delighted to see the beautiful picture. They could not see the crack. But no one knew that very soon the crack would widen and cause a great problem.

The spiritual experience of many is like that. Their spiritual involvement and activities help to hide their awkward and crooked way of life. They just hide their wickedness and do not examine their attitude and evil character in the presence of God, with an inclination to correct them. Instead of having a candid examination, they try to conceal their ungodly attitude under some pious activities. So comforted by their holy exterior, they do not become aware of their awkward inner defects and deformities.

Some people do not worry about how they live and do not give any thought to their attitude to wealth and riches. They just do not bother about such things. Instead, they deceive themselves by their excited involvement in singing, worshipping and other spiritual activities. Their external participation in religious activities makes them insensitive to other essential awakenings Songs, prayers and worships can kindle our interest in spiritual matters.

But deriving superficial satisfaction from these alone, without being aware of our real spiritual status will lead us into great danger. We need to find our real spiritual stand and avoid becoming numb by our excited involvement in outwardly pious activities. Such external euphoria makes us blind to our inner need.

To Ponder

He who is not fully committed is more dangerous, than a man without any spirituality.

JANUARY 29

I NEED YOU

Luke 15:11-32

…ran and fell on his neck and kissed him
Luke 15:20

He was a little lad. His parents said, 'You! You are fit for nothing. We don't know how we got you as our child…" His teachers said, "Why, you could have gone to tend the sheep and cows. Why are you occupying this place in vain? He went for a job. His manager said, "Why, you could have gone as a sage, having food, without earning anything. Why are you taking away my life?' He got married. His wife said, "It's disgusting that you are my husband'.

Not knowing where else to go, he went to God and stood before Him. He said, "Did you get the urge to seek me only now, after everyone rejected you? If only you had sought me earlier I would have taken you to a great height" Sometimes, this world, the people, the situations and even our own mind hasten to say that we are fit for nothing. 'Why are you living? What's the use of your living? Who needs your life?' – Such voices could be heard in our ears.

When the Prodigal son returned after he was in ruins, his own brother thought why the father should accept such a person. But the father alone said, "Son, no matter how bad you have gone, I want you. I still want you" This is a father's mind; this is a father's perspective.

Nearly 25 years back, as a young man, I was standing in the middle of the noisy atmosphere of Mumbai city. I could feel the world, relatives, friends and even my own heart saying, "No, no, you are not wanted by any one' I shed bitter tears lamenting, 'Oh! I've become an unwanted person at this young age!" Those tears did not melt any heart.

There, the Lord Jesus, through His Word said, "I want you; I need you. Your tears have value for me" Today many are there to say that they want me. The only reason for this is the Lord Jesus told me that day that He wanted me.

To Ponder

If trials make you depressed,
learn to lean on the Word of God and take rest.

JANUARY 30

COMFORTABLE LIFE

I Timothy 6:1-21

Those who are rich....
I Timothy 6:17

When cinema was introduced in Tamil and became prominent among the people, Thiyagraja Bagavathar, the then actor attained the status of Super Star in Tamil Filmdom. His hair style influences people even today; the songs sung by him are even now enjoyed by many. He lived a luxurious life. He used to sleep on beds of flowers which had been removed from their stalks. He used to rinse his mouth with rose water. He was linked with many women. He was leading an ostentatious life.

But later, he was accused in the murder of Lakshmikanthan after which he was sent to prison. After he was released from the jail, he, who was till then sleeping on bed of flowers, slept only on a cot made of ropes, until his death. The kite flies high; but when something snips off the thread it falls down somewhere. The situations in life are transitory. Many, who were considered to be one among the richest have become beggars, by incurring heavy debts. It can never be said that tomorrow will be like today.

Hence, we should not form our life on the basis of our situations but have the attitude of not getting moved by any situation in life. Abraham was a rich man. Yet he never lived a showly life. He lived his life, depending on divine principles. Jacob, who had to live in a tent for a while and then move out, built a palace for him. But he had to run away from that all of a sudden.

A person, who loved ministry, gave offering in thousands of rupees to many ministries. Yet he was steady in his life by staying in an ordinary house, had ordinary food and traveled in ordinary vehicles. In today's world, many Christian ministers of God and pastors are in the list of those who lead a most comfortable and luxurious life. They consider it as a blessing of God. But they do not have the mind to notice the life style of Abraham.

To Ponder

If the eyes keep looking at holy things,
legs would not be caught up in sinful things.

JANUARY 31

HIS PEACE

Matthew 11:25-30

Come to Me, and I will give you rest.
Matthew 11:28

*T*here were times when I had no pressing problem that troubled my mind; there were times when I had no burden to carry in my heart. Yet these peaceful times have always made me feel empty; though it was a peaceful time, with nothing to depress me, those were the times I found difficult.

Yet, the peaceful times that I enjoyed at certain situations have not left my mind. At such times, I have enjoyed that peace, with a different mentality. It is at such times, I really get enlightened. It is at this time, I am able to look at me as I am. At such times, I have felt my hard feelings departing from me and the humility spoken by God, filling me. It is at this time that deep spiritual thoughts flood the mind.

Do you know under what circumstances I had those quiet and peaceful times? It was when I was oppressed; when I was distressed mentally; when my heart felt heavy with thousands of cares; when I was deeply hurt by someone's words or deeds; when I was grossly misunderstood and criticized despite having a clear conscience; when I was wrongly assumed to have done harm, despite doing good; when I was in despair thinking that everything has turned against me.

It was during such negative situations which actually posed danger to my peace, I had experienced this quietness within me. I have enjoyed this divine peace when I faced trouble and looked to Jesus with the question, "Why Lord?' Here, I could really feel the truthfulness in the Lord's promise, "'Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'.

Yes, the restful times we have, when there is no problem, creates a void in us and gives us the desire to attain something. It happened to Solomon. But, the divine peace given by the Lord amidst our afflictions, makes us tell, 'O, Lord, You are enough; your fellowship is sufficient for me', just as David said.

To Ponder

If you carry the Word of God in you, you can know God carrying you.

Feburary 1

LOVE AND PIETY

Luke 11:37-54

You neglect justice and the love of God…
Luke 11:42.

A Christian business man was very passionate about following all Christian regulations. Nothing could tempt him to have a sale on Sundays. He used to open his shop with prayer in the morning. He was very particular about tithing and gave liberally to the missionary organizations.

He was known for his Christian discipline. But, in his business dealings, the integrity and honesty level, was so low; and they were even less than that of the non-believers. He used to threaten and terrorize those who worked for him. Loving conversations and gentle behavior were alien to him.

Strict adherence to religious regulations is not a sign of true Christian life. How passionately we exhibit our Christian fervour in our outward activities is not as important as the way we reveal our commitment to Christ in our attitudes and approaches.

We need to check how faithfully we follow the exhortations of Christ in our life and show love, humility and compassion. Jesus himself said that loving others was the evidence, that one was His disciple (John 13:35).

The Pharisees loved God and were rigid about prayer, fasting and offertory. But Jesus said that they lacked justice and love of God (Luke 11:42). When love and justice are missing, pious activities become meaningless.

Even without a close intimacy with God, one can be very actively involved in pious acts. But, only when we are connected to God and enjoy a good relationship, we can love others and express divine attitudes.

Let us not impress others with our pious acts but let us impact others with our love, humility and other godly attitudes.

To Ponder

Those who progress in love of God, cannot lag behind in, loving others.

Feburary 2

I WILL PRAISE THE LORD

2 Chronicles. 20:14-26

I shall yet praise Him.
Psalm 42:5

It is true that everyone has forsaken me and I am left alone; but it is also true that my LORD is with me and He is my Helper. So, I praise the LORD.

It is true that all my strengths have deteriorated and my hopes have faded away. But the LORD Him- self is my Hope and He sustains me. So, I praise the LORD.

It is true that I am unable to understand all the troubles that have surrounded me. Yet Lord who understands me is with me. So, I praise the LORD.

It is true that all my life supports have disappeared. The pillars that have supported me have fallen down. But since I have accepted the LORD as my Support, I will not fall down. So, I praise the LORD.

It is true that questions like 'why my prayers are not answered' and 'why didn't the Lord help me? arise in my heart. But the LORD is never wrong. So I praise the LORD.

It is true that I am not living under peaceful situations and I am not placed in peaceful conditions. Yet the LORD gives peace and joy to my heart. So I praise the LORD.

It is true that I have not received everything I have asked for and many of my expectations are not fulfilled. But He has given me a heart that is able to accept all those disappointments without any anxiety. So I praise the LORD.

It is true that the LORD has not prevented the unjust deeds of some and He has not stopped me from suffering because of few. But I have the hope that one day, He will manifest my righteousness and will enquire my case. So I praise the LORD.

To Ponder

If there are no problems in a life,
then that life itself will become a problem.

Feburary 3

AWARENESS OF MISTAKES

Proverbs 12: 15-28

The way of a fool seems right to him…
Proverbs 12:15

A person travelling in an aeroplane, felt that there was a bad smell emanating from the area where he was seated. He couldn't tolerate that and went on sniffing to detect the source of the stench.

Exasperated after such futile efforts, he requested the hostess to allot a different seat for him. He was permitted to occupy a seat in the rear.

As soon as he left the place, the smell vanished from that area. It was because he was the source of that pungent odour. His sweat soaked socks were the culprit.

Some people are like this man who was blind to the fact that he himself was the cause for his discomfort.

They do not identify that they are the cause for all their problems and defects. They usually attribute their losses and discomfitures to others.

We need to examine ourselves first. David didn't realize that the stench of wickedness and betrayal could be found in his own life.

Without that awareness, he jumped to punish a man for his injustice when Nathan presented a similar case before them.

In some families, the wife blames the husband for the conflicts that prevail in the family and the husband charges the wife.

In fact, both are culprits and both can cause the disruptions. Peace is shattered because they fail to examine themselves and do not mend their behaviors.

If we take some time to examine our conduct and analyze our attitude in the presence of God, we will identify the stench that emerges from us.

To Ponder

If weakness is not identified and corrected
It causes permanent failure.

Feburary 4

ENCOURAGING PERCEPTION

Numbers 13:1-33

We seemed like grass- hoppers in our own eyes …
Numbers. 13:33

Sometimes the problem and conflicts that we face appear very big in our eyes. It may be true that they are really huge and gigantic. But, we look at them as an average man does. When we perceive the problems like huge mountains, our eyes see us as tiny insects. If we are children of God, the way we look at problems must be different. We need to understand that we are not facing it alone. We look at the problematic situation along with God.

Since David had the vision of faith that God was with him, he became bold enough to face Goliath. Saul was frightened by Goliath's stature and weapon. He looked at himself as a tiny human being and so was scared. When compared with Saul, David was very ordinary but he was confident that he would defeat Goliath. It was because he firmly believed that he was going to encounter the giant with God. He was convinced that God would help him to defeat the Philistine. That's why David easily destroyed Goliath, though the enemy was hundred fold stronger than himself.

Out of the twelve who went to Canaan to find out about the land, ten declared that they would not be able to capture the place. They saw that the inhabitants of the place were very strong and considered themselves weak like grasshoppers. If they who saw themselves as grasshoppers had believed that God was with them, they could have easily captured the land.

It is not enough if we have faith. Our faith must impact our perception of situations. Problems can be huge but when we face them we need to remember that we are with God. Hence, we can easily overcome any situation. Let us not be scared to look at the problems that appear huge like mountains because we have God, the Rock of Ages with us. If we are close to God, we can face problems of any magnitude with courage and confidence.

To Ponder

Pebbles of David accomplished more;
than the big armies of Saul.

Feburary 5

ONLY THE GOOD

II Chronicles 18:17-31

Should you love those who hate the LORD?
II Chronicles 19:2

A little boy once bought an apple; but three fourths portion of the apple had gone bad. The father questioned him as to why he bought a rotten apple. He said, 'Anyway, I'll be given only one fourth share of this apple; that one fourth portion is good. So I bought it…' His calculation was that it was enough that what he could have was good. Some people are like this little boy; they don't bother if someone is too bad to harm others. All they want is that that person is good to them. To them, that good part alone is enough and they would gladly make use of that aspect of that person. They are not concerned that others are affected by the bad side of that same person.

King Ahab's life was full of evil; his actions were always against the Lord. Yet he was a good friend to Jehoshaphat, who was content with that friendship thinking, 'Who cares how he is towards others? He is a good friend of mine..' However, his fellowship with Ahab, was about to cause him a great danger. Ahab's deeds against God were bringing down His wrath upon him. But because of Jehoshaphat's certain good deeds, God helped him to escape.

Some people say that we should see only the good in others; this is a bad advice, with a good appearance. The correct statement is that we ought to see both good and the evil. This is because, those who have many evil nature in them, will have certain good nature too. If we consider only the good things in them, the evil in them will not stop affecting us.

In a church, a man who always had the tendency to do something wicked against everyone, used to behave like a saint in the church. The pastor too accepted him as a good believer looking at his good aspects and gave him more power. Ultimately, the pastor was affected by that man and made miserable. Yes, it is not enough that a person is good towards us; it should be seen how he is in the sight of God.

To Ponder

It cannot be said that you are right just because many praise you, it cannot be said that you are wrong just because some deride you.

Feburary 6

SIN IS...

James 1:10-27

sin, when it is full-grown...
James 1:15

A person may fall into a pit as his foot stumbles; or he may fall into a big ditch. Here, the basic reason for his fall – whether into a pit or a ditch – is the stumbling of his foot. A person may fall down and get injured with slight scratches, as he walks carelessly; or he may have a fracture. Whatever be it, the basic reason is his carelessness.

Similarly, a person might have spoken a lie; or another person might have fallen into sexual sin. He might have used abusive words out of anger; or the other one might have fought violently, in anger. But fighting with words and fighting by sword are the same. Both are sins. Sin cannot be calculated on the basis of what has happened. Rather, the inducement for the incident is important.

When a man fails to live in fellowship with the Lord, sin will rule over him. The result of the reign of sin could be ordinary or severe. But the basic reason is sin. Hence, he, who lied is a sinner; he, who indulged in fraudulent act is also a sinner. So, a mistake should be seen not on the basis of its severity but on the basis of the sin which was the reason for that.

In society the illiterate man's small mistakes are considered to be dark, wrong things. But, the big mistakes of the educated people are viewed as white mistakes. The colour of the mistakes may vary, on the basis of the status of the one who does the wrong. But, their nature and terribleness are the same. Hence, unlike certain people, we cannot consider ourselves to be holy for the reason that we have not committed terribly wrong things or things that are worse in the sight of others. Even a small mistake is the cause of the sin of our failure to live with God. Even if it is a small wrong, we should know that it had happened because of the lack of God's reign over us.

To Ponder

If you are not concerned about right nature, you would be worried by the incorrect sins.

Feburary 7

WHO CAN COMFORT?

Psalm 102:1-28

I have become like a bird alone on a roof
Psalm 102:7

In the early years of my ministry, my anxieties and sorrows appeared unbearable. I used to crave for some solace. I wanted to share my burden with somebody so that my oppressing pain could find an outlet. But, I could not find anyone in whom I could confide and pour out my pressing agonies. Some considered my difficulties as trivial matters and paid no heed to my aching heart that was crying for comfort. So I was in a very difficult situation. I could neither bear the pain all by myself nor share it with others. I could only pour out my heart's worries at the feet of God, seeking divine consolation. It was a very stressful period but the lesson I learnt during that time helps me even now when I counsel others

That's why I could with certainty affirm to others that God is powerful enough to comfort and console us when we are inconsolable and land in situations when no one is there to comfort. God took me through desperate times just to teach me that His comfort could raise me from my despondency and instill hope in my sinking heart. He seemed to say "However bitter the path you tread is, I can encourage you. Though you may struggle through sorrowful times, I can comfort you. I alone can be your help and strength". Probably, you too find yourself in such adverse situations. May be you also grieve within yourself because you feel that there is no one to whom you can confide your problems.

But be assured of one thing. God is all sufficient for you. His comfort is all sufficient for you. His comfort and consolation can lift your spirit. He wants you to cling to Him alone. He may have left you without other comfort because only at His feet you can receive true love and comfort. Yes, trust in His comfort. Seek His consolation at His feet. Definitely you will emerge out of despair and stand with confidence.

To Ponder

Do not crave for comfort from people who lack love.
Seek His presence whose love is great and genuine.

Feburary 8

GODLY GOAL

Hebrews 13:1-8

be without covetousness
Hebrews 13:5

A particular man desired to go abroad so as to earn more money for the sake of his family. Accordingly he got a good job there and he was so happy that God had blessed his efforts.

His income increased as he expected and he became wealthy. Unfortunately, his children went astray, which grieved the father. He lamented why God, who blessed all his efforts, failed to take care of his children.

The obsession for money and to reach high status like so many others, separate many people from their families and they fail in their responsibility to take care of their children.

Such a goal for money is not pleasing to God. So, it is not then right to blame God when unwanted things happen in the family and to the children.

It should be realized that importance should be given to the goal of leading the family in a proper way and not to the goal of gaining more money. Situations may be favourable and everything may happen as we expected.

But that does not mean that God approves of our goal. We need to have the discernment to find which things should be given more importance in life.

Some people have been very successful in their efforts to raise up churches and big ministerial organization; but they have miserably failed in matters concerning their family and children.

This is because more importance was given to achieve something big and not to run the family properly. Those who believe God and seek after His blessings should act with the mind of God and have the goal which pleases God.

To Ponder

If your attention is on matters related to God,
His attention will be on your needs.

Feburary 9

FELLOWSHIP IS HIS REPLY

John 14:12-23

I will... show Myself to him.
John 14:21

The starting period of my spiritual life was filled with troubles and tribulations. During those days, many questions would arise in me. "Lord, why things are happening to me this way? Why are You not giving so many good things that I have been expecting so long? What will happen to me if things continue in the same way? Are all my beliefs in vain?" Many such questions would arise. But I never got answers for these questions.

Instead I would feel the presence of the LORD more during these times. His precepts would be revealed to me. In my spirit, I would realize His loving union. Yes, for my questions, the presence of God would be the answer. Though I did not receive answers for the questions I had asked, His wholesome presence would appear to say, "I am here with you. And everything is happening properly as per My wisdom and plan."

It is difficult to receive answers from the LORD for all the questions that arise out of our circumstances. Yet when He reveals His fellowship in us, the pandemonium of all the questions will become still. His presence will be the proper testimony that the LORD is ruling over all our situations and doing everything properly.

In the midst of all the troubles Job faced, questions like, "Why this happened? What is next?" kept cropping up. Yet he did not get answers from the LORD. Still He spoke to Job and asked many questions. Through these, Job realized that God was with him. And in that hope, instead of asking questions, he surrendered himself saying, "I know that You can do all things; no plan of Yours can be thwarted." Yes, we should take the revelation of the LORD's love, the peace and the hope He provides, His embracing touch and His deeds that resurrect our hopes as the answers to our questions.

To Ponder

Until you are ready to face the problems,
God will not show the way to overcome them.

Feburary 10

DIFFICULT – YET

Luke 6:27–35

Love your enemies
Luke 6:27

After examining the patient, the doctor recommended immediate treatment. When asked how much it would cost, he said it would cost five lakhs of rupees. When the patient's wife heard this, she exclaimed with shock, "Oh! What a great amount?" The doctor advised her, "Do not see how much it costs. See how important for your husband to live his life

Sometimes some things are difficult only. At the same time, we have to see how important they are for us than how difficult they are. A few people think that the teachings of Jesus are very tough. But if we understand the need for those teachings, we will surely change our mind about those difficulties.

How to show the left cheek to the one who slapped the right cheek? How to forgive the one who has not repaid the loan? How to love the enemy? How to do good to our rival? These things are very, very tough only. But just think for a moment how these instructions could do good and great things to us.

Tit for tat seems to be the attitude of our present day society. This gives way to a lot of non-stop problems for us. If man decides not to take revenge, then a lot of problems can be prevented. Yes! The things Jesus said are tough only. But if we ignore them, a lot of evils will not be stopped. If we come forward to do those tough things, then we can stand erect without losing peace, joy and hope.

More tough efforts are needed to achieve good things. But, Christ did not tell us to do tough things only. He also shows us how to do those tough things through His divine fellowship. Let us not achieve through the efforts of our devotional ways but make our mind to go deep into experiences of divine fellowship. This divine, godly relationship will change our difficult paths into easy ones.

To Ponder

If you refuse to accept the bitterness of the truth today, the sweetness of the falsehood will make your life bitter tomorrow.

Feburary 11

RESPOND TO THE NEED

Luke 18:35-43

What do you want me to do for you?
Luke 18:41

*M*any years ago when I was facing many problems in life, I went to a pastor of a church. I poured out to him all my questions and anxieties. He listened to me and finally sent me after placing some money in my shirt packet. I did not much relish the financial help. Neither did I expect such a help. I was disappointed because I went to him with the expectation of receiving encouraging advice and consoling words. I wished to have some clarification about the problems which were crushing me.

If a mother tries to calm her hungry child by giving toys, the child will not stop crying. It is a foolish move, totally inconsiderate action and a thoughtless response. Without finding the need of those who approach us for help we might extend various other helps which may be of no use to them. They will not value our efforts.

When Jesus was passing by the blind Bartimaeus who was begging, he cried "Son of God, have mercy on me". Jesus did not consider him as an ordinary beggar who expected charity from Jesus as he had done with others. When Jesus came closer to him, He wanted to know the desire of the blind man and therefore asked what he wanted Him to do for him.

Bartimaeus wanted something different from Jesus and did not ask for the usual financial relief. He wanted to be delivered from the blindness which had made him a beggar. Jesus got to know his desire and granted him what he asked for. Others might not expect financial help from us always. There may be moments when they like to receive kind and encouraging words. Sometimes they may desire counsel and guidance. Very often they like to be assured of our concern for them. Some may like to enjoy a good fellowship with us. Our indiscreet way of extending help without discerning others' real needs is of no use.

To Ponder

Help is not doing something or anything.
It is doing exactly what others need.

Feburary 12

NEED DIVINE FAITH

Job 13: 1 – 28

Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him
Job 13: 15

One day Job, who was a very rich man, lost all his wealth, children and health. Yet he had only one thing with him which he did not lose and also did not wish to lose. And that one thing finally saved him and brought him ashore. Yes! That one thing was his indomitable faith in God. Unfortunately many people easily lose this thing in their lives but Job preserved it in the midst of all pain and agony.

Job was steadfast in his divine faith and godly devotion in spite of all his indescribable mental agony and pain which would normally make people lose their faith in God, prayers and devotion. But, some people easily lose their faith in God, devotion and prayers and also feel desperate and hopeless once they face some irreparable failures, disappointments and losses.

Yes! We need great efforts to bear tough and challenging situations when failures, setbacks and losses confront us. We need great strength to tide over dreadful times. Personal ability and human support will not give peace of mind and mental strength during those distressing times. Perhaps God might not have stopped our sufferings as we expected. Yet we need His grace to bear our pains and to continue our life journey.

Yes! It is during these crisis times that we need more of His fellowship, comfort and support. That is why Job said that he would continue to trust God even if He killed him.

Yes, Surely there will not be any occasion when we can say that we do not need His grace hereafter. There will never be a moment when we can denounce His help. We need more of His grace especially during times of great losses, during trials and during times when we do not know how to take the next step.

To Ponder

He who understands the compassion of the Lord, will not be shaken by the stumbling blocks found in His way.

Feburary 13

ENVY

Genesis. 26: 12 - 30

The Philistines envied him.
Genesis. 26:14

When we see someone suffering from hunger, we feel pity towards him. The pain of someone who is being afflicted brings tears to our eyes. When we see someone suffering from a disease, our heart will be troubled. But the question is when someone is happier than we are, will we be happy about that? It is a complicated question: when someone reaches a higher status and is being praised by others, will it bring joy to us?

It is easy for a man to see someone else's misery and to shed tears for him. But, it is very difficult to become happy seeing someone's better life. If the younger brother constructs a house, the elder brother is upset about that. If someone buys a car, his friend is distressed by that. If the neighbour's kid gets good marks, our heart is upset that our child does not get so.

David saved the honour of King Saul and protected the entire country from the enemies. Yet, when the people praised him, Saul was unable to digest that and suffered from envy. Instead of honouring and raising David, Saul wanted to trample him.

What was the reason? Envy. Many evil characters will leave a man quickly. But not envy. It will remain rooted and will refuse to leave him. In our spiritual life, the natural trait that we have to work really hard to remove is envy. The sons of Jacob threw their younger brother in a pit, When he came to help them. That should explain the power of envy.

If envy has to be weakened, then love has to be strengthened in our hearts. It is because the love is weakened in our hearts, envy acts in us in its full strength. How much our heart is filled with divine love, only that much we will be able to get rid of this devilish trait called envy.

To Ponder

The failing of others may sadden you. But, see whether others' rise makes you happy.

Feburary 14

SOUND AND SILENCE

Luke 10:25-37

Go and do likewise…
Luke 10:37

The educated and the elders used that street frequently. Someone had dumped the garbage which lay scattered. Some of the people, who came by that street, commented, "Oh, these Indians are highly irresponsible!". Some others said, "What is this government doing?" "The administration of the municipality is not good; this matter should be taken to the court" "If this had happened in Singapore, the culprit would be in jail by now…" Sounds of criticism were on the crescendo. The garbage lay as it was.

In a short while, an old man came by. He did not make any criticism. He bent down, picked up the garbage patiently and dumped it in the garbage bin. His silent action accomplished a good deed which others' criticism could not do. Many are those who scream at shortcomings; many are those who rage with anger over faults; many are those who create a ruckus over wrong things. But few are those who think of ways and means to rectify the error and set right things.

These days, wherever I go, I could see many who vehemently condemn the false ministers of God. It is good to express one's opposition against wrong things, without keeping quiet. At the same time, satisfactory good things could not be seen in them also. Though they are avid in their criticism, they do not stand as good testimonies for what they criticize.

The world has to see truth at least in us, though it is not able to see it in anyone. If the world is not able to see anyone who does right things, it should be happy to see it at least in us. Today, on one side is a group of Pharisees who do wrongs; on the other side, there is a group which criticizes them. The fact is that they are also Pharisees. Those are Pharisees who have departed from the law, but these people are Pharisees who are unwise.

To Ponder

Good things can be done, without ourselves being good, but we cannot be good without doing good.

Feburary 15

LIFE NEVER ENJOYED

Luke12:1-32

Beware of all covetousness.
Luke 12:15

Some spend their days of youth in foreign countries because they want to earn lot of money. At old age, when the body is weak, they spend their days with their wife and family. Some will come home very late because of business and will leave early morning. They will not have time to talk and share with their wife; they will not have time to play and enjoy with their children and no time for friends or relatives. It is an unfortunate life where there is no time for anything other than earning money.

Greediness and covetousness make many into money making machines. So, they end up never enjoying their life in the proper manner. Many think that their wife, children and relatives will be there; but if they lose a chance to earn some money, they may never get a chance again. Of course, no one will go away anywhere. The family and relatives will be there. But ,we should remember that age and certain chances that depend on our age pass away, there will be nothing left to enjoy later.

Spending time with your life partner, going out just for fun. watching the kids grow, playing with them, meeting our relatives and good friends, taking part in the special occasions in their families sharing your love and your opinions with others, taking care of those who are sick, taking part in spiritual programmes, enjoying the nature that God has created so beautifully, reading good books, spending enough time to be with God.

Watching what is going on in our society, these are some of the many things that we can easily avoid, saying "Where do I have the time for all these?" But don't forget that all these things are important for the happiness of our life and most importantly, to give a meaning to our life.

To Ponder

Don't be lazy to receive the things that God wants to give.
Don't try hard to receive those things that He does not want to give.

Feburary 16

JOY FROM WORSHIP

Amos 5:21 - 27

I despise your feasts.
Amos 5:21

It is true that nowadays in many churches, people who gather get joy and deliverance during the worship hours. In some churches, the worship hours still continue to be something that we have to endure. But in some churches, it is true that worship hours bring joy and happiness to people. But the problem is that the joy, happiness and deliverance that they experience during the worship hours do not pass on to the other times of their life.

Nowadays in many churches, people have learned to look like they are happy. But they have not learned to be happy. In entertainment centers, movie theaters and amusement parks, it is natural for people to feel happy. But their life can not take that happiness to the other parts. Similarly the church functions and worship may give us some happiness, but we can not own them.

True spiritual happiness and deliverance are not created by worship. They are created by the deep relationship we have with the Lord. They become a part of our life when we surrender ourselves completely to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and when we desire and seek the divine fellowship in our hearts. Only when our spiritual life has the thirst to have a personal relationship with God and be in closer union with Him, the joy of the LORD will materialize there. And the reflection of that joy are virtues like love, peace, humility, compassion, patience and meekness.

We may shout and celebrate during the worship hours. We may rejoice and be happy. We may speak in tongues and worship God. But if hatred and enmity are present in our life, if anger and greediness occupy our life, if cunningness and deceitfulness are still part of our life, if hypocrisy and falsehood continue to be present, then it means that what we are doing is without spirit and truth worship.

To Ponder

If you sense the Lord in the church, but not in your house, then your heart does not have Him.

Feburary 17

THE LORD WILL LEAD YOU

Psalm 71:1-24

Have shown me great troubles and distresses.
Psalm 71:20

The path in which a shepherd leads his sheep will not always be smooth, and comfortable green pastures. They will be lead through various circumstances. But the hope they have is that the shepherd is able to lead them through any kind of situation.The path of our life is not always the same. Our life journey may have to pass through peaks and troughs; the path may be crooked and rough; it may be filled with troubles. We may not be able to see situations that we desire; we may have to walk through situations that are undesirable. But if we are sheep who are joined to the flock of the Good Shepherd Jesus, then He will be with us, will not forsake us and He will lead us.

The path the Israelites took while journeying towards the Promised Land was not an easy one. There were certain insufficiencies, few hurdles, some troubles and few adversities. Yet the LORD walked with them so that they were not stopped by those adverse situations. The LORD alone led them.

Of course, many Israelites were destroyed during that difficult journey, but that was not because of those adverse situations. They did not listen to the voice of God who was leading them and because of their disobedience, they lost their lives. Yes, troubles and pains, diseases and adversities, losses and difficulties, oppositions and humiliations do not disable us in our path. But, our spiritual ears should be able to listen to the voice of the Shepherd who is leading us.

The ship that was carrying the Apostle Paul to Rome was beset by many calamities; every single circumstance was against that journey. Yet, the LORD was leading that ship according to His will even in the middle of all those disasters. Knowing this, Paul was encouraged. It is because he was able to hear the voice of the LORD in the midst of those problems. Yes, let us not concentrate on the situations around us, but let us take care to listen to the voice of God.

To Ponder

Failures are not hindrances for your continuous efforts. They are hints that you should try harder and harder.

Feburary 18

DEDICATION

Psalm 84:1-12

How lovely is Your tabernacle…
Psalm 84:1

Once, a servant of God dedicated a Christian's house during the House Warming Ceremony. He sprinkled water in each and every room of the house, symbolic of the blood of Jesus and prayed for God's presence to fill all the places. At the close of the prayer he said excitedly, "Behold, I see every room of this house getting filled with God's presence. God's glory will stay upon this house, like cloud, forever"

But there is no chance that his statement could be true. The family which built that house and was going to reside there had absolutely no experience of salvation or living a holy life. They never knew about the necessity to dedicate their lives for the Lord and live for Him. God's presence is the filling of a divine state that is caused in places where God reveals Himself. It can be revealed only through man since he is the temple where God wants to dwell. Man should open the inner chambers of his heart to the Lord and allow Him to stay in it. Only then God can stay and reveal His glory and presence.

Many do not want to invite God into their hearts but want to make His presence stay in their house and business spots. Before dedicating themselves for the Lord, they want to dedicate their house for Him. But God wants to stay not in buildings but in man.

Some people build a room in their house exclusively for accommodating servants of God just as how the Shunammite woman set up an upper room for Elisha. They assume that their house would be blessed when servants of God stay in it. Indeed it is a good thought. At the same time, it is sad that many, who have such good thought, do not open up their heart to the Lord. If we want the presence of God to abide in our house or in the place of our business, we need to dedicate not the places but our life, in which God wants to stay and work.

To Ponder

God is not in the palace built by man,
because He prefers to stay in the hut of man's heart.

Feburary 19

BEARING THE SHORTOMINGS

I Corinthians 13:1-13

Love bears all things.
1 Corinthians 13:7

We should have eyes that see the shortcomings of others; but we also need a matured heart that bears those shortcomings. When a father sees some errors, mistakes and faults in his children, he does not close his eyes from seeing those. Instead, he points out them in an appropriate manner and shows them the way to correct themselves.

Closing your eyes without seeing the mistakes of others will only lead those wrongs to increase; it will also lead those who have those shortcomings to be ruined because of them. When a man was getting married, decided that he would never consider any of his wife's faults as big issues. So he trained himself to say, "Wow, that is a good food that you have cooked," though her cooking was horrible. But whoever came to their house for meals never liked her cooking and they would wonder how he was able to eat such tastless food.

On the other hand, blaming someone based on their shortcomings or making fun of them for their faults is wrong. But it is not wrong to be moved by the Spirit, like Nathan was, to point out the errors and to help rectify them. We should not find fault with others with a Pharisaical attitude. It is important that we are filled with love, like Jesus was when He pointed out the faults of Peter, and others.

But some are like Phinehas. Whenever they see some wrongs, they take the sword of accusations and cut others. But they do not know how to embrace like Jesus. Though He knew that Judas was going to betray Him, Peter was going to deny Him, He accepted them with love. I have seen some people who think that it is a divine virtue to ignore the faults, errors and mistakes of others and remain silent. And invariably those who have such attitude also do not have eyes to see the faults in their personal life. This is not a divine virtue that bears the faults. It is a reflection of sin that has lost the spiritual discretion of to recognize sin.

To Ponder

Humiliation may help you mend your ways.
Adulation may make your ways go crooked.

Feburary 20

INEXPERIENCED CHRISTIANITY!

Hebrews 5:7-14

by this time you ought to be teachers
Hebrews 5:12

A man went to Mumbai when he was young and lived there till his old age. Every morning he used to board the bus from Boisar and reached the Railway station in Borivili. From there he would get into the electric train and go for his job in Andheri. According to him, this was Mumbai for he never went anywhere else and neither did he want to know about the other places in Mumbai. He could not tell anything if asked about the details of the city of Mumbai.

The Christian experiences of many are like this. They don't know anything else apart from certain Godly experiences, no matter how many years they have been known as Christians. Apart from offering a short prayer in the morning, reading the Bible, going to the church and giving offering, they are ignorant of anything else.

Some people have one or two Christian experiences all through their lives and earn the name , "Slept in the Lord'. As days go by and as time flies off, we need to grow and gain many experiences. Once, the grandson of a Secretary of a church asked his grandfather the name of Abraham's father. He said, "I remember to have learnt it when I was a small boy. But now I'm unable to recollect it..".

Christianity begins with our relationship with God, grows in our fellowship with Him and enjoys receiving divine experiences more and more. Christians should not always continue in the same experience of being a babe, drinking only milk. We need to grow in the experience of yielding fruits. But, why does this not happen? It is because of diligently observing only certain ritual like methods and not beginning the Christian life, with the first step of salvation. Those who have experience in merely following certain pious deeds, cannot enjoy rich spiritual experiences and shine for God.

To Ponder

When the way you live fails to honour God, the way you worship will grieve Him.

Feburary 21

NO TIME

Ephesians 5:1-20

Making good use of the time....
Ephesians 5:16

A man has to eat; if he does not, he will not be able to survive. He has to take care of his wife and children. He has to fulfill his family responsibilities. If not, he will not be able to live in peace. If someone says that he does not have time for these duties, we will call him a 'fool.' Because, in life, there are certain important things for which we can never say we do not have time.

Similarly, if a man believes that there is God then he has certain important duties to do before Him. If he says that he does not have time for those duties, it means there is something wrong with him. No time to pray. No time to meditate the word of God. No time to take part in worship and honour the LORD. No time to do some work for God. If we say like this, then the true problem is not that we do not have time. The problem is we do not manage our times properly.

Some say, "Times are not like before. It flies away very swiftly." But time always passes in the same way. Because we have not planned our times properly and are involved in many matters of this world, we do not realize that time is flying away.

Many waste their times by talking about unnecessary things, chatting and by sending SMS over the mobile phones and watching TV serials. We should know the most important things in our life and should give priority to them. If not, we will be always running short of time in our life. Only when we fail to regulate our life and other duties according to the LORD, we end up saying that we do not have time for the matters of the LORD.

For the matters of this world, we always somehow manage to find time; but when we are not able to do the same for the spiritual matters, it means that spiritually we have not grown enough. It is true that God has given us enough time in our life.

To Ponder

If you seek joy, it will run away from you.
If you seek God, joy will come close to you.

Feburary 22

IF THERE'S NO LOVE

I Corinthians 13:1-13

Love always trusts, always hopes
I Corinth 13:7

*T*hey have been married for seven years. They did not have any problems in the initial five years. There was no clash of their egos. Their heated arguments did not disturb their neighbors. They did not accuse and blame each other. But in the next two years, they never stopped quarrelling. Their quarrelsome noisy presence at home was noticed by their neighbours. He heaped accusations on her and she reacted suitably.

How did all these begin? Why did the marriage of seven years, lose its glamour all of a sudden? It was because their love had cooled down. Their disagreement started when he rejected her proposal of taking up a job. From the time he denied her request, she began to find fault with every move of her husband. He also started looking at her wife with critical eyes. The accusations were not based on any concrete failures or mistakes of the spouses. They were just losing their warmth for each other. A heart bereft of love can't rest without finding fault. It cannot tolerate other's failures. It cannot help complaining.

The words of Jesus were impeccable. His actions were above reproof. Yet, the Pharisees found a lot to complain about His acts and words. All that He did and spoke was criticized by the Pharisees whose eyes were focused on finding fault. It was because there was no love in them.

If the heart is filled with love, the defects in others will not be offensive and irritating. Love that resides in the heart will enable a person to bear hurts. In the absence of love, an insignificant and negligible mistake which is just like a feeble and fragile grass appears like a huge banyan tree. Mostly, we are wounded not by the defects of others but by the absence of love deep within us. We need to seek the grace of God so that we will be filled with love.

To Ponder

The enemy of one's happiness is not from outside; but lurks deep within one's own self.

Feburary 23

THINK DIFFERENTLY

I Samuel 17:23-37

I will go and fight him ....
I Samuel 17:32

Generally, we hesitate to think and act independently. We always try to drift along with others and are happy when our thoughts and actions align with those of others. If others approve of one thing, we are also ready to accept that. If others accept an idea without any question, we also fall flat for that.

If the majority voices the opinion that the idea is worth implementing, we will also uphold that. If they wish to ignore that, we will also become cool about that. All these show and prove how reluctant we are to do things on our own.

It took a very long time to make people believe that the earth is spherical. They were of the opinion that it was flat. But we need to think differently from people some times. Goliath challenged the Israelites and was very sure that he was invulnerable. Even Saul did not have any hope of defeating him. The soldiers of his great army also never conceived that any one could challenge the giant, who they thought was invincible.

But, the shepherd boy David thought that he could vanquish Goliath. Of course, he thought differently. He did not follow the thought pattern of the others. The world thinks that we can not lead a pure and straightforward life. It also considers that leading a humble and honest life is next to impossibility.

We need not think as the world thinks. If we are with God, we can overcome what is considered as unconquerable and do those things which others find difficult. If we are not self reliant and depend only on God, we can think and act differently.

When God wants some work to be accomplished, He will make that thing come to pass through the people who opt to do that. David was successful because he thought that Goliath should be won.

To Ponder

Great and noble thoughts are like wings,
they carry you to lofty places.

Feburary 24

WHAT IS RELIABLE?

Isaiah 54:1-17

Though the mountains be shaken
Isaiah: 54:10

Some banks in America were world renowned. They had wide credibility. Therefore the Americans deposited their money in them without any fear. No question was raised about their credibility and dependability. But in 2008 some banks declared their failure and the Americans were shocked. Since then, recession has been disturbing the world economy.

Even today the question, what in the world is reliable is being asked everywhere. Those things which were considered immovable have been shaken. Those which cannot be broken, break easily. What can be trusted then? We cannot live without placing our trust in something. If no foundation is strong enough to bear and support us, where else can we stand?

We need money, knowledge, skill and relationships. But all these are not totally reliable. Only the faith we have in God is most dependable. It is rare to find children deserted by parents but this also happens in some places on some occasions. That's why David confidently declared that though father and mother forsook us God never did.

The Bible says that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. Hence His love, power, compassion, His word and the faith we place in Him will never change. He is the only one who can be trusted. He is constant and therefore He is only reliable God.

Even when the mountains are shaken, we will trust in Him. Today our possessions, education and relationships may look like mountains that remain firm and constant. But, the durability of all these can never be vouched for. There is no guarantee that these assets will remain unshaken. We can be happy if we possess them but we must stand on the solid rock of Christ. We sing in a hymn that 'all other foundations are mere sand'.

To Ponder

Let us not lose heart when the world pushes us down. It is an opportunity for us to be lifted by God.

Feburary 25

THE BLESSING FOR THE CHILD

Galatians 4: 1 – 9

You are no longer a slave but a son...
Galatians 4: 7

The present day servants of God identify God to others as someone whose only job is hearing prayers. They also love to see Him answering their prayers always. Asking and receiving are taken as the basic function of Christian life. Hence, we are unable to see much of the real glory of Christianity among Christians and churches.

We must not think that the purpose of spiritual life consists of asking by us and answering by Him. We must ponder about the plan and purpose of God in creating mankind and what He wants us to do for Him.

God should mould us in such a way, that His will for us could be fulfilled. We must be disciplined in the right way so that we become a tool in His hand to work for Him.

We must have the experience of being led by the Spirit according to His will. We must be transformed to comprehend the mind of God concerning our life. Yes! Our noble call is not just begging for favours and getting them.

God wants to see that we are born-again as His dear children so that we are able to reflect His divine glory among other people.

A lot of people like to see themselves before God as the dogs which wait eagerly for the crumbs that fall from their master's table but our loving God wants to see us as His dear children who sit and share the food along with Him.

Even today, many people love to go on calling, "Son of David! Have mercy on us" But they fail to see when the Bible says that if we are the children of God, then heirs of God and not slaves.

We, who have been called to be the children of God, should not remain contented with crumb-like blessings.

To Ponder

Your devotion to God should be seen in the context of what you do, to fulfill His expectations and not in fulfilling your own expectations.

Feburary 26

IS KNOWLEDGE ALONE ENOUGH?

Psalm 78:1-8

That they should make them known to the their children
Psalm 78:5

In the modern world, numerous people do not enjoy peace. Many people have lost the joy of living and are engulfed by darkness. Indiscipline and irregularities are rampant. What can be the underlying cause for this lusterless life? Can this be attributed to illiteracy? Is it because people lack wisdom and knowledge? No, it is so because people do not possess a good heart.

What is the benefit if one goes on acquiring knowledge without any attention to values? What will be the use if one sharpens the brain without controlling the heart? A good heart is essential for a person to lead a fruitful and meaningful life. Mere physical growth coupled with acquisition of knowledge does not constitute growth. There should be adequate growth in the heart level also. The heart also should have been nurtured.

In today's world, there is knowledge explosion, especially among the youth but they lag behind in discipline. If the heart is not nourished and moulded properly, knowledge and education alone can not lead a person in the right path.

Many parents, who help their children to acquire knowledge, do not take steps to refine their hearts. Even the children, who strive very hard to sharpen their brain, allow their hearts to become dark.

King Solomon possessed remarkable wisdom but did not lead a satisfactory life. Finally, he declared that every thing in the world is meaningless. It was mainly because he did not have fellowship with God. His heart was barren and God did not reign there. Hence, the parents who feed the children with knowledge and wisdom must heed the warning. They must also take time to nourish the young hearts with good counsel so that they become stronger with the right values.

To Ponder

A good student does not learn for learning sake, he learns to follow what he learns.

Feburary 27

AN END FOR SORROWS

Isaiah 43:1-11

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you...
Isaiah 43:2

We don't like someone to die in our family. We don't want to be sick with some illness. We don't want sufferings to affect our life. The biggest expectation we have towards God is that He prevents all these things happening to us and protects us. Of course, we hate all those that cause emotional sufferings.

But these things happen once in a while in our life. We will not see God fulfilling all our desires and wants. God has appointed the natural world in such a way that we have to face these unavoidable things. Though we may have mountainous faith, according to the laws of nature, certain things will surely happen in our life. God does not overturn the rules of nature for those who love Him. Hence, certain situations come into our life just like it happens to those who do not believe in God.

But no matter what happens or how it happens, if we depend on God in our life, then He will be with us and support us. Though He may not stop situations that cause us to weep, He never forgets to comfort us when we weep. Though He may not stop sorrows to affect our life, He does not delay to hold and support His believers who are bereft. What if something like that happens to me? How can I continue to live after that? Will I be able to accept that without breaking down? There are times when such questions flash across our hearts. But, if the LORD is with us, He will guide us under any circumstance.

The divine presence of the LORD is able to comfort, steady and strengthen us under any circumstance that life may throw at us. During times of oppression, the divine presence will hold us strong so that we don't break apart; during times of afflictions, the presence of God will guard our hearts from breaking. Let us be careful to live in the presence of God always.

To Ponder

If you are with God, troubles come not to tear you apart, but to make you perfect.

Feburary 28

DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS

Matthew 11:11-24

A friend of tax collectors and sinners……
Matthew 11:19

I was silent, they called me dumb.
I started talking, they called me talkative.
I controlled my feelings, they called me insensitive log.
I expressed them freely, they said I was emotional.
I did not point out others' defects, they said I compromise.
I started pointing out the mistakes; they said I am a fault-finding devil.
I was very careful in spending money, they said I was stingy.
I began to spend lavishly, they said I was a spendthrift.
I wore simple dress; they said I am a hypocrite.
I began to dress well, they said I was pompous.
I befriended only the good; they said I did not love all.
I mixed with all, they said I lacked principles.
In this world, irrespective of how we live, some people will be so biased that they will see only defects in us. We can not please all. Only God can direct us how to live and if we live according to His guidance we will be happy and satisfied.
The Pharisees criticized John the Baptist who lived in wilderness like an ascetic.They criticized Jesus who led an ordinary life among the people.
If we learn to live according to the expectation of God, we Will not be hurt by others' criticism. We need not bother about expectation of others.

To Ponder

If a person wishes to avoid criticism, he can not walk in the path of truth.

Feburary 29

SAME MESSAGE

Philippians 3:1-14

To write the same things to you is no trouble to me
Philippians 3:1

A member in a church used to jot down points from the pastor's message. Since, he was very systematic he had an exact account of all what the pastor said including anecdotes. So, when he heard some of those things repeated, he used to tell the pastor "you had already mentioned all these in your earlier sermons" which annoyed the pastor. Once he approached the pastor to comment that his idea had already been stated in his previous sermon. The pastor replied, "If I repeat that after you start following what I have preached, tell me" .After that, the pastor was not troubled by that critic.

Sometimes we may have to listen to ideas and advice which we had already heard. Then we become vexed because the same ideas are being repeated. But, what is important is the question whether we are following what we have already heard. We may have heard the same sermon several times. Messages that focus on one single trait can be spoken repeatedly. That is not our problem. We need to ask ourselves whether we have followed the suggestions and succeeded in our attempt. Until we reach that time we can't grumble about repetitions.

A wife who calls her husband to have his food, may do so repeatedly until he heeds her call. One such a husband got so wild when his wife kept on calling him and shouted at her but she said, "Only after you finish, I can clean the plate and start my next phase of work". Her requests inviting him to eat will continue until he finishes his dinner.

Paul said that writing the same thing to the Philippians was not a trouble for him because they would benefit from that. Repetition is not to be condemned. They are the reminders that urge us to practice what we hear. If we had not implemented the things that we had already heard, repetition is a necessity. Those ideas must be reiterated to make us feel the urgency of following them.

To Ponder

Until we discover what we have to do,
God cannot do anything.

MARCH 1

WE OURSELVES CAN PRAY

Joshua 1: 1 – 9

as I was with Moses
Joshua 1: 5

A devout mother would daily pray for her dear children's safety before sending them off to school. One day her condition became very critical and she knew that her end had come. Before dying, she advised her children that she would not be able pray for them hereafter but asked them not to forget to pray daily to get His blessings. She assured them that God would surely hear their prayers.

A pastor told his church members that he had prayed for them for a long time and he would not pray for them any further. He told them that God would certainly hear their prayers and bless them. The members of a family wept bitterly when the servant of the Lord who had been praying for them died for they wondered who would pray for them hereafter.

But, we should realize the truth that we do not need a third person to pray for us. It is enough if we ourselves pray for us. It is meaningless for a son to wonder who will help him to get his needs from his own father. It is enough if he behaves as a good son. It is good if someone is praying for us. But it does not matter if others do not pray for us for our God will surely meet our needs.

After the death of Moses, Joshua was not incapacitated to do anything because God was with him as He had been with Moses. God assured him of His presence. Yes! Our God is a living God and He has the power to help us at all times.

Let us thank God if there are some people to pray for us. Yet, our blessings do not depend on the prayers of other people. Our prayers are not less powerful than the prayers of world-famous servant of God. God can not only work through Moses but also through Joshua. If we abide in God, our prayers automatically become very powerful.

To Ponder

The easy way to forget the pain of the past is to continue thinking about the the future.

MARCH 2

DISAPPOINTMENTS

John 16:13-33

Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.
John 16:20

It is true that certain disappointments and certain failures make you very depressed and dejected. At times these are even capable of incapacitating your life. Certain disappointments may be hurting you still. The wounds due to certain failures may take longer to heal. But failures and disappointments are not permanent. Behind these setbacks, certain good things are waiting for you; behind these failures, few successes are waiting to surprise you.

The attempts of Moses were a huge letdown in the very first step itself. But, those were failures of his own plans, not the plans of God. That was why one day Moses was exalted far beyond his expectation. Glorious triumphs came through in his life. As his plans failed, a vacuum was created, and God used that vacuum as the place of success for His great plans.

When the evil plans of Joseph's brothers succeeded against him Joseph appeared to be a defeated man. But, the pain due to those failures was followed by victories due to God's intervention. Those victories changed the face and meaning of his very existence. The failures due to his brother's plot led him straight to the glorious triumphs that God had planned for him.

God has plans for you and He has plans for you to succeed; but, He waits to give those victories till all plans you have of your own fail. Only after all the plans David had based on his own counsel failed, he was able to achieve success based on God's plans. Probably you have desired something and experienced failures and disappointments just like David and Moses did. But do not waste that pain and the tears those failures and setbacks caused. Take those hurt and sufferings to God. When someone realizes the mistakes of his past and seeks God with a true heart, there is an unexpected victory waiting for you according to God's plan. And wait patiently till it is revealed.

To Ponder

If you have developed confidence in,
you will never bow down due to lack of self-confidence..

MARCH 3

REFLECTING JESUS

Acts 1:1-11

you shall be witnesses to Me
Acts 1:8

A warm reception was given to the pastor who was new to that church. A little boy, on seeing him, asked his mother, "Mummy! Is he, Jesus Christ?'. The mother replied, "No, dear. He's not Jesus. He has come to teach us about Jesus. He lives like Jesus". After a few weeks, the boy told his mother, 'Mummy! He's not like Jesus. He's like our daddy. He scolds me a lot and if I do something, he gets terribly angry with me…"

When the preachers/ pastors appear in a special spiritual costume, people have big expectations from them. There is no chance to see Jesus. But, His image can be seen in the preachers/pastors since they are not mere preachers but have the responsibility to reflect Jesus. They should not only be publicizing about Jesus but also show Him to others.

When Jesus sent His disciples all over the world, He wanted them to be not only good preachers but also to be good witnesses for Him. It is because the teachings of Christ are not preaching only; rather they contain the method of living too.

Proclaiming the Gospel means providing preaching along with codes of living. "Listen to what I am speaking; look at my life through which I reveal Him – This should be the obligation. People do not wish to see those things about which we preach in our lives first before they see them in their lives. When our life fails to reflect Jesus, it is difficult for the excellent things about which we spoke, to form Christ in others.

However, many see only whether a preacher/pastor reflects Jesus. Not only they, everyone, who know Jesus has the duty to reflect Him to at least a few. Each one of us should never fail to ask ourselves if others are able to see the reflection of Jesus in us.

To Ponder

He, who knows God knows himself,
He alone is worthy to proclaim about God to others.

MARCH 4

AVOID ANGER

Jonah 4:1-11

Do you have a right to be angry?.....
Jonah 4:9

When we recall what a person said and did, there might be every reason for us to be angry and bitter. But what do we gain by our anger, resentment and bitterness? Such adverse and negative emotions bring to us more harm than good. We will be surely affected physically and emotionally by enmity, hatred, resentment and desire for revenge. These will disturb and destroy our efforts to prosper, our peace and happiness. What we consider to be right and just can ruin our happiness. We might justify our anger, but we must also remember that the negative reaction does harm to us.

Jonah's feelings towards the people of Nineveh may appear reasonable because he was annoyed at their wickedness. Because of their attitude, he thought that they should be punished. Hidden bitterness and angry was due to their godless life. This response looks justifiable on the surface.

But, he had to undergo a series of difficulties because of his ungodly reaction. He had to flee from the presence of God and be crushed in the stomach of a fish. He lost his peace too. God had to take all these efforts to mould him and bring him back on to the track of obedience.

Very often, we try to justify our bitterness and resentment. We supply adequately convincing reasons for harbouring such negative feelings. But, at the same time we lose sight of the evil consequences of such adverse emotions. If we analyze carefully the evil that such people may have done will be negligible, compared to the enormous danger which our unhealthy response produces. Hence, it is essential that we do not allow such negative emotions to rankle in our heart. God wants to remove all these emotions that injure and wreck our life

MARCH 5

VICTORIES AND FAILURES

Psalm 34: 1 – 22

Many are the afflictions of the righteous
Psalm 34: 19

A student was the hero of his college. He was a great sportsman. All were sure that he alone would win the medal whenever he participated in any sports event. Till today, his team had not lost any event in which he was a member. But, once unexpectedly he had to face the defeat and he could not overcome that shock defeat. He became very desperate and dejected and this agony and pain became a mental block for all his future efforts.

Yes! He, who after numerous victories, fails to overcome a single defeat is not a conqueror but a coward. Some people prosper in all the things they do and accomplish whatever they plan. When there are no hurdles, they progress quickly but a single defeat will demoralize and immobilize them forever.

For those who are unable to bear their defeats, it is always very difficult to retain their victories. All those godly people in the Bible who achieved great victories through the grace of God were not exception to defeats. People like Abraham, Joseph and David had to face victory and defeat one after another. An important political leader was continuously winning the elections but once he had to face defeat. Thereafter he had no courage to face elections.

It is always good to face victory and defeat alternately. This will help a person to know the cost of victory and the consequence of defeat. It is better to have the understanding that God does permit some defeats in our lives for surely we can get some good experiences through our defeats. They can help us to rectify our weaknesses and also to do better in the days to come. That is why godly man says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psalm 119: 71). Let us not treat only the times of victories as God-given ones. Our times of failures are also good ones for they can strengthen us in divine works.

To Ponder

God does not give us trouble-free life only. He gives us a life that is not frustrated by troubles and problems.

MARCH 6

WORLDLY TASTES

Colossians. 3:1-15

Set your minds on higher things above
Colossians 3:2

Some small children, who eat a lot of ice cream and other snacks, will have to be forced to eat other healthy food. Those who prefer fast food will not have any appetite for healthy food items. If our tongue gets accustomed to one particular type of food, then other things will not be palatable.

Similarly, some people who are known to be spiritual, do not show adequate enthusiasm in spiritual matters. They seem to be disinterested in prayer, fellowship with God and clear spiritual messages. This is because though they are spiritual, their taste is different.

They get pleasure out of human fellowship, tasty food, wealth, modern dresses and television. Since their appetite is for such things, they can not be satisfied with other spiritual involvement. God's word and His fellowship do not have any fascination for them. They become tasteless and insipid.

They do not relish reading the Bible but watching television gives them immeasurable joy. For them, praying is drudgery but talking to others on mobile phone is delightful. They shun prayer meetings and worship service but attend weddings and birthday parties with great enthusiasm. Seeking relationship with God tastes like bitter medicine for them but the company of friends is as sweet as honey.

Those who prefer the worldly pleasure will not be interested in the divine joy. They lose the sensitiveness to the matters of heavenly matter. A person must have gone through the experience of salvation and his heart must have been transformed by the Holy Spirit. Only then he will be interested in spiritual matters and pursue them with passion.

To Ponder

Be filled with good thoughts.
The evil ones will then flee and vanish.

MARCH 7

WHO HAS MORE PORTION?

Matthew 26:38-44

they might be with Him
Mark 3:14

The elder son who was living abroad had earned a good name among others who said that he was leading a good life. Every month, he sent lot of things to his father. However, when he returned to his native place, after several years he was shocked to learn that his father gave most of his properties to the younger son, though he was not as good as the elder one. The reason for the father's this decision was, 'My younger son was always with me"

We may be perfect. We may have many admirable virtues. We may give liberally for God. Yet, if we stand far away from God, trusting on our self righteousness and boasting about it, we cannot enjoy most of His blessings.

The prime thing that God expects from us is fellowship with Him. He wants us to have a close relationship with Him. Christianity does not lie in merely following certain laws or rules and regulations. God, who gave laws and statues through Moses, gave Christ for us in the New Testament. Moving closer to Him and getting connected to Him is Christian life.

The result of such fellowship is a disciplined and pious life. We should not only be good but also have the experience of living close to Him in His presence. Our fellowship increases, when we indulge more in prayer and Bible reading. God too likes that.

We should not only accept Christian disciplines but also Christ's relationship with us. We can excel in many aspects by preparing ourselves to follow certain Christian discipline Yet, if we do not have everyday fellowship with Him, it would pave ways for us to take pride by comparing ourselves with others. Of course good disciplines may be there. Yet there would be lack of love, humility, virtues and a tendency to accept others.

To Ponder

More than seeing how excellent your worship is see how close you are with God.

MARCH 8

WHO IS A FRIEND?

I Kings 21:17-29

So you have found me, my enemy? ...
I Kings 21:20

Whom does an average man consider as his close friend? If we give some thought to this question, it will be obvious that only a person with questionable character is preferred as a friend.

Man prefers the one who accepts him as he is, ignoring his mistakes and stands by him in the wrongs he commits. Such a person is regarded as the best friend.

That's why, those who are accepted as good friends can not be genuine people. In this context, it will be difficult to accept a person who points out our mistakes and refuses to support our wrong moves. We may not like to befriend a person who hesitates to believe whatever we say.

It is not enough if a person is a good friend, he needs to be a good person. Rehoboam had good friends but they were not men of good character. So their counsel turned out to be dangerous.

Ahab considered all who supported his views as his friends and treated Elijah and Micaiah as his enemies because these two stood only for truth and opposed wickedness. He was destroyed by the advice of those people whom he considered to be his friends.

Nathan was David's friend. He did not think that he should please David as a friend. That's why, he condemned David's unscrupulous action which made David repent and receive God's grace.

Good people will not have a wide circle of friends. It is because they can not compromise with breach of values. They can not associate with people who come short of excellence.

The reason for the ruin of many people's lives is not their enemies; it is their friends. Some of the good friends can be bad people also.

To Ponder

We may be displeased with those who point our mistakes, but, one day we will realize they are our well-wishers.

MARCH 9

WRONG DECISIONS

I Corinthians 5: 1-13

In that case, you would have to leave the world…
I Corinthians 5:10

A friend closed all the windows because mosquitoes flew in. Taking precautions against the mosquitoes is good but the closed windows will block fresh air and natural breeze and thereby affect the health. When we try to help others, we may face some problems. When we try to establish relationships with others, we may encounter some unnecessary difficulties and bitterness. But, it is unwise to decide that it is wrong to maintain any relationship. It is foolish to isolate ourselves from all contacts because relationships causes some heartache

Though Jesus Christ was holy, He was friendly with people of diverse characteristics. He never isolated Himself because of the defects and imperfections of people. In human life, it is important that we are friendly with others and enjoy good relationships.

We need to help others and be involved in others' problems. If we withdraw from all these because of the few problems we might encounter in our interactions, we will be ruining ourselves. Then our life itself will become meaningless. But at the same time, we need to be careful in our dealings with people. We need to know how to behave with others and exercise caution .We need to be wise and discerning in our interactions with others. We can not isolate ourselves from people in order to avoid problems because there will be problems even in such an estranged life.

There are people who abstained totally from churches, because of some problems they encountered in a few churches. There are people who abandoned human relationships, because of the problems in relationships. There are people who refuse to accept preachers, because of some preachers who were not honest. Let us not deny ourselves something that is good, in our effort to avoid something that is bad.

To Ponder

If we depend only on God,
human relationship will not disappoint us

MARCH 10

OTHERS' TASTE

I Corinthians 10:24-33

please all men in all things
I Corinthians 10:33

Once, with great enthusiasm I bought for my children, a particular variety of sweet which I had enjoyed eating earlier. But that sweet item did not appeal to them. I felt bad that they did not have a good sense of taste and that they had put aside the thing which I bought for them with great desire. But when I thought about this deeply, I realized that it was I, who had not understood them properly.

What tastes good to me will not be tasty to every other tongue. What appears excellent to me may not appear so, to others. So, I need to consider others' taste too, instead of acting on the basis of my tastes alone. It is not concluding by ourselves what is love and what is happiness, among relationships. 'What are the things that are considered to be love by others? What are the things seen by them as matters of joy? What satisfies them?" – We need to think about these also.

It is not that we should bend and yield to others' mentality. With equality, we should respect others' reasonable feelings, thoughts, tastes, likes and dislikes. Only then we can love them truly. Only then we can do good works that would make them happy. "Is, what I consider to be love is seen by the other as love? Can he too view this which appears good to me, to be good? Did that thing which I believed would bring happiness, really gave him happiness? " - We need to think in these lines, in our family life; only then our love and good works shall be respected.

We also need to think, "What does God like? What is correct in the eyes of God? What does God approve of as love? Will He too consider good the thing which we consider to be good? When we thus learn to do the things that please God, we can also know the reasonable wishes of others and act accordingly

To Ponder

Anyone can condemn the bad,
only a few can appreciate the good.

MARCH 11

OLD SPIRIT?

Luke 9:51-62

You do not know what manner of spirit you are of
Luke 9:55

Arguments broke between two passengers in the train over using the lights during the night's journey. One of the passengers used abusive and harsh words whereas the other one pretended not to be affected by that and continued to talk with dignity. Observing this, a third passenger asked this man, "How is it possible for you to reply calmly after hearing that horrible man's foul words?" for which he replied, "It was the spirit in him that made him talk like that. It was the Spirit in me that made me reply like that. Nothing else"

Some good Christians too, while losing their temper, leave off the Christian spirit and hasten to act according to the spirit of man. When a person slightly provoked a servant of God, he said, "Hello, I am a pastor and hence I'm patient. Don't needle me and make me show who I am"

Some people talk meekly, so patiently and in a divine voice. But when they are hurt, they hasten to reveal their original self. A true Christian cannot be ruled by the spirit of self and the Spirit of God. Once accepting Jesus, the old man and the spirit of self should not be allowed to operate.

Children of God should not have two spirits. Aggravating situations and hurting times should be faced with the meekness given by the Holy Spirit. If we call our old man and the spirit of self to operate during times of temptations, it means that we have not yet died to the self.

When the disciples of Jesus were provoked in Samaria, they wanted to take vengeance with the spirit of Elijah. But, Jesus said to them, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of'. Yes, let us be careful to allow only the Spirit of God to operate in us.

To Ponder

He, who wants to take revenge,
adds one more hurt to the hurts he already has.

MARCH 12

GENUINE HUMILITY

Luke 14:7-14

He who humbles himself will be exalted…
Luke 14:11

He who leads a humble life will be exalted by God. But, there is an enormous difference in being really humble and giving an appearance of humility.

Some people dress and speak in a very humble way, while their attitude remains haughty. Their words are clothed in conceit.

If one keeps harping on his humble nature all the time, it is obvious that he seeks recognition through his humility.

Some who wish to project themselves as kings, call themselves as trash and dust. This is a kind of deceptive humility and a business tactic.

Some who take part in worship and prayer, claim that they are not fit for anything and thus appear as if they shun self-glory.

But if people fail to appreciate and recognize them, they can not tolerate that. This humility is the result of hypocritical piety.

Real humility springs from the awareness that we have already got God's recognition and approval. When we are recognized by God, we will not run after the approval and commendations from others. When Isaiah saw the glory of God, he saw his own miserable state.

When he saw his plight and humbled himself, God exalted him. Humbling oneself is the most difficult process.

When we enjoy a strong relationship with God and when we become conscious of that fellowship, we find happiness in humbling ourselves. Consequently, we will not hesitate to maintain a low profile before others too.

To Ponder

Acknowledging truth may seem to be bitter,
but life itself will turn bitter if we don't do it.

MARCH 13

CLEANLINESS AND HOLINESS

Luke 6: 27-45

Perfect holiness, out of reverence for God
II Corinthians 7:1

The life of some Christians appears spotless and clean. No one can point out any mistake yet, there is nothing special about their life. They do not experience extraordinary fulfillment. A house which is neatly maintained is considered clean but we may not consider it extraordinarily grand, unless there are artistic things to make it look grand. Highly ornate embellishments and expensive decorative things only make the house look stunningly grand.

A house which is elaborately and lavishly built also will look grand and impressive. There is a vast difference between such a mansion and a simple but clean house. Similarly, our life which is free from sin is like the clean house. We may not consider this kind of life as the best one that might please God. It can not also be considered as a holy life. In a holy life, along with cleanliness there ought to be other special qualities. A holy life must have very honorable qualities and must almost resemble the life of Christ.

Absence of a few mistakes does not make a life holy. The fullness of life, its mature values and spontaneous purity must surprise those who watch. Such a life alone can be holy. A life of extraordinary virtues will impact others and will stand prominently. This different life alone can be called holy.

The luster of our Christian life will attract the attention of others only when our virtues are prominent. Therefore it is not enough if one avoids committing mistakes, He must be a person of compassion. It is not enough if his heart is clean. His heart must be filled with love. It does not suffice if he is a man of justice. He must be able to tolerate injustice. Yes, the life that is commended by God for the extraordinary qualities is a holy life.

To Ponder

**God's attributes in us reveal,
that God is with us.**

MARCH 14

FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM

Proverbs 28: 1-13

He who conceals hissins does not prosper.
Proverbs 28:13

Some, who experience discomforts in their body hesitate to go to the doctor for check up. That's due to the fear that they may have to hear some unpleasant truth. They are reluctant to face the diagnosis and do not like to have the real situations exposed. They wish to close their eye and ears to their defects, weaknesses and problems. They ignore the reality as they are not strong enough to face the pain such disclosures would cause.

Once, I asked a person whom I know was struggling with great debts, " how is your problem now?" His reply was," Why do you remind me of that? I do not think about it at all now." Of course, it is also true that if one is totally obsessed by his problems, he will not be able to concentrate on anything else.

But, at the same time if one pushes his problems into total oblivion and tends to suppress the very thought of that, he may not try to seek solutions. A person who had read a good spiritual book said, "I should not have read the book. This book made me realize that I lack much in holiness."

He was reluctant to see his real state. God gave us His words, so that in that light we could identify our weaknesses. Until we see them, there is no way of correcting ourselves. Our attempt to deliberately close our eyes to our deficiencies, will only take us to more serious consequences. Then the damages will be irreparable.

God revealed to Isaiah in a vision that he needed to be cleansed so that he could be used mightily by Him. Isaiah in response confessed his inadequacy; so God cleansed him and equipped him for His work. God sometimes reveals our defects. Sometimes He allows us to examine ourselves so that we could become conscious of our failures. He does this not to reject us but to equip us.

To Ponder

You might one day realize the fault you wish to cover now,
But no good may come out of it then, for it will be too late.

MARCH 15

MESSAGE OF SALVATION

Luke 9:46-62

Son of man did not come to destroy men's lives
Luke - 9:56

An evangelist met a person who was a drunkard, quarrelsome and undisciplined and spoke to him about salvation. But the drunkard abused him and chased him away. This response was not because the drunkard was rude but it was largely due to the crude and rude way of conveying the happy message of deliverance. The way the evangelist gave the message of salvation was wrong and annoying.

He said, "You are a sinner. You need to repent or God will punish you severely." What the evangelist had desired to do was just to warn the other man. His motive was not to show the way to be saved. Many people like to warn and condemn like John the Baptist but lack the compassion of Christ who was full of sympathy for the sinners and wanted them to experience the joy of salvation.

The man, who was called Legion, was possessed by many evil spirits and was therefore chained. The people bound him in chains but Jesus set him free from the clutches of the evil force. The man, who could not be controlled by any one, became a normal human being because of the compassion of Jesus.

Why are many people bad and evil? It is because of the sin that enslaves them and keeps them captive. It is also because of Satan who guides them in the wrong path. It is natural for any one to be irritated and disgusted by the attitudes and actions of these people who function as puppets in the hands of the devil.

But like Christ, we need to be compassionate and pray and try for their deliverance. People may reject judgmental words of warning but will listen to loving words that promise deliverance. They knew that they live under the power of evil and are ignorant of the ways of deliverance.

To Ponder

If one hates another in the name of God, he does not worship the real God.

MARCH 16

ACTING AS KING

II Corinthians 5:11-21

If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation
II Corinthians 5:17

A king needs attire that goes with his royalty. A dagger, crown and a scepter complete his dress and lend a majestic appearance. The king should be seated on a throne and speak in a commanding voice.

All these are essential pre-requisites for a king. But a man, who acts in the role of a king, may not have all these. Though he is not a real king, he puts on all these to impersonate a king.

Similarly, we see different aspects of piety like Bible reading, worship and offertory in a Christian.

But a person who has all these aspects may not be a genuine Christian, just like the play king who can not be a real king.

The person, who involves in all the spiritual activities, wishes to give the appearance of a true Christian. These are undertaken to impress others but they can not last for long.

A true Christian does not bother about creating an image. Once he commits himself to Christ, automatically he undergoes a metamorphosis and becomes a new creation.

As a result, he begins to involve in pious acts spontaneously without any compulsion. His prayers, offertory and worship do not make him a true Christian. These factors appear because he is a Christian.

Though some may impress others with their prayers, worship and offertory, they may not have love, humility and patience which ought to be found in a true child of God.

This happens when the religious activities are the outcome of their own efforts and have not evolved out of their experience of rebirth.

To Ponder

If we claim that Christ is with us,
we will shun what He hates.

MARCH 17

SUFFICIENT

II Timothy 4:7-22

'But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me"
II Timothy 4:17

This journey of life is indeed full of sorrows and struggles. However, a life that has taken the Lord as its companion can never become a forsaken life; in such a life, the Lord Himself shall stand with us, under all circumstances, encourage us and prefect everything for us.

"What can be considered as the success of a Christian life?" – If this question is posed to me, I would reply, "Getting rooted in the belief that the Lord Jesus shall be more than enough for me, till the end of this life's journey". 'Being sufficient' does not necessarily mean that He would give everything and meet all the needs without any lack.

Rather it means that He would do whatever should be done for me, under any situation, till the end of my journey on this earth; He would fulfil His purpose in my life perfectly, no matter through which path He takes me.

It is my desire that whatever happens tomorrow should be good; but it is not sure it would be so. I desire for prosperity; yet it may turn out to be dry; I desire to travel in a comfortable and smooth path; yet I may go through rough and unknown ups and downs tomorrow. Nobody knows what would happen the next day.

However, amidst all these, it is enough if Christ is with me, in that situation. It is my firm hope that even if those things that I fear happen to me, the Lord would be with me there. He would show me the way I should go. I know that in darkness, He would be my light; in sorrow, He would be my comfort; in afflictions, He would be my companion; in my lacks, He would be my everything; in my loneliness, He would be my courage. Yes, I am firm in my conviction that He would take me across. Getting strong in this conviction is my daily desire.

To Ponder

A tree stands erect when the root is fixed on the ground; hope stands tall in the heart which is fixed with God.

MARCH 18

WHATEVER IS DONE

Ecclesiastes 9:1-18

Whatever your hand finds to do...
Ecclesiastes 9:10

One of my friends was a skilled tailor; many went to him for stitching. When he was becoming reputed for his skill, he got frustrated with his profession and regretted for failing to choose some other good profession like so many others.

So, he left his tailoring and went for business. It made him realize that business was not his line. He was thoroughly confused with his future and lost all his good identities.

We should do only that which is fitting for us. Whatever we do, we should do it with good thoughts and with inertest. We should not long for the other fields where others may be flying high.

They cannot do what we can do. If we enter into their field, we cannot shine as they. If Sachin Tendulkar had gone to do business the world would not have known him. If Bill Gates of Microsoft had gone to pay cricket, he would not have become a world renowned man.

Not only the Ford car which has world-wide reputation, but also the KFC chicken is world famous. There are people who are world famous not only in the computer field but also in samosa making.

Whatever we can do should be done with our whole strength and mind and with joy. Everybody cannot do what we do. We cannot do what everybody does. Barack Obama should be in politics; Wall Mart should be in the retail market.

Sometimes, God might not have placed us in a place where we would be known in a high level. But when we honour Him in the place where He has kept us and work sincerely, the satisfaction and joy from that would be great. I know pretty well that I can never become a Billy Graham. But the contentment, fulfillment and joy that I have within the circle in which I am placed is not less than what Billy Graham has.

To Ponder

The dejection over unattained benefit, makes the attained benefits futile.

MARCH 19

LIVING WITNESS

II Timothy 2:12-26

I sanctified myself ...
John 17:19

We car driver can make his son a pilot. The son of an illiterate father can try hard and make his son an IAS officer. A poor farmer with his hard work and skill can help his son to become a millionaire. But, it is totally impossible for a man whose life is not disciplined and good, to make his son lead a virtuous life.

One who leads a life of dissipation can't change his son with all his advice and counsel. It is because the son's lifestyle is determined more by the father's quality of life than by his teaching.

A father may have the vision and desire to see desirable changes in his children. A pastor's dream can be to have all the members of his church lead a saintly life. Their visions and dreams will never become real unless they themselves lead a life of holiness.

Our desires alone will not change others. Our teachings can not effectively bring about the changes we wish to see in others. Other's life will be impacted only by our model life.

Paul didn't ask others to follow him. He said that they must follow him as he followed Christ. He was able to say that because he was leading such a sanctified life. Jesus led an impeccable life to encourage His disciples to lead such a holy life.

Many parents who want their children to be like David and Daniel, lead a sinful existence like Saul and Ahab. Hence, children do not change. Similarly, many pastors dream that their members must become great like Peter and Paul while they themselves live like Judas. Teaching and visions are not enough to motivate. The way we live must impact others.

To Ponder

The world will see our light,
when we allow the light of God to dwell within us.

MARCH 20

DEVOTEES OR CHILDREN?

Romans 8:14-26

we are children of God
Romans 8:16

We pray; read the Bible; worship as a congregation in the church; do ministry; give offerings and so on. All these are sufficient indications that we believe in God and give importance to Him. However, the important question that should be asked here is, "What are the evidences that confirm that we are the children of God?"

Godly activities are more than enough to prove our piety and belief in God. However, only our good nature, excellent qualities and virtues alone can certify that we are really the children of God.

Think of the Pharisees in the days of Jesus! They were so keen on showing their godliness; yet, on the other side, they were exhibiting hatred, jealousy, bitterness and pride against Him. Jesus never accepted their spiritual standard and asserted that they were not children of God at all.

God calls us not to live as His devotees but as His children. We need to have the experience of repentance, being born again, filled with the Holy Spirit and inheriting the Father's nature.

Only the divine nature that is seen in us certifies that we are His children and it alone clarifies whether we are worshipping the Lord as God or whether we have accepted Him as our Father and are His children.

Jesus gave Himself up on the cross so that we would go past the status of His devotees and reach the highest status of being His children. If there is no change in our character, it implies that we have not yet received the excellent blessings that are kept in store for us, through His death.

To Ponder

Godly man without virtue is worse than an ungodly wicked man.

MARCH 21

TEMPORARY RELIEF

Jermiah 8:11-22

No recovery for the health of the daughter of my people?
Jeremiah 8:22

It can never be said that headaches stem only from some sickness in the head. There is every chance that a person may suffer from headache because of certain problem in his stomach. Not knowing this, if he takes medicine for headache, he cannot be cured but can have only temporary relief.

When the effect of the tablet numbs the nerve centre, he gets relief but he gets back his headache once the effect wears off. Hence, it is necessary that we should find the cause of the sickness.

Many do not know the actual reason for lack of peace and joy in their lives. Some people are of the view that everything would be solved if they go to certain servants of God and attend fasting prayer. This is totally wrong. Of course they can get peace when they go to such places. But it is not permanent. Worries are forgotten only for a while. First of all, we should analyze the basic reason for our lack of peace and joy. Knowing that basic reason, we should do what ought to be done since otherwise we can never enjoy true peace.

It can never be denied that it is because of lack of relationship with God that we lack peace and joy in life. We should think of the paths we have trodden and the way in which we lived. We should realize that we lived to please ourselves and not God. Realizing this we should be willing to have close relationship with God and go deep into spiritual life.

Some people have the chance to know the Lord and His ways. Yet, they are not diligent to live a pleasing life to God. There are people who do not yield themselves to God, but go along their own hard heartedness. Here, their spiritual knowledge itself turns against them since they do not live by their spiritual awareness and realization.

To Ponder

He, who is unable to stand on the truth which he has come to understand, can never understand the subsequent truth.

MARCH 22

VIRTUES AND INDIFFERENCE

Proverbs 22:1-19

A good name is to be chosen
Proverbs 22:1

We are living among people who value money and materials as something precious. It can never be expected that they would hold our virtues and good qualities in high esteem. Eyes that are used to seeing glamorous things can never learn to enjoy a beautiful artistic painting.

There is no chance that the people who consider a free life without any self control as modern culture can ever give good marks to a disciplined and virtuous life.

The society has learnt to enthrone only one's strength, talent and glamour; so it despises love, humility, truthfulness and morality. On realizing this, naturally the question, "Is it that necessary to lead a good life, facing so much difficulties?' arises in our mind.

As a result, naturally there is no strong inclination to live a life of good conduct and qualities.

If Joseph had given second place in his life to integrity and morality, he would have lived like a prince in the palace of Potiphar, instead of going to the prison; if David had yielded to his situations, without giving importance to fear of God and His ways, he need not have wandered in the wilderness.

Rather he could have easily seized Saul's throne. Yes, their integrity, honesty and patience was despised by the people; yet one day they were richly rewarded by the Lord. We need not be concerned if people don't respect and value our good qualities because these qualities give us mental peace, contentment and security.

Not only that, we can enjoy the joy of the Lord. These are the highest reward that we can ever receive.

To Ponder

Don't see whether your actions are praised by others, but, see whether they are laudable.

MARCH 23

INGRATITUDE

Psalm 106:1-23

He saved them for His name's sake...
Psalm 106:8

The wife of a Christian believer fell ill and was admitted in a hospital. The husband was worried about the money he had to get ready for the treatment. Another man, who was aware of his problem, came forward to give a huge amount to him. But his wife was annoyed by her husband's generosity and tried to discourage him saying "I am shocked that you want to help that man who has no gratitude. Haven't we helped him several times like this? Has he ever visited us while we suffered?" The husband replied patiently, "Let us not look at his ingratitude. Now when he needs help, let us just focus on his desperate need and the difficult situation".

Ingratitude is a very bad quality but at the same time expecting gratitude also is not an admirable trait. We may not see any reason to help those who need it if we wish to help on the basis of their character. When we wish to help someone we need to concentrate only on their helpless situation, their inadequacy to face it and their inability to tend for themselves.

God provided manna for forty years when the Israelites were in the wilderness. He showed them the way, when they were ignorant of the directions. He helped them in dangerous situations. But, those people were ungrateful, forgot all the benefits very easily and grieved the heart of God. Suppose God wanted to help them on the basis of their attitudes and behaviour, He could not have extended His help beyond a year.

Though Moses slogged day and night with great concern, they did not pay any attention to his hard work. But Moses, filled with compassion for them, interceded on their behalf. Helping others reflects our character. It need not be induced by the character of the person who requires help. If we help those who may not deserve our help, God will be pleased. Such a help will be rewarded by God.

To Ponder

**Words cannot delineate love,
but, life can portray it.**

MARCH 24

RICHNESS OF MIND

Psalm 65:1-13

The streams of God are filled with water
Psalm 65:9

One can think that happiness is attained by excessive wealth and comfortable living. Such luxuries and material prosperity may make a person happy to some extent. But, he may not experience the fullness of joy which does not depend on any external factors. Only when God touches the mind of a person he is blessed to enjoy a good relationship with Him. Only then, he can feel the richness of mind. This status of mental bliss can be experienced even in the absence of material prosperity.

When the mind enters into this blissful state love, peace, contentment and joy appear within. David possessed this mind-set. He was caught in barren and dry situations on several occasions. Everything, around him looked bleak and depressing. No situation could offer him joy but he was experiencing a joyful mind-set. There was inexplicable joy in his heart. It was due to his intimate relationship with God.

The richness of his heart was also due to constant search for God and his intense desire to please God. He meditated on God both night and day. He was aware of the greatness of God's word and therefore chose to meditate on His word. Since he had all these characteristics and habits, it was possible for him to stay connected with God and enjoy a deep relationship with Him.

Such a relationship enriched his heart and made it possible to experience joy in all adverse situations. Such a joy was greater than that which riches can produce. (Ps.4:7) Real richness of mind does not depend on situations. It depends on the mind set. There are so many people whose minds remain barren in the midst of prosperous environment. Solomon is a concrete example for such a miserable life. His riches did not give him satisfaction. Let us be careful to enjoy real richness, by being connected to God.

To Ponder

He who knows how important God is in his life, receives all that he needs without any difficulty.

MARCH 25

TEN PERCENT EVIL

I Thessalonians. 5:14-28

Avoid every kind of evil
I Thessalonians. 5:22

Suppose, a person consumes a food item which contains 90% nutrition and 10% that cause harm. What will be the outcome? Will he benefit by the 90% nutrition or will he be affected by the 10% injurious element? In reality, his health will be affected more by the negligible portion of the bad things in the food.

Modern inventions have developed many useful gadgets. Television can be of much use in various ways. Internet promotes knowledge and help spread information. Mobile phone is very handy. Face book and Twitter help in exchange of ideas and views. It is possible to identify like- minded people. But, there are some evil aspects also in all these. 10% evil can cancel the benefit of 90% good.

Today's society has become a victim to the 10% evil, though there is 90% advantage. Mobile phone and internet have destroyed the lives of many people. They are like dangerous virus and have killed many. It has become impossible to live without them because they seem to have become indispensable.

One young man confessed that he could not resist watching obscene scenes on TV, though there are many good things to watch including Christian Programmes. There are many good programmes; yet, a few vulgar scenes impact the mind with great lingering force and affect the thought process. One Christian youth who sang in church choir agreed that he felt as if he was being dragged to hell by a single vile and vulgar internet message, though he received several other messages that seem to transport him to heaven.

We see that TV, mobile and internet function jointly as evil trio. Unless we seek the presence of God daily, we can't escape being washed away by such evil forces. God, who made a way in the middle of the surging water of Jordan, will save us from the horrible misuse of such electronic gadgets.

To Ponder

Evil sprouts in the heart spontaneously, good traits take time and efforts to appear.

MARCH 26

DURING GOOD DAYS

Job 19: 13-29

I myself will see Him ...
Job 19:27

When we come across difficulties we ask, "Why should I be troubled like this?" but when God helps us experience joyful moments we never ask, "Why are we blessed with so much of joy?"

When trials and pain come our way, we ask "What sin did I commit to deserve this?" but during happy moments we fail to ask, "What good did I do to deserve this?"

During moments of grief we cry, "God, do you have eyes?" But when everything is smooth in life, we never think that God is watching all our mistakes.

We, who ask in times of distress, "Where is the compassion of God?" do not thank Him for His grace in times of peace.

Though Job lived in prosperity, he never forgot God. Though he was surrounded by every comfort, he led a disciplined and righteous life.

He was careful about protecting his integrity because he was grateful to God for blessing him.

Since he was loyal and true to God in times of affluence, he could rely on Him totally even when he lost everything.

He was not swept off his balance when life dealt him a hard blow. He could say that God gave and He took.

When everyone thought that life had come to a standstill because he had lost everything, he said with confidence that God was alive and he would see Him.

Let us think of our creator in days of prosperity. Then in days of misery we will be strengthened by Him.

To Ponder

Bitter medicine heals the body.
bitter experiences mould our life.

MARCH 27

RIGHT MEASUREMENT

II Corinthians 10:1-18

Those who commend themselves…
II Corinthians 10: 12

A person, who was going abroad, weighed all his travel bags at home and was satisfied that everything was within the specified limit. But, when the bags were weighed at the airport, he had to pay for the excess weight. He argued vociferously that everything was fine when he weighed the bags at home. The truth was that his weighing machine was not accurate.

Some people who are fully satisfied with their faith and spiritual standards are mistaken in their evaluations. They measure their spiritual fervour by their involvement in spiritual activities, prayer life and offerings.

They are so satisfied with what they are and what they do and thereby become very complacent. But, spiritual activities do not indicate our spiritual maturity.

If we expect God's blessings to be in proportion to our spiritual involvement, we will be disappointed. Some people feel that God does not grant them the blessings which they deserve to receive .

They expect their spiritual involvements to be rewarded. They wonder why God has not rewarded their enthusiastic participation in religious activities. But, how can our spiritual standards be measured and evaluated?

The measures we have to use ought to be different. First, we have to find out how far we enjoy relationship with God in our spirit and how thirsty we are to walk in His way?

We need to consider to what extent we are prepared to humble ourselves in order to enjoy his love. The way our acts and attitudes reflect God's image and the way we enjoy God's peace and joy, indicate our spiritual standard. These are vital and we need to measure ourselves against these parameters.

To Ponder

The mirror reflects the beauty of the face.
The Bible reflects the defects of the heart.

MARCH 28

TOWARDS A NOBLE OBJECTIVE

Philippians 3: 1-14

I press on toward the goal...
Philippians 3:14

One, who is focused on hunting tigers, will not be distracted by the rabbits or hares that cross his path. When we are focused on high objectives, we can not afford to be distracted by small matters. If we magnify the petty matters and direct our attention to them, we will lose sight of our goal.

Abraham was chosen to accomplish God's mighty plan. While, his mind was fixed on that, certain things tried to distract him from his main pursuit. A conflict arose between him and Lot. But Abraham was mature enough to stick to his objective. He did not try to establish his superiority. For Abraham accomplishing God will was higher than establishing his prestige.

He humbled himself and gave Lot the privilege to choose his place of settlement. Similarly, he must have been grieved when Sarah decided to send Hagar and Ishmael away but even there, he did not try to establish his will. Though his inner feelings were hurt, he submitted himself to the guidance of God. If he had given place to such distractions, he may not have reached the goal God had set for him.

In our spiritual as well as secular life, when we wish to achieve certain goals, we may face certain factors that seem to hurt our personal feelings and self respect. We may have to face frustrations, mental agony, injustice, rejection and problems of prestige.

If we get distracted, by all these our focus will be disturbed and the vision of our main objective will grow dimmer. Consequently, our strength and determination to advance towards our goal will taper down and dwindle. People, who struggle for their self esteem, will easily lose the prize that God had fixed for them.

To Ponder

When problems assail you and wound you,
your mind gets enriched and moulded.

MARCH 29

COMMON SENSE

Romans 12:1-9

Do not confirm to the pattern of this world
Romans 12:2

Wearing dresses that expose more than what it should conceal has become the modern trend. The cap is worn the wrong way following the fashion of the day. Women cut the hair short and grow the nails long. Young men do not comb their hair. Instead, with the help of gel, they make their hair stand erect on their head like the spokes of a porcupine. They call it the latest style. Youngsters wear faded jeans and threadbare pants. They are in vogue.

Today world follows what is contrary to the established and approved norms. What is right is disregarded and what is diametrically opposite is acclaimed as fashion. Tradition is outdated. Convention is condemned as outdated.

Instead of following something as fashion of the day we need to examine if it is right. We cannot accept something just because everyone calls it modern fashion. We need to check if it is within the limit of reason and examine whether it runs counter to social discipline and norms. Today's world calls the irregularities as fashion. Something that is contrary to social norms is considered as the latest style. If somebody loses all sense of discipline and decorum and does something to catch the attention of others it also becomes a fashion. Here we must exercise our common sense.

We need to check if something is right instead of falling for the modern trend. It is not wisdom to follow something just because all the others like that. This is a choice not assisted by common sense. The world likes to live differently and does not choose to live wisely.

We need to be careful in not losing our Christian values. If we are caught by these fads and fashions we are likely to lose our stability. Therefore we need to give importance to discerning what is right and what is wrong. We need to ignore the world's value system and learn to hold in high regard those things which God approves of.

To Ponder

He who acts before planning is a fool.
He who doesn't act even after planning is an idler

MARCH 30

LOVE AND RESPECT

John 21:14-25

do you love Me?
John 21:16

A good pastor attended an important event. A bad politician had also come there. On seeing the good pastor, every one smiled at him warmly. On the other hand, seeing the politician every one stood up. Observing this, a man asked the Pastor, "Everyone stood up when they saw the bad politician and showed him respect. Why didn't they respect you like that?"

The Pastor replied, "They expressed their love for me through their smile. But they stood up and paid him respect. Love is greater than respect. I can enjoy this love till my death; but it is difficult for him to retain this respect till his death" Money, man power, much knowledge, authority, status etc., would earn others' respect compulsorily. But good character, good qualities, good conduct and good deeds would earn us true love.

More than receiving respect because of our strong background, receiving love because of the background of our virtues is excellent. We need to seek not the matters that earn us respect but the matters that earn us love. Once upon a time, the Germans were frightened of Hitler. But today, his name is not found in the list of respectable leaders prepared by the Germans. People of India loved Mahatma Gandhi; even today he is the most respected leader to them.

God too prefers not the people, who pay Him much respect, but the people who love Him so much. Respect would give God a good worship. Only true love would urge a person to walk in His ways and honour Him.

Jesus did not ask Peter, 'Do you respect Me?' but asked "Do you love Me?" Most of the Christians of today stand up and pay respect to Jesus. But, there is no love-instigated smile for Him.

To Ponder

If you have received something from God,
work in such a way for man to receive something from you .

MARCH 31

WRONG MODEL

1 Peter 5: 1 – 14

but being examples to the flock
1 Peter 5: 3

A student used to come to the class without zipping up the first two top buttons in his shirt. When his teacher strictly questioned him for this lapse, he replied that his father always wore his shirts in this fashion and he was just following his father. He thought that his father did like this for some good reason. Yes! Sometimes the wrong lifestyles of some people become a model for others to follow and may also make them think that it is needed for life.

What we see in others make a greater impact on us than what we hear from them.We should be aware that our talk, our behaviour and our lifestyle are bound to make quick impacts on those who move closely with us. Generally the noble qualities we see in others will not create a big impact on us but the wrong things we see in others are sure to create a quick impact on us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not call His disciples to come to a certain place and teach them. But He made them abide with Him at all times and also took them to all places along with Him and taught them. They not only heard what He preached but also saw how He lived. They could not see any wrong or bad things in Him.

The Apostle Paul was another man who also lived like this. That is why He could confidently write to others to do what they saw in him, heard from him, learnt from him and received from him. We should not only be good preachers but also be good role-models to others. We should not only be good parents who give good things to children but also good parents who are able to live a good life before our children.

None of our actions should ever be a wrong-model to those who are close to us or those who love us. We should be very cautious about this because our wrong actions are sure to make an impact on them very easily and quickly.

To Ponder

We cannot say that you are right just because a lot of people praise you or wrong because a few people condemn you.

APRIL 1

HONOUR FOR GOD

Matthew 5:1-16

Glorify your Father in heaven
Matthew 5:16

Once, a man lovingly invited a servant of God to attend his son's wedding saying, "You are a Very Important Person for us. Our greatest privilege and joy is your presence'. That servant of God was moved that he had such a great regard for him.However, when he went to the wedding, nobody knew that he was a VIP because he who invited him did not treat him as an important person.

Many have great respect and devotion for the Lord. They show their reverence for Him by using excellent and beautiful words. They say, "Jesus, You are more important to me than anything and anyone". But nobody would know that Jesus is the most important Person for them since there is nothing in them to prove it.

Giving true respect is not telling the concerned person about it; we should let others know how much respect and honour we have for that person. Considering Jesus as the most important Person does not mean that we should tell Him this directly; but we should live in such a way that others should know that we consider Him to be important for us.

When we praise and extol Him, He alone knows it. But giving honour is making others know about it. Through our life and way of living, others should be made known that we give priority to Jesus alone. By looking at our standard towards our nature, money, fame, materials and name, prestige and luxury, others should know that we consider Him as the most important Person in our lives.

Believers alone would see us when we sing and glorify Him. But, others would see how we live. So, we should conduct ourselves in such a way that they should also know that Jesus is very important to us.

To Ponder

Show your piety not through your way of worship, but by walking in God's ways.

APRIL 2

SACRIFICE AND JOY

Philippians 3:7-17

I now consider loss for the sake of Christ
Philippians 3:7

There are many Christians who are extremely good. They are very passionate for God and are ready to sacrifice their job, comfort, status and other things for God. They live a simple life, wear simple dress and live in a modest house. Yet, we find that there is no joy on their face. Their words convey their piety but do not sound vibrant and cheerful. They appear very serious and lack warmth. When we see them, we find an aura of abstinence and asceticism but we are not motivated to become like them.

It is because in their desire to please God, they lead a controlled life. But, they do not experience the special spiritual joy which they can obtain through a good relationship with God. When a person sacrifices something, he will enjoy the divine delight in the place of what he has lost.

The more we lose, the more we will receive the joy of the Lord. The more we enjoy this joy the more we will desire to sacrifice. The outcome of this chain reaction is not a sad and sober life, but a happy life. Such a life will attract others and tempt them to lead such a life.

Paul experienced this great joy. As a result of that, he was ready to sacrifice his status and honour. He exhorted everyone to be happy. We need to show forth the joy of Christ in our words, acts and reactions.

A small boy bought a balloon for Rs.10. In fact he had to loose the money but he had derived great pleasure while he played with the balloon. Similarly, when we sacrifice something for God, we receive in its place great joy and we must radiate this joy in our words and actions. Our intimacy with God generates a happiness which is contagious. God does not delight in a grumpy and gloomy life.

To Ponder

When others watch our excellent life, they will realize that what we preach is good.

APRIL 3

MERE RELIGIOUS RITUALS

Amos 5:10-27

Away with the noise of your songs …
Amos 5:23

The excitement induced internally by the Holy Spirit very often is expressed outwardly through various signs and gestures. People worship God with obvious zeal and vibrant gestures. They raise hands and wave them, praising God loudly. Some clap their hands and express their ardent passion for God. The children of God who experience the presence of the Holy Spirit within them express their devotion through such outward gestures.

But today all these movements have become mechanical and stereotyped. The external gestures which were the expression of genuine internal fervor for God are imitated by those whose heart is not aflame for God. The gestures proceed from a heart which is not aglow with passion for God. Hence, these mere gestures which indicated sincerity have become lifeless rituals and empty signs of dry spirituality.

It has become meaningless like the sin offering in the Old Testament Jews offered without any feeling of guilt. The meaningless expressions of a person's ecstatic movement, is proved by the person's empty life, which is devoid of the fruit of the spirit. It is also proved by the life of contradictions. Our frenzied singing and ecstatic expressions cannot glorify God if they are not validated by our efforts to lead a life that is pleasing to God. External piety and internal depravity will cause the wrath of God. One cannot worship God with all sincerity unless he is kindled in his spirit.

Today, many people are under the impression that the signs of spirituality are clapping and shouting praises. They assume that once they do all those with obvious passion, they enter into a state of holiness. Hence, they start doing what they consider to be signs of spirituality without feeling the touch of God in their inner being.

To Ponder

God watches how in our life we express our devotion to Him; He does not watch how we worship Him.

APRIL 4

WINGS OF FAITH

Philippians 3:12-21

Forgetting what is behind
Philippians 3:13

That river was overflowing due to the flood. When I saw the flood, there were few birds flying here and there happily. It was delightful watching them fly from one shore to another and fly over water without any signs of trouble. These birds are easily crossing that flooding river which men are unable to do. They are not afraid what will happen to them if they fall on the raging waters. What is the reason? Their wings.

Since, they have the ability to fly easily because of those wings, they are not afraid of the raging flood below them. The Bible says that the righteous lives by faith. If he has faith, he will not be distressed by the sight of flood-like situations and can live happily. If the wings of faith are strong, he will not be disturbed by the worries and troubles of this world and will be strong in his faith. When the wings of faith are there to soar in the skies, there is no reason to worry about the various troublesome floods that flow beneath.

Many a times, our eyes are not fixed on Jesus who is ready to lead us in peace; instead, we focus our eyes on raging situations. Hence, various worries and fears take hold of us. When the Israelites were traveling in the wilderness, to go forward, they were not looking at the darkness that surrounded them, but the pillar of fire that was going before them.

Some problems may go around us like a deluge that may threaten to carry us away. Yet our eyes should be not on them, but on our God. That is the eyes of faith. The faith that under any circumstances, God will be with us and support us will make us overcome those troubles. When the wind was blowing hard and the sea was raging, Peter had his eyes on Jesus and the raging situation could not do anything to him. But when he took his eyes off and started to look at the situation, he started to sink. Let our eyes be on Jesus all the time.

To Ponder

Tests will not destroy you.
But, it will show who you are.

APRIL 5

FESTIVAL CHRISTIAN

Luke 19:28-48

They began to praise God in loud voices...
Luke 19:37

Jesus rode on a donkey like a king. In those days it was customary for kings and honourable people to ride on donkey. Many people joined the procession in a happy mood and celebration. All these people joined in with a great expectation that He would offer them a golden era as David did.

They did not come there with true devotion, commitment and a decision, to follow Jesus. They were just there seeking pleasure. They were not there with a determination to follow Jesus at all times in all circumstances. Their focus was on good times, pleasure and happiness .

Many people prefer this momentary excitement. But, he who follows Jesus cannot afford to pursue such temporary moments of excitement and exhilaration. Jesus does not want such people who wish to make themselves merry. He did not prefer people who offered mere lip service. He called them to deny self and carry the cross. Only such people who could bear hardship can follow Him.

There are many people who are ready to shout and dance for Christ. But, very few are prepared to deny-self and carry the cross. Many are those who opt for emotional excited Christianity but God cannot be glorified through people who just shout without self-denial. So we must not look for the evidences of true Christianity in programmes that are marked by mere external excitement.

Our real Christian commitment can be measured only by our humility, commitment and the extent to which we follow the way of Christ. Our adherence to Christ's way is the only indication that we are on the right tract. Those who deny self and commit themselves to following Christ are happier than those Christians who seek to reach happiness through excitement.

To Ponder

Spiritual life is not focused on excitement, it is indicated by the level of holiness.

APRIL 6

TEMPORARY PIETY

Isaiah 58:1-11

Why have we fasted and you have not seen it
Isaiah 58:3

A Christian used to change his entire life style during Lenten season. He used to put on saffron clothes and abstain from cigarette, cinema and liquor. He gave up non-vegetarian food. He used to grow beard and walked barefoot. He stopped having fun with his friends. Instead he spent long hours in the church. But, once the Lenten season was over he would go back to his former way of living. His friend would make from this practice. The following remark brought out his dual personality. "He alone has understood the real significance of Easter. All the unhealthy habits and traits that lie buried till Easter are resurrected on that joyful day."

In the lives of some, 40 day piety dies on Easter day. In the lives of some, their sinful acts and habits that had been dead for 40 days are resurrected on Easter day. Those who start wearing saffron on Ash Wednesday, go back to their sinful state on Easter day.

Temporary piety and short-lived spirituality may satisfy some but that will grieve God who does not watch our life just for a short span of time. He watches our thoughts and acts constantly. He cannot be pleased by our pious acts that burst out occasionally in some specific places. His eyes are on us wherever we go throughout our life time, every minute of our existence.

It is good indeed for us to allot some days when we can be fully absorbed in spiritual matters. It is desirable to seek God's presence in a very special way on particular days. The impact of such retreats and special spiritual acts of concentration must be seen throughout our life. The impact must not die as soon as the days set apart come to a close. We need to continue in our devotion even after the Lenten season ends. Shall we examine our religious abstinence during Lent? God watches the impact of our short term religious observances on our life as a whole.

To Ponder

We need to watch how God acts within us, while we are busy doing things for God.

APRIL 7

DO WE APPRECIATE?

Titus 1: 7-16

To those who are corrupted, nothing is pure
Titus 1: 15

Some people are so interested in identifying fake and hypocritical Christians. Even when they come across some genuine Christians, they are bent upon finding some hypocritical trait in those persons. They are so confirmed in the belief that there cannot be a single genuine servant of God and they refuse to acknowledge the one who is good as a genuine minister.

We need a good and refined heart to identify good persons. To ignore the wicked is also bad but not acknowledging the goodness of a genuinely good person is more vicious.

Good people are not openly acknowledged in proportion to the way in which evil is magnified because the focus given to evil is not given to goodness. Therefore the good people are not motivated to grow in their state of goodness.

Why don't we rejoice seeing the righteous life of others as much as we are annoyed at the unrighteousness of others? We perceive the erring people as devils but fail to view the people who lead a life of integrity as children of God. Why is it so?

The eyes of the Phraisees were looking for defects in others. They did not try to see the goodness and excellence found in others. It was so because they did not have any vision about a wholesome life. Neither did they have a heart to delight in goodness.

Though they were involved in many pious acts, they did not possess a holy and pure heart. They neither knew God nor chose to live close to God. Therefore they couldn't lead a spiritual life.

Yes, of course, we must not close our eyes to evil. But, at the same time we must identify the goodness of others and delight in that. This aspect is a very important evidence of one's spiritual life.

To Ponder

Let us not look for the good which is not in us.
Let us try to praise the goodness we find in others.

APRIL 8

PETER'S HEART

Mathew. 26:57-75

I do not know the Man!
Matthew 26:72

Peter denying Christ is an oft-quoted incident. Some servants of God give undue importance to this incident of denial. However, this sin of denial was not much criticized by Jesus. Neither did He condemn and admonish him for this but rather pitied him and accepted him.

It is because man looks at the outward of actions; but God looks at the real state of a heart. The denial of Peter in those occasions is a regrettable matter; but we can also see the very big concern and love that Peter had for Jesus. Like the other disciples, Peter could have fled away from the scene to escape from all problems. Why was he compelled to deny Him again and again? It was because he did not try to save him from that frantic situation.

Saving his life was not in his mind. He was more curious to know what would happen to Jesus, which made him circle around those situations. He never thought, 'Whatever happens to Jesus, let it happen; let me save my life' His heart did not want to depart from Jesus.

He wanted to stay right there saying outwardly, 'I do not know Jesus'. The love he had for the Lord pulled him towards the place where He was. It can be said that he sought a way to be with Him in His time of sorrow by at least showing himself to be someone who had no connection with Jesus. That's why the resurrected Lord Jesus did not speak anything about his denial but appeared to him and made him an important pillar of the church.

Sometimes, looking at the outward actions of certain people, we wrongly conclude that they are loveless or that they are bad. But, sometimes, the actions we see in a person may not actually reflect his heart. When their conduct may make us believe that they are loveless, it could be that they are really very loving people

To Ponder

Think what God would think of you and live accordingly. Then the worry about what man will think of you will vanish.

APRIL 9

GRIEF WITHOUT REPENTANCE

Joel 2:12-32

Rend your heart and not your garments.
Joel 2:13

The Thursday before Good Friday is observed as Maundy Thursdays. On one such Thursday, a special preacher spoke very passionately about the agony that Christ went through in the garden of Gethsemane. It was so fraught with emotions that even a hard-hearted person could be moved.

A person started crying on hearing the message. Those who saw him cry, thought that he would repent and commit his life to Christ then and there. He was grieved on hearing the message about the sufferings of christ but was not interested in repenting and receiving forgiveness for which christ suffered.

Many Christians are keen on some outward show of self-denial during Lent, but soon after the Lenten season, they seem to show no interest in self-denial and literally hate to overcome ego. It is true that there is a shade of sorrow on the faces of people on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. But this look of sadness is not an expression of regret for their sins and mistakes.

A man went about in saffron dress, never shaved for the forty days and abstained from eating meat. He participated in all the services and walked without shoes. But on Easter day, he invited all his friends and hosted a feast with alcoholic drinks. God does not want us to mourn for his agony and pain, which He endured. He had to go through the process because of our sins and our Godless life.

Now, we need to grieve for our sins. We need to shed tears feeling sorry for our indifference to the precious salvation that Jesus has made available for us. Old Testament Jews, following the traditional signs of piety, used to cover their head with ash, wear sackcloth and tear their garments. But, God was vexed with their hollow religion and said that they should tear their hearts and not their garments.

To Ponder

Piety is not just going to temple seeing God, true Piety is living as the temple of God.

APRIL 10

THE CROSS

John 16:15-33

your sorrow will be turned into joy
John 16:20

In the days when Jesus sojourned in this world as the Son of man, the cross was considered to be the most shameful part of punishment. Those who were related to the person, who was nailed on the cross, would be ashamed to call him their relative. Simon of Cyrene, had come to Jerusalem, to observe the Passover, by travelling nearly 600 miles.

Yet, he had to unnecessarily carry the cross of Jesus in the place where he had come to observe the festival. What a pity! He must have been ashamed greatly. He must have been utterly miserable. Perhaps he might have felt bad when he appeared to be a criminal in the eyes of thousands of people, by bearing the cross of some other criminal. However, all these were there only till Jesus rose up alive.

When the disciples proclaimed everywhere that He had risen, Simon of Cyrene would have considered himself to be the most privileged person. He would have been excited that the cross which was a shame that day, had become a blessing. That incident when he carried the cross of the One, who was going to shake the world, would have made his future glorious. We too may happen to accept certain false accusations, in the path of Jesus. Unjust reproaches, shame and loss may attack us. We may be compelled to bear the cross, unnecessarily. We may appear to be a criminal in the sight of many.

Yet, do not be troubled. This cross was because of our walk in the path of Jesus and because of drawing near Him. Today it may grieve us. But, one day the thought of this cross would make us more joyful. Joseph carried that cross. One day, it became the reason for his joy. Every reproach, shame, failure, disappointment and accusations that we bear while walking in the ways of the Lord would never fail to give us joy one day.

To Ponder

It is with the company of afflictions, pleasant things of life increase.

APRIL 11

IS THE CROSS SACRED?

Hebrew 13:8-21

Bearing the disgrace He bore..
Hebrew 13:13

We, Christians consider cross as holy and sacred sign. But in reality it is a symbol of shame and pain. The Jews of Jesus' time viewed it as a sign of curse. (Gal 3:13)

It is because the Law of Moses says dying on the cross is the most infamous act. (Deut 21:23) The Romans and Greeks looked upon it as a sign of shame and pain.

This cross is not a symbol of sacredness. If it had been held as a sacred symbol, Jesus' death on the cross would not have been considered as a shameful one.

Instead it would have extolled as something glorious, honorable and sacred. Even before the time of Jesus and after, cross is viewed as a sign of shame and curse.

But, Jesus embraced death on the cross to make us holy, righteous and saintly .Jesus bore the bitterness so that we can lead a holy life. He courted curse so that we could become honourable .

Cross is a reminder of the shame and curse which Jesus endured to redeem us from sin. The symbol of cross can make us aware of the fact that sin has shameful and painful consequence. It is also a reminder that Jesus paid a heavy ransom through the cross to redeem us from sin.

Cross is a reminder of great truths. It must bring to our mind the price Jesus paid to save us from the jaws of hell and punishment Keeping the cross as a precious relic with us, drawing the sign of the cross and kissing it with all reverence will not yield any result.

Giving undue importance to cross sign instead of repenting and leading a life pleasing to God, is a form of idol worship.

To Ponder

The only way to proclaim Jesus is to live like Jesus.

APRIL 12

YOU ALSO CAN SEE

Acts 1:1-14

He showed Himself and gave proofs that he was alive. Acts 1:3

When Jesus Christ was crucified and dead, many people who loved Him may have believed that He would resurrect just as He said but not all of them saw Him. When the news of His resurrection spread like wild fire, many would have believed that. But, not all of them had opportunities to see the risen Christ The only group that had the privilege of seeing the risen Christ was the small band of His disciples. If a dearly loved person comes back to life after death, how great would be the rejoicing among those who see him or her. Just imagine the situation. But when Jesus rose from the dead, only His disciples experienced great delight.

Jesus revealed Himself as the risen Christ not to people who just loved Him and believed in Him but to those who followed Him. Only that small group rejoiced. Do you know what constitutes as the most integral part of Christianity? Do you know what makes a person a genuine Christian? What changes a person's life completely?

Accepting Jesus may not change one. Having faith in Him can't change one either. Neither worshipping Him or nor following His commandments generate changes in one's life-style. Only the presence and perceptions of the risen Christ within a person is important. Only this constant consciousness of the risen Christ in a person's heart can change his/her life. I have not seen Jesus in my dreams and He never revealed Himself to me in a vision. But His presence in me is an indisputable fact and reality more than anything in the world and I am very sure of His abiding presence within me.

We celebrate Easter every year. This celebration is not based on the historicity of the event. We must celebrate with the real joy of experiencing the risen Christ within us. That is easy when we dedicate ourselves to follow Him, we can see the risen Christ within us.

To Ponder

Others cannot see the power of Christ in him, who cannot see Him within himself.

APRIL 13

OFFERTORY

Malachi 1:1-14

I will accept no offering from your hands ...
Malachi 1:10

Churches and service organization encourage the believer to give to God and receive His blessing. Nowadays the idea that through offering, one can receive God's blessing is proclaimed wide and large. So many people believe that they can obtain God's favor through offertory, however bad their life is.

But, the Bible stipulates that even to give offering one must possess some qualification. The Bible does not say that God accepts offerings without any condition. If so, He would have accepted Cain's sacrifice and would have blessed him. But, God did not accept his offering because his heart was not pleasing to God.

During the days of Isaiah, God asked them not to give Him meaningless offering. In Malachi 1:10 He says "I will accept no offerings from your hands. Jesus says that before offering gift at the altar a person must be reconciled to his brother (Mat 5:24) Even when Ananias and Sapphira gave a large sum as offering, God punished them because of their deception.

The Bible says that our offering must be pure and the mind of the giver also must be pure. All these prove that God watches one's integrity, righteousness and honesty when he gives offering.

God will not like what we give if we are not careful about the life we lead.The Churches and ministers may commend us just because of what we give.

But, if we wish to be commended by God, our life must be holy and disciplined in line with His expectation. God gives more importance to the way we live than to the amount we give.

To Ponder

Let us show God, not only through our words;
but also through our way of life.

APRIL 14

HOWEVER MUCH LEARNT

II Timothy 3:1-17

always learning and never able to come to the knowledge
II Timothy 3:7

A very rich man in America prepared his will before dying stating that a huge amount should be given to his grandson as long he was studying. The grandson began to study. He studied many courses in various international universities and got many degrees. But he never did any job with that qualification. He continued his studies in order to get that big amount from his grandfather's money.

Most of the Christians are like him. They don't lack in listening to messages; they don't lack in reading books; they would be tirelessly attending Gospel meetings, seminars, camps etc., But they never live according to the truths they have heard. They consider listening to the truth as a spiritual experience. This is not correct. Only when we apply what we hear in life and make them our experience, there shall be real blessings in our life.

Most of the ministers of God too are like this. They study with the help of others; they heap degrees. They consider it to be divine experience. But, in their personal life, their experience in life is totally contradictory. The Bible has not been given to us to make us knowledgeable about God and the Bible. Every knowledge related to God, should cause righteous transformation in us. Spirituality does not lie in how much we know but how much is applied in our practical life.

Nicodemus had rich knowledge in the Laws of God. He was a teacher to many. Yet, the Lord Jesus tells Him, 'Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3). Yes, knowledge of God and the talent of preaching cannot help us to receive blessings or make us worthy to enter into the Kingdom of God. They should become practical experience in our life. These experiences alone would make us worthy to enjoy His blessings.

To Ponder

Not how much we have learnt,
but how much we have experienced is more important.

APRIL 15

DISCIPLINE IN THINKING

Philippians 4: 1 – 9

Meditate on these things
Philippians 4: 8

It is our thinking that decides the tranquility of our heart. When our thoughts are disciplined, the peace in our heart is preserved. Our thoughts of bitterness, hatred, anger, jealousy, resentment, vengeance and sorrow are sure to destroy the peace of our heart. When we fail to control these unhealthy thoughts, all our prayers and efforts to maintain peace in our heart are sure to go in vain.

If our thoughts are full of hatred, bitterness, anger, jealousy and sorrow, there will be no tranquility and peace in our heart. We may have good justifications for our bad and sad thoughts but they would destroy the peace in our heart. Our dear Lord loves to bless us with His peace and tranquility. He also gives us the power to overcome these unhealthy thoughts to help us maintain peace in our heart. The presence of God and His words have the power to give us peace but if these unhealthy thoughts continue to control us, peace will leave us.

Our relationship with God brings into us the deeds of the spirit. And through the spirit, we can receive the thoughts of love, peace, humility, forgiveness and truth. When we give more importance to these kinds of healthy thoughts, then the harmful thoughts like hatred, bitterness, resentment and anger will lose their power. Consequently, the divine peace takes control of our heart.

Yes! We should always remember God and His ways. We must meditate on His words. We should reflect on His justice and judgments. We should see that we give more importance to think and meditate about love, humility, truth and patience. When we start doing like this, then the thoughts that oppose the divine peace will lose their strength. When we start giving more prominence to thoughts that are pleasing in the sight of God, then we are sure to receive the divine peace that passes all human understanding.

To Ponder

Those who have not learnt to hear the divine voice, can never ever understand the will of God.

APRIL 16

ACHIEVEMENT OR PEACE?

Isaiah 55:1-13

Why spend on what does not satisfy...
Isaiah 55:2

One particular man was keen on achieving something great in his life. From his childhood he was harbouring this desire. So he used to read books like "How to achieve great things in youth." "How to earn more money?" `How to become eminent achievers?" Through the advice found in the books, he reached an eminent position indeed. Riches and status escalated. But in due course, he lost his peace and joy and became discouraged. He lost his interest in life and started living in anxiety.

What was the reason? He was concentrating on how to earn money and how to become an achiever. He never bothered about how to live peacefully and how to lead a meaningful life. He never cared to find out how to face trials and temptations and how to find real happiness.

Nowadays many people think that only money can make them lead a comfortable and peaceful life. So, they consider multiplication of wealth and riches as great achievement. Yes, of course if a person sharpens and uses his brain, and uses his skills effectively he can achieve great things. But, it cannot bring peace and joy.

Only when the heart is set right, one can get peace and joy. That's why man has to seek relationship with God, and should walk in the ways of God. Only, when a person leads a God centred life and walks in His way, he can have peace and joy. The Bible speaks about this.

How comfortable we are in life is not the question. How comfortable we are in our mind is important. How much wealth we possess is not important. How much peace, satisfaction and joy we possess is important. We need not be bothered about our status and financial position. But, we must be concerned as to how developed we are in our attitude.

To Ponder

Keep doing something so that others could enjoy peace. Only then you can retain your peace.

APRIL 17

STARS WILL APPEAR

Romans 8:18-39

In all things God works for the good...
Romans 8:28

If God allows pains and problems in a person's life, there must be a great purpose for that. If even after seeing in a persons life oppressing darkness, He doesn't remove that, it means that he is going to create something in the midst of the darkness. One saint said ,"If you were to meet darkness, do not be afraid you will see stars". At one particular time in my life God took me to a period, when I was surrounded by total darkness. That darkness pained my heart exceedingly.

But, in that darkness I could see God's justice, guidance and the wonderful ways He acts in our life. His expressions of love, His comfort and life's lessons, were shining like brilliant stars. Since I was so impressed by them I realized that even darkness is a way of blessing. If David's life had not been darkened by the threatening situations, would he have composed so many psalms? Those exquisite songs that flowed from his broken heart, shine like comforting stars for the numerous people who struggle through the darkness of life.

John Bunyan's life was engulfed in darkness and he was imprisoned. God made stars appear in his darkness. His "Pilgrims Progress" shines like a bright light even today. Those who organize light and sound shows, just put out all the other lights. Only then the show will be clear and attractive. Sometimes God uses and allows dark situations in our life to help us shift our focus to His glorious matters.

John was left all alone in Patmos island. In that distressful darkness, God made the stars appear. As a result the book of Revelation which revived the churches of that time, was born. Even today it is shining before us. Yes, true children of God do not see the darkness but wait for the stars that will appear there soon.

To Ponder

If a man realizes that pleasure is not a serial story, pain will be brief like a short story.

APRIL 18

EXPERIENCES

Lamentations 3: 1 – 32

He has led me and made me walk in darkness
Lamentations 3: 2

Once I kept 5000 rupees inside old newspapers in my room to safeguard it. But after some days, I forgot about that money and sold the old newspapers. And I learnt the bitter lesson that all things should be preserved in the appropriate places with good alertness. It cost me 5000 rupees to learn this lesson. There was long-standing impression that it would take only 10 minutes to reach the railway station from my house but one day it was shattered. And I had to spend another 2000 rupees to reach my destination. And it cost me 2000 rupees to learn that we must get ready sufficiently earlier before starting a journey.

In life, we gain certain experiences only after incurring heavy cost. It is only after a huge spending that we gain the awareness about certain things for trouble-free things sometimes do not give us the right awareness. Generally a great loss that breaks our heart teaches us an unforgettable lesson. Also a huge expenditure always provokes us to be watchful in our future spending.

Jacob could have easily learnt some simple lessons and lived accordingly in his life. But he had to pay a huge cost to learn certain lessons in the right way. He had to suffer a lot and learn lessons of his life as he failed to depend on God but trusted his own understanding and counsel. He had to learn many lessons of life only after undergoing great mental pain and agony.

David too had to learn some great lessons and warnings of life by paying great price. Though the price was high, they gave him useful lessons for future life. Yes! There is a price you have to pay not only for some articles but also for some good experiences. But, we should not go on paying price all through our lives. We should keep in mind the lessons we have already learnt and act accordingly.

To Ponder

Bad becomes good in the lives of good people but even the good becomes bad in the lives of wicked people.

APRIL 19

CHRISTIAN WITNESS

Acts 2:22-41

..of which we are all witnesses
Acts 2:32

A Christian theologian once debated with a leader of another religion for hours together. He argued on the basis of theology that Jesus is the only true God and that Christian teachings are the correct ones. He quoted many verses from the Bible to make his points valid. But he could not cite a single example from his own experience or life to prove that Christianity is true. It was because, though he knew theology, he did not know God personally.

Jesus Christ calls us not only to proclaim Christianity but also to bear witness to Him. It is not enough to teach others based on mere theological knowledge. We also need to testify with the knowledge of knowing Him. The influence of Jesus in our life is more important than our skill for preaching and ability to debate.

The Apostles who preached about the resurrection of Jesus to many also said that they were all witnesses to that. Others may deny what we claim to be true; they may even say that our belief is wrong.

But the changes that God brought in us and the good spiritual experience we have cannot be denied by anyone. We cannot change Christianity into a believable one to others without the background of our own practical experience in life.

Facts about Christ alone are not sufficient to make others believe in Jesus and accept Him. We need to show Christ to others through our testimonial life. It is not giving the information about where He was born, lived, taught and went to Heaven.

We must make them know how He is living with us, how He works in us and about our experience through Him. Only then others can know how genuine Christianity is. Let us first of all see what positive influences have been caused by Christianity in us.

To Ponder

When the sovereignty of Jesus is in our heart, glory and witness shall be in our lives.

APRIL 20

GRACE AND TRUTH

Psalm 26:1-12

For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes
Psalm 26:3

*R*aising our spiritual beliefs by seeing the one side of God's characteristics is like constructing a building on a weak foundation. It is not good to be attracted by God's one side and be unconcerned about His next side Most of the spiritual people see only the merciful side of God and assume that it alone is the full manifestation of God. If we focus only on God's love, mercy, compassion, grace, favour, forgiving nature and comfort, we can attain an emotional spiritual state but cannot reach true spiritual goals.

The Bible says that God is merciful full of lovingkindness and that He is also the truth. We, who taste the sweetness of His love on one side, have to accept the bitterness of His truth also. It was the grace of God that led the people of Israel towards Canaan, by doing many wonders. But, it was His truth that chastised them for their transgressions, sins, disobedience and unbelief.

Today's Christians see God as good, compassionate and as a miracle worker and hence seek His benefits. But they fail to pay attention to live a holy life, seeing Him as the Most holy God and as an authority in matters related to righteousness. We should not keep on seeing God merely as a shepherd who goes behind the sheep, holding a long staff. We should also see Him as the Judge, who sits on the Throne of judgment. Only when we act, with sufficient knowledge about these two sides, we can continue in our journey with Him.

We should not forget that the same Jesus, who took pity on seeing the pathetic condition of the people, who were like flocks without a shepherd, also took the whip of cords in terrible anger, when He saw profane things in the temple of God. When we fail to act with the knowledge of His righteousness and holiness, our beliefs about His love would not yield us any result.

To Ponder

Keep learning all through your life; yet do something to make others learn from your life.

APRIL 21

IN THE SINFUL WORLD

Hebrews 12: 1- 13

We are surrounded by… the sin…
Hebrews 12:1

What a big sea! But the ship sailing in it does not get sunk in those waters! Or the waters do not seep into the ship and drown it. Why is it so? Though the water level is deep and the sea is vast, the ship is built in such a way that the waters do not enter into it.

We are living in a world which is full of sins. Flood of sin surrounds us on all sides; sinful scenes, attractions, and enticing things are all around us, wherever we turn. This world is full of lusts and pleasures; it is full of dirty sights which easily kindle lust; it is full of luxury, extravagance, and comforts. The literate and the illiterates, the rich and the poor are enticed by them and walk happily along its course. How can we lead a holy life in such a world? Is it possible for us not to get pulled by these sinful things which are closely surrounding us?

Many are the questions….but when we step into the ship called fellowship with Christ, nothing can make us fall. Christ's relationship guards us from the attack of sinful attractions. The experience of salvation makes us focus only on the love of Christ. When we receive this experience of salvation which draws our entire attention to Christ, sins cannot enter into us, though they may be surrounding us like a huge sea.

The experience of salvation that comes through Jesus Christ formulates our life in such a way that the flood of sin does not enter into it. So, it is not necessary that we face every single sin separately and overcome it. When we go into the ship called the fellowship with Christ, the force of sinful desires would lose its strength. Noah was inside the ark. But, the whole earth was full of flood. Everything was destroyed by that flood. But, Noah's ark was not harmed by anything. Yes, when we are in Christ, the ark, we shall not be harmed by anything.

To Ponder

It is only when the wind of trials blow against you, it could be known whether you are a chaff or a wheat.

APRIL 22

THE PATH WE TROD

II Sam 22:1-25

He brought me out into a spacious place.
II Sam 22:20

David was exalted to a high position. Solomon too experienced such a rise in position. Both were taken to an eminent place in life. But, before David reached his greatness he had to go through a path of pain and struggle. He had to cross many obstacles and face many conflicts before he reached greatness. He waded through ups and down, and groped through rugged and rough situations before he ascended the throne as king.

But, Solomon who was a prince by the virtue of being the son of a king, attained kingship without any struggle. His path to the throne was not strewn with struggles. It was an easy passage to power. Though he was raised by God. he had not experienced the guidance of God in times of difficulties and therefore he had not known and enjoyed God's power of deliverance. So, he could not function effectively in his position. Not only that, we also do not get any life lessons from his life.

On the other hand, David learnt many lessons in life because he had to go through harsh grating situations. Because of these experiences, he was able to maintain his exalted position carefully till the end. Even now his experiences serve as source of encouragement to many and of course we can also learn many lessons through them.

Man prefers to achieve things in an easy way. But, honours and victories obtained without difficulty can vanish easily. That's why God leads us through difficulties and problems before He takes us to eminence and honours. Victories reached without hardships may usher in defeat later. The lessons we learnt through on hardships are like a fence which helps to retain the honour we finally achieve.

In David's psalms we may not find deep wisdom. But, they reflect what he learnt through his experiences. So, in our day to day life they offer encouragement and hope.

To Ponder

Your initial failures are like a fence which can protect your future victories.

APRIL 23

ONCE A WEEK

Colossians 3:12-25

Do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus…
Colossians 3:17

Devabakthynathan was a very successful business man. He kept Sundays free and did not have any business transactions on that day. He was fully involved in church matters on Sundays. Many people appreciated him for that but very strangely, there was not a single sign of his devotion on other days. None of his actions could indicate that he was a Christian. His attitudes did not have any trace of piety. There was no Christian quality in the way he transacted business.

Most of the Christians lead a Christian life once a week, whether traditional Christians or Pentecost persons. Many people gather once a week, shout hallelujah and worship with extraordinary enthusiasm but lead a very ordinary life on other days. This kind of approach to piety is very similar to that of the people of other faiths also. Most of them go to particular places, perform some rites and consider them as expressions of their devotion to their gods.

But, Christian devotion must be exhibited in a different way. It is not good to allot one day in a week for such religious involvement. Each day must be dedicated for that.

We need to glorify God in all the days of the week. Wherever we work, we are called to serve and worship God through our responsibilities. It is not at all adequate if we worship God on Sundays. He must be honoured and glorified in the work places by our attitudes, words and actions.

Praising, singing and praying alone are not the means through which God is glorified. We can worship Him by the way we act and react in our interpersonal relationships, work places, social interactions, familial fellowships and business. This is the right Christian life. God must be honoured and glorified in all places.

To Ponder

If our life does not reflect God,
our worship will not please Him.

APRIL 24

WHAT'S THE USE OF MIRROR

James 1:17-27

Like a man who looks at his face in a mirror.
James 1:23

We keep looking at a mirror now and then to check how we appear. Among those who do this, there are two groups. One category of people look at the mirror and try to set right their appearance. They arrange their hair, if it is unruly. If the way they are dressed needs attention they do that. If the face is oily they do what is needed to rectify that. They make themselves presentable as a result of looking into the mirror. The other category also looks at the mirror. They see their reflection but never bother to correct themselves.

Many people wish to know their real position yet never bother to correct the areas that need to be amended. Those who read the Bible do realize where they fall short of God's expectation. Some realize that they are sinners when they listen to some sermons. They are satisfied about the way they feel about themselves and consider that to be a kind of spiritual achievement and stop there. They don't bother to correct themselves. After listening to good sermons some say that God has revealed certain things to them. They consider that as great spiritual experience.

If such promptings do not lead to changes in the way one lives and thinks, they are of no use. It is just like looking into the mirror with no desire to correct oneself. Saul did realize that he had sinned but he never tried to change. When David was made to realize his sin after Nathan spoke to him, he repented. Nathan like a mirror, reflected his sinful life. Consequently, David was broken and miserable. He changed.

For many people listening to good sermon and reading the Bible are acts of piety. They get full satisfaction out of that. But, they never meditate on what they hear and read. Just mere reading will not help. We read the Bible so that we can change the way we think, feel and act according to what we read.

To Ponder

He who tries to correct you is a better friend than he who ignores your mistakes.

APRIL 25

YOU ALSO SERVE GOD

Matthew 5:1-20

They may see your good deeds...
Matthew 5:16

Abraham did not give any advise. He did not preach anywhere in the Bible. Yet the life of Abraham teaches great many things to us. The way he lived is powerful enough to teach us. On the other hand, Solomon gave a lot of teaching. He seemed to have taught many lessons. But his life is not a model. May be it teaches us how we should not live.

A person who leads a committed life in a small circle is better than the one who goes to different places to preach. A person may proclaim that Jesus changes people and Jesus saves but the one who affirms that in the way he lives is a powerful servant of God. We must not conclude that a person without speaking skill can not be called by God to serve Him. Neither should we wrongly think that those who do not possess preaching skill do not have the grace to be involved in gospel work. We must not consider that those who cannot explain the Bible lack the talent of teaching others.

It is true that one's mouth is essential to speak, preach and explain the Bible. At the same time, we need to remember that it is not the mouth alone that speaks, one's life speaks in a powerful manner. Sometimes the way one lives a life impacts more than the words one speaks.

The words one hears can easily make an exit easily just the way they gained entry. But, the way one lives influences others strongly and leaves an indelible mark. It will have a greater impact. One can ignore a person's spoken words as attempts to promote one's religion. But no one can stop or oppose a person's way of life.

The way one lives is the best sermon. God calls those who do not posses oratorical skill. They can very effectively communicate the way Jesus changes one's life through their good characteristics, actions, love, humility, patience, compassion and sacrifice.

To Ponder

When you tell others that Christ is alive, do not do this with your words. Let your life proclaim that He lives in you.

APRIL 26

TRAVELLING PATH

Ecclesiastes 1:1-18

All things are meaningless, a chasing after the wind
Ecclesiastes 1:14

The road was perfectly fit for travel. The car too was a luxury car- Audi. Imagine that a person travels in such a comfortable car on a perfect road. But he does not seem to enjoy the delightful travel. He is taken as a captive to be confined in a prison for a serious offence he has committed. Can he enjoy the comfort of the drive? His heart will be downcast. Neither the safe road nor the comfortable car can help relax his heavy heart.

We can visualize another scene. The road is horrible and a person travels in a travesty of a car which seems to be falling apart. But the person happens to be a released prisoner heading towards his house. This man, surely, will not bother about the condition of the vehicle in which he travels. Our destination is more important than the travel. How we travel is not as significant as the place we are going to reach.

How comfortable our life is does not matter. But, where we are heading to is a matter of grave concern. The life of David was fraught with all kinds of anxieties and conflicts. Yet, he stood firm and unshaken because he was moving towards an exalted goal. His focus was on a glorious end. He acted with faith and composure, in the midst of various set backs and threatening situations which seamed to crush him. He lived in peace and joy, in the midst of pain because he was moving towards a great vision.

On the contrary, Solomon's life was filled with pomp, luxury and comfort. He lived in abundance. He would not have gone through any painful situation. But, in the end he found everything under the sun to be meaningless because he lived without any high vision and Godly goal. Yes, the path that takes us to glorious goals can be rugged and thorny. But, this will not take away our peace and joy.

To Ponder

Lessons learnt in failures help to retain victories and honour.

APRIL 27

WITHOUT ANY AIM

1 Corinthians 9: 24 – 27

Therefore I run thus not with uncertainty
1 Corinthians 9: 26

A villager went to the railway station ticket-counter and asked for a ticket. When asked where he wanted to go, he replied, "I am not going anywhere. All I want is to enjoy travelling in a train for a few hours. So give me a ticket to suit this plan

This man has the desire to travel in a train but he has no desire of going to a particular place. Many people have the same kind of desire in their spiritual life. Yes! Their spiritual life has no aim at all. They are deeply involved in their spiritual life without any awareness about the call of their destination.

Some people regularly attend church services and prayer meetings. Their only aim is to spend some time in peace without any worry. Their expectations are only to get involved in some spiritual activity to gain some peace of mind.

But, this kind of spiritual approach is sure to lead us in a wrong spiritual path. We must have the desire to fulfill God's will in our lives. We must consider church services and prayer meetings not as places for getting peace of mind but as tools to lead us in our search for a strong, peaceful and joyful life.

The main aim of our life must be to glorify the name of God and to fulfill His will through us. Our spiritual works must focus on these Christian aims so that our spiritual life will have a meaning and reveal the glory of God. It is at this juncture, we can see how God leads us and gives His divine grace.

Today what is the reason for many Christians to backslide, lack deep spiritual experiences and remain cold in their spiritual life? This happens because they have no higher or nobler goals. You can successfully progress in your difficult journey of life only when you identify your aims and focus attention on them.

To Ponder

A fool jumps up and down by seeing only one side of a thing but the wise man waits patiently till he sees the other side also.

APRIL 28

ASKING IN VAIN

Luke 8: 1 – 15

Those by the wayside are…
Luke 8: 12

Some people have a keen desire to hear the word of God and make good use of all the opportunities they get to hear them. Though they have a keen desire to hear them, they do not have the desire to give fruits according to what they hear. They heard much but yielded nothing because their hearts, though they had a keen desire to hear, were not willing to retain them to give fruits.

Their hearts are like the seeds that were sown on the roadside as described by our Lord Jesus in His parable. These seeds do not have the protection to sprout and grow along the roadside. This road is open to all, especially to those who are bad and scornful. So the seeds are trampled under the feet of these people.

Some people hear carefully but are not watchful in their hearts to retain them to yield fruits. They feel their duty is over once they have heard the word of God. Soon after hearing the word, they switch on their TV sets, Internet, Facebook and WhatsApp services to hear all the filthy and unfiltered messages. These news items and messages enter into their hearts and make the word of God ineffective and fruitless. It is good to have the heart that desires to hear the word of God but it is of no use unless care is taken to protect that heart from other evil influences.

what people who want to get benefits from God's words must do is, to have the fence of salvation around their heart first. Next they must pay attention to see that what they have already heard is not trampled upon by their thoughts and messages they would hear. They must see that all the good seeds already sown in their heart are well-protected and taken care of. Some TV programmes, movies, internet and website news may appear to be harmless but they are the birds that take away the good seeds from the ground.

To Ponder

**If the self-esteem takes the place of God,
then disorder takes the place of peace.**

APRIL 29

WHO IS FIRST?

Matthew 7:1-14

whatever you want men to do to you
Matthew 7:12

In general, man is not willing to love others in the measure of his expectation of how others should love him. He does not realize the necessity to respect others in the measure of his feelings of how much he should be respected by others. He does not realize the need to trust others to the measure of his desire to be trusted by others. He is not willing to understand others in the measure of his wish to be understood by others.

"I can love only if the other person loves me; I can accept the other person only if he accepts me; I can go to him only if he comes to me; I can do something to others only if they do something for me" – Many are those who have this attitude to do something in return for what others first do to them.

Many say, "They did not inquire of me" – this means that they are unwilling to go first and inquire of the other person. Many say, "How can I do this thing to those who did not do that for me?" – This means 'I can do only for those who do something for me". In that case, who should love first? Who should give first? Who should accept first? Who should come down first? – These questions arise. If everybody waits for the other person's action, no good thing can be done.

Nothing good will happen if the seller and buyer embark on a fight for honour saying, "Give me the money and I'll give this item' and "Give me the item and then I'll give the money'? Once, during a family retreat, a man asked me, "In married life, who should yield first – the husband or the wife?" I said, 'The one, who wants to please God should first yield". Jesus said whatever we want others to do, we should first do to them. If this great teaching had been given importance, peace would have prevailed in so many families; so many churches would not have broken.

To Ponder

Love never asks, "What will I get?'
but asks, "What will others get by me?'

APRIL 30

NO ONE TO CONSOLE

Psalm 42:1-11

Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Psalm 42:5

Sometimes when the children of God walk through a path that is filled with painful problems, they are denied the comfort of others. It looks as if there is none to encourage them. Even friends and relatives fail to console them with words. When their eyes fail to see verbal consolation uttered by human beings, their eyes are opened to see the presence of God, the comforter with them.

David had to tread on a path covered with thorns. Like an orphan he roamed in forests and lived in caves. He literally lived in tears and walked through bitterness. He was confused by many discouraging factors. When he started to cry in pain, God began to act in his life. All of a sudden, he steadied himself. Addressing his fearful heart he said, "Why are you downcast my soul?" In the midst of his sorrows he told himself. "Put your hope in God".

He was able to do this, not by his own strength. This miraculous empowerment was the result of his intimacy with God. He was lifted from the mire of despondency by the Holy Spirit. God is able to do the same for us also. There was a time when I went through this lonely path of tribulation. My pain was intensified in the absence of consoling and comforting companions. But, I could sense that I was endowed with the power to strengthen and steady myself. I experienced this gift from God.

Yes, we may not meet people who console and encourage us in all the situations of our life. Even if such people are available, we cannot hope to be consoled by their words. Only God's comfort can instill in us the required courage. Hence, we must not get soaked in sorrow and think that we have none to encourage us. We must learn to face life with the courage and confidence that even when we stand alone, God is with us. Only when human succor fails, we can enjoy the comfort which God provides.

To Ponder

Those who enjoy the comfort of God,
never long for the love of human beings.

MAY 1

MUST DO GOOD

Luke 3:6-17

He who has two tunics, let him give..
Luke 3:11

A woman, who was travelling by train found it extremely difficult to manage her little son, who was crying out for water. Water could not be bought until the arrival of the next station. Till then it was difficult to pacify him. A woman fellow passenger, who was next to her, had three bottles of water with her; yet she had no mind to give some water to that little boy.

Some people are not moved by whatever happens in others' lives and behave as if they have no connection to it. They will not be touched by others' difficulties, poverty, pain, grief and distress. They do not have any empathy towards others' sufferings.

The main purpose for us to gather as a church is to show love to others, and to get the urge to do something good for them. But today's churches function as mere worship centres. So the thought, 'Oh, I've come here. Let me worship and go back home" is predominant in most people. Whatever happens in others' lives, these people are not affected thinking that it is those persons' problem.

Knowing the purpose of the church which has been formed for everyone to have fellowship with one another, Christians should come to the church and not to merely worship. Liberal offering alone is not enough. We need to have the constructive thought to do something for others.

True Christians who are led by the Holy Spirit will have the mind of Christ. They would have the Christian character of having the attitude of doing good to others like Jesus. It is not dressing up well and drawing the attention of a few; but the distressing state of those who do not have good clothes, food and accommodation should draw our attention. This is living Christianity. This is the identification of a true Christian.

To Ponder

Human favour is necessary; yet believe the favour of God, then the favour of man will automatically come for you.

MAY 2

CONTINUE IN TRUTH

Galatians 6:1-10

Let us not become weary in doing good
Galatians 6:9

It is true that good people do not flourish always. But, if a person is good and truthful and if he has a close relationship with God, definitely he will face a time when he will flourish. God will never fail to give the honour that he deserves.

But many times we do not get rewarded for our good life. Why? It is because we backslide when we face problems on our path of truth. We get discouraged by the problems and go backward. When we face problems even when we lead a truthful life and when people prove ungrateful in spite of our doing good things for them we become discouraged and stop being truthful.

When can it be proved that we love truth and give priority to truth? It will be proved only when we continue to cling to truth even when our truthfulness is despised and when our honesty brings in problems for us. Those who do not give up truthfulness though it is not rewarded, will prove that their stand regarding truthfulness is stable and unwavering.

Joseph who was sold by his brother because of his truthfulness, was truthful even after he landed in Egypt. So he was honoured by Potiphar. But, even there shame and injustice were the reward for his truthfulness. He was imprisoned. There also he was honest and was honoured. He was made an overseer in the prison. God made him a governor of the whole country. He will do it for us also.

If we try to be truthful only for the sake of a few people, very soon we will face discouraging situations that will make us give up our honesty. We can not expect people to reward our truthfulness. But, if we are truthful for the sake of God, we will not be discouraged by the narrow mindedness of the people. God will definitely honour those who are willing to face problems for the sake of truth.

To Ponder

Lies will continuously wound the life of a person who does not cling to truth always.

MAY 3

WHY DO I PRAY?

I Thessalonians 5:16-28

Pray without ceasing
I Thessalonians 5:17

I would have saved my times of prayer, if there was some other excellent way to confirm God's relationship with me and understand that such relationship is genuine

I would have avoided spending my time in prayer, if I had known of some other way to practically taste God's love and get rest in my soul through that.

I would have spent my time of prayer in doing something else, if there was any other way except prayer to receive the power of God.

I would not have spent so much of time on prayer, if I was able to pour out and share the burdens and feelings in my heart to someone and get quietness, comfort and hope in my soul.

I would have rejected prayer, assuming that it is a vain job if I had the assurance that I have the ability to meet every need in my life.

I would have concluded that prayer is not an important factor, if I had known any other easy and simple way to guard myself in holiness, in this world.

If prayer had not been an excellent way for me, to get the urge to examine myself and know my real state, and to humble myself before God, I would not have given much importance to prayer.

If there is any other way, except prayer, to get strengthened at times of despair, to get a new strength at times of desolation, to have clarity at times of confusion, and to have a secure feeling at times of loneliness, I would not be concerned with prayer.

If I had reasons to believe that prayer is not at all needed, to enjoy true peace and joy beyond imagination, I would willingly be a man, without prayer.

To Ponder

If trials make you despair and weak,
learn to lean on the word of God and take rest.

MAY 4

EVIL INTO GOOD

Isaiah 43:1-20

I will do a new thing..
Isaiah 43:19

William Carey was one of the most important missionaries, who came to India carrying the gospel. He came to India, learnt the Indian languages and gave the gospel to the Indians. Initially, he learnt the language of Bengali and translated the New Testament in that language, by working strenuously hard on it for twelve years. But everything was burnt in a fire accident that occurred in the printing press. What an agonizing event this was! Just think awhile!

Yet, strengthening himself, he again entered into the translating venture. The second translation was more excellent than the first one, devoid of errors. Though an accident seemed to destroy the result of a hard labour, it paved way for something far more excellent to be created. Yes, God creates certain profits through certain losses.

Sometimes, certain things that happen to us are so bad that we are unable to see any good in that. Yet, if the Lord is with us, He creates a good thing out of that evil. We should learn to firmly hold on to the Lord in the midst of any failures or loss or disappointment in life. Then God is able to use that failures, losses and disappointments into something blessed.

Everything that happened to Naomi was painful. They could not be said to be good. But, how comforting it is to know that God created a good situation by deftly using those bad situations!

Loss in the business, deaths in the family, breakage of certain relationships, loss of employment, failure in settling the marriage, gross injustice meted out by certain people in some families have thrust them into terrible agonies.

But, since they have held on to the Lord firmly despite these factors, God has worked in the midst of those bad things and created far more excellent situations than the earlier ones.

To Ponder

The failures you had in the beginning,
are fence of thorns that preserve your future successes.

MAY 5

GOLD COATING

Matthew 23:13-31

You are like white washed tombs
Matthew 23:27

During the days when I accepted Christ I met many Christians. They seemed to possess many godly traits like love, humility and integrity. When I was impressed by them and went closer, I was thoroughly disappointed. I found to my dismay that they just appeared to be good and godly from a distance. Close association revealed their true colour. The traits were just put on to impress. They were not real. Their good characteristics appeared like real gold but on closer inspection they were found to be mere imitation or fake gold. It is a sad state of affairs if we do not have any inherent good quality. But, if we pretend to possess good traits it is a great deception.

If others cannot find any good quality, they might consider us sinners. But, if we pretend to be possessing the good qualities which we do not have, that will fetch for us the name of hypocrites. Jesus pitied the sinners but was angry at the Pharisees who pretended to be saints while leading a sinful life. That's why he addressed them as white washed sepulchers and hypocrites.

In the places we worship, we create an illusion about ourselves and appear as committed devoted Christians by the way we sing, worship, testify and speak. Our outward actions may give an exalted picture about ourselves. When people have a high expectation of Christian commitment, based on our external behaviors, it is not fair to disappoint them.

Our inner uncleanness and external saintliness can never please God. He will be angry with us. Our persistent efforts to cover up our reality and live as though our life is transformed by the touch of God, will render it impossible for us to taste real conversion. We may miss out the chances for repentance because of the satisfaction we derive in our hypocritical behaviour.

To Ponder

Sin, like a chameleon can change its colour.
But it cannot change its true nature.

MAY 6

PERFECT FORM

Isaiah 48:10-22

Behold, I have refined you.
Isaiah 48:10

A blacksmith takes a small piece of iron in the furnace, heats it, forges and shapes it with hammer and anvil. He keeps heating it and forging it. He bends it, cuts it and frays it. Probably if the iron piece had any life and a mouth, it would have wept and complained, "Why are you harassing me continuously?" But there is a great purpose for all that the blacksmith is doing. If he does not do all that, that iron piece would be left useless to anyone and would rust away. Now, though, it will be an instrument that can be used and will be useful for many.

Though a man listens to many moral sermons, they may not create virtues in him. For certain virtues and qualities to form in a man, certain amount of breaking and shattering are needed. It is while walking through adverse conditions and the heart is suffering, nobler virtues start to take deeper roots in our self. Virtues like humility, patience and meekness are created in such ways. When we come to Jesus, He also does similar things to us. In many ways, He refines, bends, twists, frays us and thus makes us into a shining and blessed instrument. If not, we will not be a blessing unto others.

When we are suffering due to various trials and afflictions, the crux of the matter is that we are being transformed by God into a useful and a blessed instrument in His hands. Our virtues and characters attain the perfect form only in the way of afflictions. It is under intense and adverse situations, we attain the maturity to discover nobler qualities.

Before raising Joseph and David to greater heights and making them a blessing unto multitude, God made them walk through various paths of afflictions. There they had a chance to get rid of those unwanted nature and to acquire new and much needed virtues.

To Ponder

What you don't understand today, will be understood tomorrow. So, now go ahead and do what you have understood before that.

MAY 7

WHY THIS DIFFICULTY?

Deuteronomy 6: 1 – 14

O Israel...that it may be well with you...
Deuteronomy 6: 3

All parents desire that their children should have a good and bright future. Therefore they do their best to give them best education right from their childhood days. But, children feel it difficult and challenging to go to school to study. They feel school-going is a great burden thrust upon them by parents

Our God Almighty also lovingly calls us live according to His teachings and His commandments. He expects from us good behaviour, good nature, good deeds, good attitudes and good control in our life. But this is not an easy job. Yes! Controlling us from evil ways and living with good temperaments are tough only. Often we feel desperate wondering why we should live with the fear of God with so many controls and restrictions in our lives.

But, we forget to remember that all these are needed only for our own better life and better standard of living. We fail to think that we can have a better life only when we improve our mental attitude, inborn nature and self-control. If a patient thinks that he is taking the treatment for the sake of his doctor, it becomes tough. But, once he understands that it is for his own health, the whole treatment procedure becomes an easy one.

Some people struggle to get rid of certain habits and practices. Some are not happy to give up their lustful desires because they think that those things are good for their well-being. They find it very difficult to win victory in these matters for they do not link them up with things connected to our Lord God.

We should live a life of discipline and noble qualities. We must also have the confidence that this disciplined life alone could give us the blessed life of peace and happiness. We will be able to endure all the pain, agony and difficulties only when we feel that they are for our good than for the sake of God.

To Ponder

The Lord loves the man who lovingly walks in His ways and not the man who obeys because of his fear for Him.

MAY 8

LOVE AND DECISION

John 15:1-17

As I have loved you
John15:12

A nominal Christian who once happened to listen to a deeply moving God's message on love, decided to love his wife truly and deeply. So, to show his love, he bought her some gifts; started to talk lovingly to her.

The wife who saw the husband's sudden change was thrilled and her joy knew no bounds. But it did not last for long. His love dissolved day by day just as the full moon reduces to new moon, and came to nothing.

Showing love and truly loving someone cannot be done by our own decision alone. Will it be possible for a frail and weak man to take a decision to work hard with his own strength?

First of all he needs to do that which ought to be done to make his body healthy and strong. Only then he can work. True love is a river of life from God. Only when we have fellowship with God, this river of love will flood our dry heart and make it fertile.

Only when our sins are cleansed by the Lord Jesus Christ, this experience is possible in our life.

To many people, the experience of showing love is like an actor showing certain good qualities on the screen and then returning to his original self.

Nobody will have this experience unless the Lord creates the bond of love in us.

Showing love is not as easy as sailing a boat on the lake. Sometimes, it is like climbing a mountain. sometimes it is like encountering a tempest.

Hence, mere decision alone is not enough. Fellowship with God is the most essential thing needed for that.

To Ponder

Love shown to others will be according to the measure of God's love tasted by us, within ourselves.

MAY 9

THAT TOO IS LOVE

Psalm 103:1-13

Praise the Lord, O my soul....
Psalm 103:1

A girl wanted to marry a boy of her choice. But, her father ignored her wishes and chose another young man for her to marry. She thought that her father did not love her as he went against her wish. But, later when she came to know fully about the bad character and conduct of the boy she had wished to marry, she understood that the father had rejected him out of his love for her. His refusal to comply with her wishes was an indication of his love for her. He had done what would be good for her life. It took sometime for the daughter to really comprehend and appreciate her father's love.

In our life too, sometimes we are grieved that God has denied us some favors without realizing the depth of His love for us. Several times we wonder why our loving God did not fulfill the desires of our heart. But, in some matters we can not experience God's care and love immediately. It takes time to be able to understand and appreciate what appears to be denials and lack of concern. We might then realize that God had done everything with real concern and love.

We may not have got the education opportunity of our choice. Even with regard to our job or life partner, we might not have got what we desired for. Even after earnest prayers, our heart's desires may not have been accomplished. The question "Where then is God's love?" may keep bothering us. Surely one day God will help us understand that He had acted with love, even in those situations that were hard.

In the life of Moses, what he first wanted did not happen. He had to do what he did not really like. Even in David's early life he was taken in a path which he did not relish. But, in all these undesirable events, God's love and compassion that directed them in the way of His plan could be seen. It came to light only later. It was then confirmed that whatever happened, it was the result of His love.

To Ponder

If we surrender our life fully to God, adversities of life will not affect us

MAY 10

FAMILY LIFE

Romans 15-1-9

Accept one another..
Romans 15:7

There are many secular books which give guidelines for leading a happy family life. They also give hints as to how to resolve conflicts in family. There are many articles which in a very efficient way give suggestions for leading a healthy family life. The truth is that such counsels appear to be extremely effective and wonderful. But, the members in a family, who are stressed out in the midst of unresolved conflicts, will not be in a state of mind to receive these wonderful suggestions and base their actions on them to find good results. They may not be in the right frame of mind to implement the good suggestions.

A good refined heart is essential to maintain relationship in a family. A heart that is moulded and cultured is needed to delight in family relationships. Attitudes also must have undergone changes. The hardness of heart should be removed. People must be prepared to accept truth, own their mistake, tolerate certain things and let go those which have to give up. A few good suggestions cannot accomplish this. Basically a heart which can achieve this is needed. There should be a change in one's heart.

A heart which permits the reign of God can be easily moulded to generate the desirable attitudes which are vital in maintaining good family relationships. Until this change occurs in the heart, all wise counsel, experience based suggestions, psychological explanations and philosophical doctrines cannot bring about any change. This is so because the heart is basically incapable of cooperating with man in his desire to be good.

Only, God can make the heart work in the right way. When we surrender ourselves to Him and submit our life to be guided by Him, He can mould us. When He controls our mind and moulds us, we will get the right attitudes that are needed to lead a good family life .Only then adjustments are possible among the members.

To Ponder

Let us not forget God while enjoying human relationship; without love for people, one can't have fellowship with God.

MAY 11

IS YOUR TEACHING CORRECT?

Luke 10:25–37

Go and do likewise
Luke 10:37

We know certain things are right in our lives but others may not think like that. However hard we try to explain to them, it will be difficult to convince them. After a certain limit, it is impossible to convince others but we need not feel upset for this. Even if others disagree, we should not waver from our right path. What we believe as right that is to be proved by our own living ways and not through our words and arguments. When someone points the right way to reach a place, he should first be prepared to walk through it and make others see how he reaches his destination.

Some people struggle hard to convince others about a particular doctrine or a truth or a church but they will not have any proof to show how that particular thing changed them to live the right life. A Christian man working in an office would go around and repeatedly tell other people that redemption is possible only through the Lord Jesus. When he continued to talk like this, another man told him, "Your explanations are good to hear but I have not seen you living the right life you preach. So how can I believe that your explanations are right and true?"

I have also seen some people who will try their best to convince others that their churches and their doctrines alone are the right and best ones. But, no one can see in them the noble and good qualities such as love, humility, patience, meekness and blameless speech. What they said may perhaps be true but their words, deeds and the reflections of their mind clearly show that they have not been transformed by their own teachings.

There was a man who will not talk with others if they refuse to accept his views. Another will not visit the homes of people who failed to attend his church in spite of his invitation. What is the proof that these people spoke the right thing?

To Ponder

The measure of your love for God can be seen by the measure of your love for other people.

MAY 12

WHICH IS BLESSING?

Psalm 4:1-8

You have put gladness in my heart
Psalm 4:7

A business man became a Christian, at one point of time. Whenever he had the chance, he, who went into deep Christian experiences, never failed to share his testimony as to how God had blessed him. However, some of his relatives who knew his former state as well as the latter one were amused by his testimony about blessings. Some of them even questioned him about this.

They asked him, "Before becoming a Christian, you were running a big shop. You lived in a comfortable house. You travelled by luxurious cars; but, today you are running a small shop; you are in an ordinary rented house; you, who were once used only to cars, are now going by TVS Moped. In this state, you are saying that Jesus has blessed you. Why are you making a false religious propaganda?"

He said, "I am not lying. I'm telling the truth. It is true that I had a big shop, big house and good cars. But I had no peace of mind then. I had no real happiness. There was no honesty in my life. I had no good qualities. No peace in the family. But today, Jesus has given me all these. Though I have a small business, small house and a small vehicle, I have contentment, hope and peace which I never had. Aren't these blessings? Shouldn't I tell about this to everyone?"

Yes, blessing is not how prosperous we are financially. Rather, it is how content and satisfied we are in our heart. What is the use of having a big house, comfortable car, high status and plenty of money, without good qualities, characters, nature, peace and joy? It is wrong to evaluate blessings on the basis of wealth. Solomon could never find fulfillment and fullness of joy even amidst his enormous riches. But, David had them all, even in the midst of his lowly and poor state since God was with him. The joy he had because of God with him was greater than the joy that is enjoyed by many because of their vast wealth. Hence, he laid down peacefully and slept well.

To Ponder

Share your sorrows with God.
Share your joy with men.

MAY 13

DESIRE THE CHANGE

Matthew 18:1–20

Unless you become as little children
Matthew 18:3

A man heard the sermons of a servant of God for some time and afterwards he stopped it. When asked why he stopped hearing it, he said that he was tired of it because the preacher always insisted on transformation and nothing else.

Some people do not like to hear the words that persuade them to make changes in their lives. This is because it is very difficult for them to comprehend the shortcomings in their lives and to rectify them. They love to hear good thoughts carefully but will not like to identify the faults in their lives and to rectify them.

Christianity insists that the experience of being born-again in Spirit is very essential for the spiritual life. When this experience comes in a man, he receives the spiritual impetus that loves transformation in life. He loves to accept the word or thought that compels him to feel the need for change in his life. It is this born-again experience that transforms a man to become a child of God. The man who is able to identify himself as a child of God also receives the desire to possess the beauty that suits the child of God.

A man who has the born-again experience rejoices to hear anything that propels him to feel the need for a transformation or modification in him, for this is a kind of spiritual character. The sermons that urge the transformation of heart are sure to encourage and not discourage those people who have a fellowship with Jesus Christ in their lives.

Do we not love to make our house look more beautiful? Do we not want to make the clothes we wear look more attractive? If this is the case, then the real Christian life is to accept the changes that are needed in our lives to make it more beautiful for God to abide in us.

To Ponder

The seeds that fall in a dry land will not give any yield.The faith of God in a corrupt heart cannot bear any fruit.

MAY 14

HOW TO OVERCOME?

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

In your struggle against sin
Hebrews 12:4

*B*eing tempted is not sin. Satan sows within us lustful thoughts ,unholy ideas, unpleasant memories, unhealthy imagination and desires. We must not consider them as sinful things. Sin is yielding to these thought and committing a sinful deed.

It is natural for a young man to be attracted by a woman and a woman to be attracted by man. But this thought level liking must not lead them to any act. If they yield to their thought level desires and enter into the next level of action, sin is born.

First, we must have the faith that any temptation can be overcome because the Bible says that we will not be tempted beyond what we can bear. (I Corinth 10:13) Many may have failed but we must have the faith that we will overcome because we are with God.

Next, we need preparation. We must not think that we can easily overcome as it was easy for Joseph. Only when we have the strong spiritual experience of living with God, we will be ready to overcome temptation.

Thirdly, invariably situations are the main cause for sinful temptation. Standing near a bee hive, you cannot try to chase the bees. First we must flee away from the place. Without removing the situations which might cause us to sin, we must not claim that we will overcome.

Fourth, we must fight back. We must come forward to resist sin. If we first stay without resisting, even a cat will defeat us. If we try to fight back, even a tiger will run away. Fighting against sin is the most important and essential fight in our life. Only when we come forward to fight, we will be empowered and enabled by God to see conquest like David.

To Ponder

The zeal you show to experience the touch of God will chase away Satan who tries in vain to touch you.

MAY 15

IF WEDON'T LOSE

Philippians 3:1-15

I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ…
Philippians 3:8

A person had a good mango fruit in his hand. He was attracted by a golden mango and wanted to possess that also. He hastened to the spot and tried to take it. But, he did not let go the mango which was in his hand. He could not get the golden mango, without dropping the mango which was in his hand. He tried very hard to grab the golden mango without losing the one he had in his hand.

Yes, he wanted the golden fruit but was reluctant to let go the ordinary one. Finally, he lost both the fruits in his futile effort to possess both. The spiritual life of many people is like this. They want to enjoy the blessings of God without giving up any of their worldly pleasures. They want all the pleasures of this world while they aspire to possess the joy and fulfillment of spiritual life. Consequently, they lose both fully.

Unless, a person comes forward to give up one, he can not enjoy spiritual bliss in fullness without denying himself the worldly pleasures, King Solomon wanted to please God and he failed in his attempt. While indulging in the pleasures of the world, he sought the joy of the Lord and heavenly bliss. Eventually, he could not derive any fulfillment from both and ended up in despair.

It is impossible to experience the happiness which God gives, while we continue to enjoy the pleasures of the world. If we wish to be filled with God's joy and happiness, we need to possess the mentality to spurn the empty pleasures of the world which can not give complete joy. Paul had the mind-set to consider his family status and social recognition as trash and rubbish for the sake of the blessings he received from God. If, we choose a life that is filled with the blessings and joy of the Lord, we need to let go some worldly pleasures, positions and attitudes which are detrimental to the pursuit of heavenly joy.

To Ponder

He who lives for himself, loses the meaning of life,
he who lives for others, gains a meaning for his life.

MAY 16

NOTHING SHOULD BE FREE

Genesis 23:1-20

I will pay the price of the field...
Genesis 23:13

A know some in the police department. When they board the bus, they will not get tickets. When they enter a restaurant, they will not pay for what they eat. They will expect everything free. When they get into a tea shop or fruit shop, the vendors will be scared to demand payment as these belong to police department. They are expected to function with integrity and dignity. This base behaviour of a few brings down the image of the department.

Such a mentality is to be found in some believers and servants of God. They think that they must get something free because they are doing God's work. They feel that their expectation can be justified. I receive many letters saying "Brother I am involved in faith ministry. So please send your books free". will be good and honourable if such people desire to pay and get things.

One of the divine characteristics of Abraham was that he never liked to get anything free. When Sarah died, Ephron came forward to give a piece of land free, to bury her. Though he persuaded Abraham to get it free, Abraham refused to accept it. Finally, he got the land after paying for it. Our God is a great God. Our behaviour should not bring dishonour to His name. It is so sad that even the affluent servants of God who are in comfortable positions wish to receive everything free. As a result all the servants of God are held in a very low esteem and they are disregarded and despised.

Though, the servants of God and believers lack in many things, they must never approach people for help. It is so because we are God's ambassadors. Even though we may be in total want, we must not use God's name for our benefit. Of course, there is no harm in accepting the gifts. Yet, those who serve God must behave in such a way ,that the message, that those who trust in God do not expect anything free, is made clear to others.

To Ponder

Do not despise human help,
at the same time do not run after that

MAY 17

WORD IS PRECIOUS

II Timothy 2:1-19

Who correctly handles the word
II Timothy 2:15

A renowned and talented musician who was popular for his exquisite music performances quit the music field in order to guide people in God's way. He gave up the opportunity to delight thousands of people with his melodious voice and chose to be a pastor to guide a small group. When his friends asked him how he benefited by the choice, he replied, "My beautiful songs which enthralled many, will not take them to heaven. But, those few who listen to my words of exhortation and exposition might be helped to find their way to heaven"

There may be numerous ways to make others happy. People with diverse talents can bring joy in the lives of multitudes. But, their efforts will end in the earth itself. We can offer riches, materials, knowledge, joy and so many other things to people of the world. But all these will not help them in their life beyond this earth. But word of God can take a person to the glorious life.

Even when the earth and heaven are destroyed, the word of God will be forever. No other help can benefit mankind as much as the word of God does. The manna that God gave to the Israelites through Moses for 40 years did not make them live forever. That's why God said,' man does not live by bread alone but by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'

We can render numerous help to people when we are motivated by the love of God. A beautiful worship service can be organized to delight lovers of God. People might run for miracles, and wonders. But, only the word of God that is given to them will help them till eternity. However much an evangelist exhibits his miracle working power and displays the power of his anointment, if he does not speak the word of God which will equip one for eternity, all his miracles and wonders can be considered waste and meaningless.

To Ponder

Relationship with God alone can bring real joy, not the material provisions and prosperity.

MAY 18

IN THE MIDST OF STORM

Matthew 8:23-27

It was completely calm…
Matthew 8:26

*B*uildings are constructed in such a way that the noise from outside do not penetrate inside. Though there may be loud noise outside, there will be perfect silence within. Similarly, when we live in close intimacy with God, we will experience a divine peace in our heart though there may be noisy disturbances in some areas of our life.

In our life, we can be threatened by some situations. Some may make us lose our hope. Some may confuse us. But when the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we will remain untouched by them. He will not allow them to enter our inner being, and cause havoc.

Paul sailed in a ship when there was a violent storm. The situation was terrific and caused great panic in the minds of all those who were travelling in the ship. They could not eat for 14 days.

But, in the midst of this turbulence, Paul remained calm and undisturbed because he could hear the still soft voice of God. Therefore he steadied himself and comforted others.

When Jesus was ministering in this world, the noise of those who opposed Him was loud. They brought false charges against Him and threw insults at Him.

All these noise were raging around but He was never perturbed. He had perfect peace within Him and He was able to accomplish everything till the end.

The Holy Spirit generates peace within us. We must hear the voice of God in our heart. When we hear His voice, all other noise will be subdued. We may not be able to stop the noisy situations around us.

But when we walk close to God, the divine peace that is within us will not allow the adverse noise to overcome and conquer.

To Ponder

Allow God to carry our burdens,
allow His peace to surround us.

MAY 19

ARE WE SINNERS

I Peter 2:1-12

You are a holy nation, a people belonging to God…
I Peter 2:9

A person who came to preach in a church said at the beginning of his sermon, 'I am a miserable sinner yet God has sent me to preach here.' One man from the congregation rose and said, "Brother, we can not believe that God sent you here. We can not accept the fact that God has sent a miserable sinner to preach to us."

Many people think that they will receive God's grace if they confess that they are useless trash and call themselves sinners. Some think that because they themselves acknowledge that they are sinners, the seriousness of their offenses will be minimized. Many people continue as sinners, because they consider themselves as sinners.

Jesus Christ came into this world, to lift us from the low state of sinners to the state of saints. So we need to view ourselves as saints because He has made us holy. If a constable is promoted as Inspector he must behave as an inspector. Instead, if he keeps on saying that he is a mere constable, he can not function as an inspector.

God has transformed us who are mere dust, into precious gems. Hence, with that assurance we must carry ourselves with dignity and must avoid the statement that we are dust and trash. We may have been sinners in the past but now we have become holy because we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. (I Corinth.1:30)

The Bible calls us that we are a chosen people belonging to God and a holy nation. (I Peter 2:9) We need to acknowledge that we are called to occupy a high place and act according to that. We can not fulfill the plan of God, if we continue looking at us as sinners. Our grasp can not be high and our vision can not be lofty, if we feel within us that we are sinners. Our thinking must be high, so that we can achieve high goals.

To Ponder

Impacting a few with our exemplary life style,
is better than impressing the world with our lofty ideas.

MAY 20

MIRAGES

Matthew 23:13-29

Man is a mere phantom...
Psalm 39:6

Some women appear tall in church, office or in any public places. But, they look shorter if we meet them in their house. They look taller outside because of the high heeled slippers they wear. This does not affect any one. But, what harms others is people's affected behaviour. They change their attitudes and behaviour according to the places they find themselves in.

The real meaning of humility is appearing as we really are, without pretending to be some body else. Revealing the real self before everyone, without hiding our nature is one important aspect of humility. It is not hiding our real life. We can be good or bad. It is our problem. But, we must not make it very difficult for others to find out our real self.

Some people do not say lie to deceive others. But, their actions will create a very good impression in others. But, if we take them at their face value and try to establish a relationship with them, we will be disappointed to find things contrary to our expectations. We will be disappointed because their good appearance is just a mirage. They are deceptive appearances. Our judgment of their character turns out to be wrong. Pretending to love some one without any genuine love for that person and welcoming somebody with great warmth without desiring their presence are hypocritical love.

Other hypocritical acts are pretending to be ready to lay down one's life without any thought of helping the other, showing great care without any concern for the other persons welfare, pretending to be a light before others without walking in the ways of God and posing as one who is ready to lose everything for Christ while being involved in ministry for personal gain. Jesus hates such hypocritical acts and attitudes.

To Ponder

Truth can not be hidden, but people hide themselves from seeing truth.

MAY 21

FUTILE BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

Matthew 7:17-29

He who does not put them into practice
Matthew 7:26

A Mechanical Engineer might know how a vehicle functions. He might also have a clear idea about how the vehicle should be designed to run effectively .But with all this information he might not be able to drive a vehicle. Knowledge about the vehicle alone cannot help a person to drive the vehicle. He must learn to drive.

A person who had studied theology was able to supply relevant information about any theological matter. He possessed a thorough knowledge about the Bible. In spite of his deep acquaintance with all the Biblical facts, he lacked Biblical values. He did not possess any good virtue. His spiritual barrenness was conspicuous. His knowledge failed to impact his attitudes and actions.

Mere knowledge without appropriate inward changes is useless. Biblical knowledge is not gained to sharpen our mental efficiency. It is acquired so that our life is impacted in the right way. The theological knowledge which serves as a display item does not benefit the one who possesses it. It is like the person who collects beautiful plates and serving dishes but never uses them.

Biblical knowledge is like an item that is show cased. It fails to influence the life of people who boast about their efficiency. Only those who had experienced repentance, salvation and fellowship with the Holy Spirit will be able to benefit from Biblical knowledge. Others may proudly exhibit their knowledge, but may not desire to apply that in their life.

Similarly some people listen to message with great interest and struggle hard to acquire Bible knowledge. Yet, the impact of their knowledge will not be seen in their life style. Even if they so desire to express it in their life, they will not succeed. Only those who had tasted salvation and those who are induced by the Holy Spirit to thirst and hunger for truths will be empowered to lead a righteous life.

To Ponder

A true Christian does not carry the Bible in his hand, he bears it in his heart.

MAY 22

TRUTHFUL IN WORDS

Matthew 5:1-16

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Matthew 5:8

A person in a responsible position in a Christian organization, committed many acts of deception and corruption. Not many were aware of that, but one person, who was dismissed from an important position in that organisation, brought all his deceptive acts to light.

He revealed everything not out of his desire to set things right but out of his hatred for the man who was instrumental in his dismissal.

All those who speak the truth, are not truthful. Those who do good things are not good people . A person, who speaks some truth, can lead an untruthful life. Though a person may not have a good heart, he can do good things with a hidden motive.

So, we can not call a person good or truthful, based on a few outward activities. The mistakes of one political leader, pointed by another leader can be very true.

Here he speaks the truth not out of his love for the truth. By this he gains an advantage over the other one. It is not enough if we just speak the truth; we need to love the truth for its own sake.

What Jesus said about the Pharisees and Sadducees was true. He disclosed their real nature and condemned them. All along Jesus was truthful and holy.

When true facts about some people are shared, many will accept that as just and reasonable. Only God knows whether we do it out of our love for truth or do it out of hate and take it as an opportunity to dishonour them.

Truth can either build or destroy. Only God knows the inner motive. We may speak truthful words but we need to check if we are truthful at heart. When we dissemble, we don't love truth.

To Ponder

Until we learn to look at ourselves first,
our eyes will not be clear to see jesus.

MAY 23

MUST BE OPPOSED

Hebrews 12:1-13

In your struggle against sin, you have not resisted…
Hebrews 12:4

Moabites and Ammonites came to make war on Jehoshaphat. He called unto God, since he felt powerless to face them. The Lord assured him through a prophet that the battle was not his but it was the Lord's. But, along with the promise, God gave him an injunction. He was to face the enemy army next day. (II Chron.20:17) It was true that God was going to fight but Jehoshaphat had to go to the battle field with faith

Similarly, we need to fight against powers of evil, strategies of the wicked devil and sinful attitudes that germinate and grow within us. Opposing sinful nature and rejecting evil attitudes are not easy things for us, as we are weak. Yet, God enables us to overcome them. But, first we need to try to overcome our wrong attitudes, and our innate inclination to do that which is displeasing to God. We must also resist the tendency to do things that are contrary to the will and purpose of God. If we take the first step to oppose these evil factors, God will act in us and help us overcome them.

We may feel that we are inadequate and weak to do that, but, we need to come forward willingly to oppose them .Only when we begin to fight them, God will fight for us and banish them from our life. God chose Gideon to fight the valiant Midianites. Gideon realized that he was not fit for the huge task. But, God promised that He would give him victory and encouraged him saying that he would vanquish the enemies without any difficulty. Here it was God who was going to defeat the Midianites and give victory to Gideon.

Though it was God who was going to fight, it was necessary for Gideon to venture on the battle with his limited strength. He had to take the initiative. Only when he took the first step and launched his plan of attack, he could see a victory that was far beyond his capacity and power.

To Ponder

Until we identify our weaknesses,
our strength will be eluding us.

MAY 24

PRAYER OF BURDEN

Psalm 27:1-14

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice
Psalm 27:7

A wound would be hurting to the one who has that wound; he alone can feel the agony of it. Others cannot experience that pain, no matter how much knowledgeable they are about the agony caused by that wound. An onlooker cannot understand the difficulty in carrying load more than he, who carries the load.

When we have sufferings, difficulties and pain, we alone can feel them as they are. Hence, we alone can let God know of these, with real burden and feelings. No minister of God can pray with the burden that we have because of our difficulties. Hannah's agony was known only to her. Hence, she could cry out her heart in bitterness and with great burden in the presence of God. Even when she had lost her strength to pray her lips were moving silently in prayer.

Many assume that some servants of God alone can pray for their problems and difficulties with more burden than they, themselves. This is a wrong idea. Similarly, they assume that God would be moved with more compassion looking at the burdensome prayers of some servants of God than by seeing their own burdened prayer.

However, the compassion that comes directly on seeing a suffering person is much more than the compassion that comes by hearing somebody else telling about one's suffering. Yes, we should learn to pray by ourselves realizing that nobody else can have perfect empathy towards our burdens. The prayers we offer with burden and agony would bring God's compassion on us in a great scale.

Experiencing painful burdens in his life, David cried out to the Lord with great mental distress in prayers which are now the wonderful Psalms which comfort the countless. There should be a close relationship and fellowship with God; our life should be righteous before Him. In that case, the prayer of any servant of God can never be more powerful than our own prayers.

To Ponder

Man is afraid to tear down masks
Why? He too is hiding behind a mask.

MAY 25

SMALL FAULT

Matthew 25:1-13

Five were foolish.
Matthew 25:2

The five virgins that appear in the parable of Ten Virgins are pitiable. They took great trouble to meet the Bridegroom and waited for a long time; yet they lost the eligibility to take part in the joy of the Bridegroom's wedding feast. If only they had had some more oil as a precautionary measure, they would not have faced such a pathetic disappointment. They were neither sinners nor ungodly. But, because of their slight carelessness, they could not part take in the most joyous feast.

The main purpose of godly life is receiving in us the joy given by God and enjoying it. The ultimate intention for our every spiritual action is to receive divine joy. What is the use if we fail to see the spiritual joy despite undertaking many spiritual difficulties?

Some people would work hard for the Lord; some would take strenuous efforts to do His ministry. Yet they would not be willing to give proper thought to experiences such as repentance, salvation, fellowship with God etc., So, though there are many appreciable good things in them, they do not get the blessings of God as a reward for their efforts. Many take into account only their various godly activities and neglect repentance thinking that they need nothing more. This hinders them from receiving benefits from God.

Many spiritual people fail to enjoy the joy of the divine feast despite their so many pious deeds. What is the reason? It is because of some small shortcoming or carelessness or negligence on their part. A little bitterness we have towards a person, a little unyielding nature, self-seeking tendency , or craving for something, unwillingness to change the nature, etc., can distance us from the joyous feast of the Lord. Unless, we try to discard these small shortcomings, we can never enjoy peace and joy, no matter how zealously we act with godly passion.

To Ponder

When the speed of love towards God reduces the desire towards the worldly things gathers speed.

MAY 26

THE GLORY OF YESTER YEARS

Psalm 90:1-17

That we may be glad all our days…
Psalm 90:14

If someone goes to meet this person who led a splendid life in the past, he would start "Once upon a time, I was …" and would talk about all the splendours of his past and would lament about them. As a result, he never did anything creative and became someone who would tell stories about the past. When we look back at childhood, it looks like a golden age. We are tempted to feel how wonderful those days were. But if we keep thinking about the splendour of times past, coming days will not be blessed.

Life is a book of many chapters. It will pass by one chapter after another. If you keep thinking that the finished chapters were better than the chapter you are reading now, you will never be able to enjoy the chapters coming next. Only as the chapters pass by, the book will be more and more interesting.

A police officer who was a higher official in the force, suffered from many ailments after his retirement due to emotional distress. What was the reason? He kept thinking about the past where he gave orders to others imperiously, but did not do anything to use his times in a positive manner. Those who live with a closer union with the LORD will always realize throughout their lives, that their life has more meaning now than ever before. Therefore, they have no problems about the glory of yesteryears.

The past of Moses was a life in palace. Yet till his last day, his life had meaning, success and glory. In his eighties, he shook the very foundations of nations. He was a tree that yielded fruit even at ripe old age. Yes, the relation we have with the LORD will give us a feeling of a good life to us. Paul, John and Peter lived a long life. Yet till the end, they saw that their life was meaningful. The final chapters of their lives were more fruitful than the beginning chapters of their life.

To Ponder

Do not see the number of successes you have had.
See if you have got the meaning of your life.

MAY 27

WHY REPENTANCE?

Matthew 3:1-12

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.
Matthew 3:2

When I was a kid, I would get breakfast only if I took bath early in the morning in the nearby river. But, I don't like taking bath in cold water in the morning. So, at times, I would just sprinkle some water on my head, wet my hair and act as if I had taken the bath and would receive my breakfast. Here I did not realize the importance of taking bath; I just acted as if I had taken it for the sake of my breakfast.

But the experience of repentance of some is similar to that. They have not realized that repentance is a major need to their life that has been spoiled by sin. They think that to receive the goodness and blessing of God, repentance is a condition. So they think of it as a ritual and fulfilling a condition, they repent half-heartedly, not knowing its importance completely.

It is true that we can receive the blessings of God by repentance. But, it is not right to repent to receive the benefits. Repentance is something that we need the most. Whether God gives the good things or holds them back, we need repentance. Imagine if a terminally ill patient demands, saying "If I have to agree for the operation, the doctor has to pay such a huge sum to me," it will be very weird. Asking that God has to do some good things to us if we have to repent is also like that.

Jesus came to this earth and did many good things. He roamed around everywhere as One who does good. Yet, the reason Jesus came to this earth was different. He said, "I came to call sinners for repentance." (Luk. 5:32) And for that purpose, Jesus accepted the Cross and its sufferings. Because, the greatest need of a man is the deliverance of sin that comes through repentance. Yes, the greatest blessing that we have to receive from God is to receive salvation and be delivered from sin. And this blessing is the door to all other blessings.

To Ponder

It is easy to rescue from the clutches of others.
The difficult part is to rescue you from your own clutches.

MAY 28

HELP FROM OTHERS

James 4:1-10

Humble yourselves before the Lord.
James 4:10

An old man was returning home from shopping carrying a heavy bag in his hand and was struggling under the weight. Seeing this, a young man offered to carry the bag for him but the old man refused his help saying," No..no..I can manage. I do not need help. I can carry this." But after he walked for a while, he fell down, as he could not continue carrying the weight.

May be, we can appreciate this man's self-confidence, which exceeded the limit of his capacity. His pride that he did not need assistance and his boastful self – competence let him down miserably. He lacked the humility to accept the fact that he needed help as he was weak. Of course, over dependence on others is bad. Reluctance to stand on one's own legs is not a proper attitude. But at the same time rejecting help from others stubbornly is not proper either. We can never be self-sufficient. Sometime in our life, we may have to receive assistance from others in some area of our life.

Rejecting help when we require it, is an expression of pride. It is a fact that children consider their old parents as burdens while at the same time it is unwise on the part of the parents to spend their old age in lonliness and misery, saying that they will not be at the mercy of their children. It is not a matured spiritual attitude to reject the support and it shows their wrong self-esteem and ego. While they say that they do not like to trouble anyone, they confess their conceited reluctance to depend on others.

We may say that we depend on God alone but sometimes He Himself sends people to help us. Prophet Elijah who performed many miracles did not hesitate to accept boarding and lodging from a widow, in obedience to God. Jesus, who could have fed the crowd with a miracle, did not hesitate to accept what the little boy offered.

To Ponder

Do not reject the favour offered by the people, do not also run after favour from them.

MAY 29

IS GOD LOVE

Ephesians 3:9-21

To know the love which passes knowledge
Ephesians 3:19

God, loving us is one; getting benefitted by His love is different. It is a fact that God loves us, even though we are sinners. But, we cannot receive any benefit from Him because of His love, even while remaining sinners.

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the father had great love on the son who went far away from him and lived a wicked life. Or else he could not have run towards him, the moment he saw him and hugged and kissed him.

Yet the son, who went away from him, could enjoy the love of the father only after he returned to the father. Though the father was nursing love for the son since a long time, the son enjoyed his love only after coming back.

God has loving thoughts towards us, wherever we may be and whatever we may do. But that love is His personality. The knowledge about it alone would not do us any good. Certain times when we are sad in the mind does not mean that He does not love us. The reason is that we are not closer to Him to enjoy the reward of His love.

'If God loves me, will this really happen? Will I have to live in such agony?" – Sometimes, our mind thus asks. But, are we closer to Him?

Do we try to draw closer to Him in order to feel His presence? Standing in the coldest part of Europe, it is not right to ask, "Why do I feel cold, when Arabia is so hot?"

Sometimes the reason why we are restless and hopeless is not because of our problems. Rather it is that we are not close to God to such an extent to taste His love. It is true that something has kept us far away from the presence of God.

To Ponder

Don't wish that others should see what you give for God.
Don't hide from others what God has given you.

MAY 30

MAKE OTHERS HAPPY

Romans.12:6-21

Rejoice with those who rejoice
Romans 12:15

A person who was raised in very difficult financial background was extremely careful to keep his children happy always. In his childhood he was not as privileged as many other kids. He could not frisk and play about joyfully in total carefree mind-set. His childhood was very much stressed. Financial problems shattered his childhood dreams and he could not blossom the strained and stressful circumstances literally clipped his wings.

The joy that was denied to him he was determined to give to his kids. He spent a lot of money on toys and other entertainments that would keep them happy. As a child he didn't have the comfort of living in a good house and the joy of wearing new dresses. He did not enjoy rides in his own vehicles. Since he was keen to shower on his children all these comforts which he could not enjoy in his childhood he did not mind spending on his own kids.

He did not cry over the pleasures of his childhood which were denied to him. Instead he gave them all to his own kids and got the satisfaction of having his dreams fulfilled in his children's lives. .

Sometimes we may not enjoy the comfort and solace which we wish to have in life. It doesn't necessarily mean that we must become bitter and frustrated. We must not allow these negative feelings to germinate in our heart. Instead we need to look for opportunities to make others happy. We must cultivate this attitude so that we become channels of blessings to others.

We need to possess the maturity to rejoice with those who enjoy the things which we did not have in the past. May be in the past we might have gone through certain turbulent moments which we might have found very hard to handle. When others go through those difficult phases with ease, we must not rue over the fact that we struggled hard over the same issues.

To Ponder

He who is concerned about others, need not worry about his own self.

MAY 31

WELL DISCIPLINED, BUT...

Romans 15:1-17

Bear with the scruples of the weak
Romans 15:1

A particular person was highly punctual. He was always on time for everything. He never went back on his words and did what he promised to do. He was excellent in accomplishing things entrusted to him. All these are laudable qualities. But, is it hard to believe that his praiseworthy discipline causes many problems in his family and among relatives. Are you surprised to learn that nobody in his office really likes him? Is it any wonder that his children disregard his well disciplined life and call him a Hitler?

Yes, indeed he was good and disciplined. Yet, he could not tolerate if someone was not punctual. He would hate those who did not do according to their word. He would not accept if someone failed to do something properly. He would view those who lacked his discipline as his enemy – be it his wife or children or parents or even friends.

Yes, it is surprising that the disciplines, certain good deeds and good qualifications make some people bad. This is high headedness caused by self righteousness. Hating those who are not well disciplined like them and discarding those people is a sadistic attitude. It is indeed good to expect discipline and regularities that we have, in others.

At the same time, we need to have a heart that patiently bears others' weaknesses, shortcomings and imperfections. Jesus Christ, who was perfect in His character, qualities and deeds tolerated others and endured the shortcomings and weaknesses of His disciples. This is because what He had was divine righteousness. Hence He had more love and compassion. Self righteousness would create lot of discipline and good habits in man. But there would not be love and humility. Only the divine righteousness that comes from Christ can create good qualities, patience and meekness.

To Ponder

Unless you do not learn to bend and yield, you would break your life and handicap it.

JUNE 1

WITHOUT BLAMING OTHERS

I Peter 2:11-25

When he suffered, He made no threats…
1 Peter 2: 23

Lord Jesus had used harsh words against the Pharisee and Sadducees, on several occasions. He had addressed them as white washed sepulcher and hypocrites.

But when he was going through the excruciating agony, He remained quiet. He did not condemn their cruel and violent activities. He was not angered by their unjust deeds.

Even in the midst of intense agony and pain, instead of cursing them who caused His death, He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing." He could have very easily called Judas as a hypocrite but he addressed him as 'friend'

Why did he behave like this? What was the reason for his soft approach? Instead of getting annoyed at what was happening to Him, He accepted the pain as permitted by God. He was fully aware of the fact that their unjust actions had been permitted by God, so He did not get angry.

He knew that what was happening to Him was something God had planned for Him. So, there was no use moaning and groaning. Even Joseph bore all the hurts inflicted on him by his brothers very patiently. He believed very strongly that what they did against him was to promote the will of God. (Gen 45: 5)

Sometimes God allows others' jealousy and resentment to operate against us. It is so because God knows that we will reap some benefits later because of them.

So it is very essential that we learn to bear them with patience. This stoic courage to bear the hurts is the outcome of our faith. Such a response is possible only when we trust in God.

To Ponder

A friend in the neighborhood promotes hope, an enemy nearby promotes maturity.

JUNE 2

TEACHINGS AND RELATIONSHIP

Matthew 3:1-12

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance...
Matthew 3:8

Abraham had excellent charact eristics. He lived as an exemplary model at every stage of his life. We find love, humility, forgiving, compassion, helping tendency, patience and commitment in Abraham. In those days, there was no preaching to enforce the importance of nurturing these virtues. There were no books that taught about the need to develop such values. Bibles or books like "How to lead a good life" did not exist. Yet, how did Abraham lead such a devoted life?

It was the impact of his relationship with God. As a result of his deep relationship, he underwent a change and acquired all the values that pleased God. In the modern days, there are numerous preachers. Preaching abounds. Bibles have flooded the bookshops. There are numerous books giving guidance. There are so many opportunities to acquire information and knowledge. But very few possess good values. Why is it so?

Preaching and teaching alone can not help man acquire proper values. One may learn so much about a life of virtues but leading such a life is totally different. Mere listening to preaching and teachings do not change the basic nature of man. God alone can generate such desirable values in a person through a good and stable relationship with Him.

Our intimacy with God and consequent fellowship with Him generates excellent virtues in our life. Even without teaching, one can imbibe good virtues through a relationship with God. But without this integral fellowship, however much a person listens to preaching and teaching, he will not experience permanent changes within him. Many people are thorough with Bible and Bible precepts, but are very far away from God since they have not gone closer to God through repentance. Therefore, they do not have fruit of the spirit.

To Ponder

If you want to flee from evil,
keep moving fast towards goodness

JUNE 3

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

Luke 24:125-53

So they could understand the scriptures...
Luke 24:45

Very many times when I speak with believers of several years, I used to wonder at their ignorance of Bible truths and facts related to God. Looking at the way they have misunderstood the Bible verses, I realized that no one has taught them the truth properly. But, when in the presence of God I thought of all this inadequate Bible knowledge, the Holy Spirit revealed certain things which appeared strange to me.

Their basic problem was not that there was no one to give the right explanation of the Bible or that they lacked the power to understand. The reason was that they had not fully committed themselves to Christ to be able to see the light. Their inner eyes have not been opened yet. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit which enables one to discern the spiritual matters had not been active within them. Since they approach the Bible and Biblical truth with worldly eyes and un-repented heart, they do not have the clarity.

Though the Pharisees and Sadducees of the ancient days were very familiar with the Bible, they could not get at the inner truth because they interpreted the Bible according to their brain power. It was so because they had not entered into the life of light which was essential to understand the Bible. We must realise that the ability to understand the Bible is attained not through brain power or education but only by the act and kindling of the Holy Spirit. So, even an ordinary person will be able to understand the Bible, only if he has received real salvation.

Even when a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit clearly describes and explains Biblical truth, it will make no sense to a person who does not have the presence of the Holy Spirit. That's why Jesus did not give any Biblical explanation to Nicodemus. Instead, He told him that a person can enter the kingdom of God only if he is born again. (John - 3:3)

To Ponder

Before attempting to know something new, check if you are practising what you had learnt earlier.

JUNE 4

I DID NOT BELIEVE

Proverbs 17:1–15

And he condemns the just…
Proverbs 17: 15

*O*ften we see how the husband and his wife do not trust each other. We cannot see any signs of trust either in their words or in their actions. The look, words and actions of the wife will reveal how she has no faith in her husband. Similarly some parents also convey through all their actions the only message about their children which says, "We do not trust you; we doubt you

We should not believe everything blindly but at the same time we should not make doubting alone as our life style. Some people think that others will cheat them if they showed their trust in them. The one who pretends to disbelieve assumes that it would make the other become cautious.

Our sickening attitude of doubting will surely weaken us in our life. They will also pave the way for those whom we doubt to lose their ability to trust others. The people whom we doubt may lose the hope of getting good name for ever and thus become desperate also. The people who continue with the attitude of doubting will surely make others become weak in their confidence level. If we repeatedly approach others with a trusting attitude, even those people who are likely to go astray will be watchful to maintain their worth of trust level.

Their zeal to live a good life before those who distrust them will go up. The bad people will also be inspired to live a good life in front of those who trust them. Potiphar trusted very much his slave Joseph. So Joseph, who recognized this trust, was watchful in living a life that will not bring any damage to that trust. Hence the young Joseph could easily overcome the biggest sexual temptation of his life. He desired that he should not betray the confidence his master had in him. And this desire was top most in his mind. Doubting eyes are the enemies of happiness. Trusting tongue is a friend of happiness.

To Ponder

There is no other way to prove a lie as a lie except to stay firm in the truth.

JUNE 5

WEDDING DRESS

Matthew 22:1-14

How did you get in here without wedding clothes?
Matthew 22:12

A congregation conducted a revival meeting. The preacher who was invited to give the sermon, pointed out that remaining as a believer in a church without having experiences of repentance, salvation and fruit-giving is a sin. His sermon did not move the congregation much. However, the pastor of the church came to the preacher and with contrition said, "Sir, if remaining as a member of church without repenting is a sin, how much I am guilty in being a pastor of this church for the last 15 years without any of those experiences."

In our spiritual life, few things God expects from us. They are repentance, salvation and giving fruits. Some are not worried about or not aware of these, but they remain as members of a church or a committee or even as a preacher. Then God is not magnified by them, but makes the LORD angry. Any good thing we do, ignoring the salvation that Jesus created for us by shedding His blood on the Cross, will be in vain.

In one of the parables Jesus Christ said, a king invited and accepted poor people, good and bad alike, to his wedding feast. However, one man did not care to wear the wedding clothes. Not only the king rebuked him, but he also threw that man into the dark. Many are satisfied with themselves by going to the church regularly and taking part in the Communion service. They are happy being a member of the Church committee and working for the church members. They think they are serving the Lord and they are satisfied by such blessings.

But the wedding clothes signify receiving the assurance of salvation and living a life that is pleasing to the LORD. Though we may be involved in many good deeds, but when we ignore those clothes, then our deeds do not glorify God. Repentance and salvation are the foundations. Without them, everything else is just baseless and futile.

To Ponder

It is not important how long we have been Christians, how much we have followed Jesus is more important.

JUNE 6

ARE WE PUPPIES?

Romans 8:14-30

If we are children, then we are heirs
Romans 8:17

One person used to pray, "Lord, have mercy on us who are pups that wait for the crumbs that fall from your table". Whenever he prayed, he never forgot to say this statement. He thought that by humbling like that, he could earn God's mercy.

It is good to humble ourselves because we need the compassion of God. At the same time, it is true also that God looks at us as His children and not like pups. We need to realize this and live by this conviction.

The way people understand God varies. Some consider God as master and behave like servants waiting at the entrance. This view is incorrect. The Holy Spirit that indwells tells us that we are His children. (Rom 8:15)

In that case we need to approach Him as children do. We must use the right of a child. God likes us to live as His children. When we accept Him as father, He must have the full freedom to guide and direct us as He likes. We must allow Him this right.

Only when we realize our responsibility as children and lead a life that is pleasing to Him, we get the privilege of approaching Him as father. Then we will experience an intimacy; otherwise, we will feel like strange street dogs. We are children who need love not compassion.

Some people call themselves sinners and dirt. They think that it is an expression of humility. In fact, it is not humility. They are not able to view themselves as children of God or people who lead a holy life.

Those who have experienced real repentance should have the certainty that they are children of God. Such people will not consider themselves as inferior ones.

To Ponder

The closer we come to God,
the more we will receive favours from Him.

JUNE 7

TIME PASS

Psalm 1:1-6

Blessed is the man who on his law meditates day and night….
Psalm 1: 2

A spiritually minded person used to play carom for long hours. When somebody asked him whether it was proper to indulge in the game for such long hours, he argued that it was not a sin. A believer used to spend a lot of time watching cricket and quiz programs on TV. When somebody pointed out that spending so much of time on that did not suit a believer, he argued that watching cricket and quiz, was not wrong.

In this world many things can not be considered as sinful but if people indulge in them without any restraint, it will affect their Christian life. The Bible defines some as sin and some as burdens and suggests that both have to be avoided (Heb: 12-1) Burdens can be good but sometimes they obstruct the progress of our spiritual life. Some games and entertainments can be very harmless and may look innocent. But, the interest we show in them often, distracts our spiritual involvement and sometimes destroys it.

Hence, we need to be cautious and have a control over those things which may disturb our relationship with God. The time that we spend on any activity defines our priorities.

It is said King Nero played on his fiddle while Rome was burning. Playing on the fiddle was not a sin. But ignoring his responsibility to save the burning city, he was playing on the fiddle. That was sinful. There are many great responsibilities for a genuine Christian. Ignoring that and indulging in other things is waste of time. This is a sin.

If time is spent on prayer and Bible reading, this will help us a lot. Life will become meaningful, if time is spent for God. A person who is time conscious when he is at prayer and loses the sense on time when he is enjoying recreations, will be easily led to hell

To Ponder

A time will come when time becomes precious, but time does not wait for us until we realize that.

JUNE 8

USELESS LIFE

Job 2:9-13

Curse God and die…
Job 2:9

A man kept an announcement board in front of his shop which said, "Bring to me anything which you consider useless. I can change it into a useful object". True to these words, whatever the people brought, he made it into something useful, with his wisdom and artistic creativity.

One day a frustrated young man came to him and said "Sir, my parents have declared that I am useless for anything. Can you make me useful?" The man replied "I can make only inanimate objects useful. Only God can change you. You better pray about that".

Yes, only God can take a useless life and make it useful. There were days when I moaned that I was useless. But, the Master artist changed my life completely and has made it useful now.

When Job lost everything, considering his pathetic state his own wife suggested that he should die. The man cried to God, who reclaimed him from the state of complete despair and gave him a new life. When we go to God with brokenness, He moulds us into useful vessels.

Are you bothered by questions like 'What is the use of my life? Why should I live?' Let us open the eyes of faith. Open your eyes wide to see a person standing near you.

He challenges you saying "Give me your life. I can make it a useful one". That is Jesus. Let us commit our life to Him. He will bless us.

I press on toward the goal to win the prize
for which GOD has called me
heavenward in Christ Jesus. ~ Phil. 3:14

To Ponder

When the things we trusted begin to shake,
we realize who we should trust.

JUNE 9

GOOD DEEDS AND GOOD QUALITIES

Luke 16:1-15

Highly esteemed among men…
Luke 16:15

He was a secretary of a Social Organization which was related to giving life to the orphans. He was the one, who established many orphanages, and served as the director and administrator for them. He was competent in approaching many foreign organizations and getting their help for the orphanages. He had won many degrees and accolades from the government and Social Service Centres for his humanitarian services. But, there is an important information at his background. He never does his duties to his old parents. He never has the mentality to even inquire about his brothers' welfare.

More than the different kinds of good deeds that we do, what is more important is whether we have the good quality needed to do them. Any good deed that does not have the backdrop of good qualities, is selfish and has the sole aim of enjoying some hidden gains. Though such good deeds may earn the appreciation of the other people, God views them as filth.

Yes, today, there is not a whiff of love in the personal life of many, who do good works that are based on love. There is no compassion in the hearts of many who are moved by people's problem and run Social Welfare Organizations. Many, who speak excellently about holiness and about burden for souls, are able to establish big ministerial organization. They are able to enjoy fame among the mass of people. But, their personal life is totally ignorant of holiness and has the sole aim for financial gain.

People listen to our talk. But, God sees what is in our heart. People, appreciate us seeing the good deeds that we do. But, God would grieve to see the lack of true qualities that are basically needed to do them. At the same time, when our good deeds win the appreciation of many, God will see the condition of our heart, which has no good qualities and bring down His wrath on us.

To Ponder

Evil will crop up in you on its own; but,
it is you, who have to create goodness in you.

JUNE 10

WHY THIS ANNOYANCE?

Jonah 4: 1 – 11

It is better for me to die than to live
Jonah 4: 8

*P*lease read the chapter 2 of the book of Jonah. He is a man of prayer (1). He says God hears his prayer (2). He acknowledges God even in the midst of troubles (4). He testifies how God delivered him from great danger (6). He describes the people who disregard the grace of God (8). He confirms that salvation belongs to God (9). God has miraculously saves him from death (10).

All these truths describe how Jonah experienced God's spiritual blessings. At the same time, it is a pity that this man with so much of divine relationship and testimonies lived a life of frustration and anger. In spite of all his divine encounters, he continued to lament that it would be better to die than to live.

Is it not an irony that a man who listed all the blessings given by the Lord also lived an annoying, desperate and a wretched life? Oh, what a paradox! Oh, what a shocking news! What is the reason for this? A man with so much of spiritual experiences should have really lived with great peace and happiness.

But Jonah's life was a miserable one. We may have so much to say about the blessings we have received from God. us. We may appear to be very religious by reading the Bible daily, praying and doing His ministry. But these deeds alone will not give us the peace, happiness and the contentment we need. The most important aspect of the spiritual life is to live with the mind and soul of the Lord.

Though Jonah had so many spiritual experiences, he was not willing to walk along with the will and wish of the Lord. The Lord God desired forgiveness, love and patience but Jonah was not willing to accept these noble qualities. Though Jonah lived within the limits of the presence of God, yet was terribly annoyed and was very far away from divine peace and happiness.

To Ponder

What God Almighty does with you and your life is more important than His presence abiding in you.

JUNE 11

MATURE SPIRITUALITY

Matthew 22:35-40

Love your neighbor as yourself...
Matthew 22:39

I have noticed that many people shun various worldly things after listening to strict and regard sermons. They crucify themselves on the cross, with the desire to glorify Christ. Their actions prove that they opt for a harsh and ascetic way of life for the sake of spirituality, yet, when they see people who do not follow their way, they just shun and avoid them. They refuse to show love to them.

But, natural spirituality is not just inflicting pain on body and controlling oneself. Many people consider that denying oneself certain comforts and working hard for God is the highest spirituality. But, real spiritual maturity is seen in one's capacity to love others. The two important commandments of Jesus highlight only love.

The older brother in the parable of the Prodigal son toiled very hard for the father. But, all his struggles and hard labor pushed him towards two defects 1. He was grieved that his father had not given him the reward he deserved for his hard work. 2. His loveless hard hearted nature did not permit him to accept his brother who retuned home after leading a wayward life.

The steps to spiritual maturity are close walk with God to know His will and wishes and growing in love. Only these experiences will direct us to the mature emotional state when we can accept and tolerate others and love all. He who lives close to God, will be moulded to such an extent that it will be easy for him to humble himself and let go his wishes for the sake of others.

Love is ignoring certain factors that obstruct fellowship with others. Showing love to people ignoring their loveless attitude is the sign of natural spirituality. Other than these we may punish ourselves and work very hard for God . This will not produce within us the maturity to accept others. All the pious efforts which fail to promote love within us are in vain. They are just useless.

To Ponder

The heart of the man who is not linked with good attitudes, is far removed from God.

JUNE 12

SURPRISE

Mark 6:1-6

Where did this Man get these things?
Mark 6:2

Auring a singing competition, when everyone came forward to sing, people welcomed them with much applause. However, when it was the turn of an ordinary looking girl, there was not much applause since everyone thought that she looked quite ordinary and had come there out of too much enthusiasm. But, after hearing her singing, there was a standing ovation and the audience wondered how such a simple girl could have such a sweet voice.

Some people can earn others' good opinion and respect by their beautiful and dignified appearance. Some people can earn good opinion from others only after exhibiting their certain good things which could not be denied or ignored.

Jesus Christ did not receive others' good will and respect by His mere appearance. But, when seeing His power, glorious words and excellent way of life it was astonishing to many and the society began to view Him as someone great. This astonishment made many people wonder, "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is this not the Son of Mary?'

There is no chance that the children of the Lord could be thought to be saints, the moment they are seen. It cannot be said that the appearance of those who live in fellowship with God would be exciting. We should be known not by appearance but by our fruits. The good characteristics, good qualities and good deeds revealed through us should be astonishing to others.

Our way of conduct, talk and behavior in certain situations should shock others. It should make them wonder, "How come, they have so many good things?". We should make others see that the Lord has chosen the base things of the world and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. Yes, good appearance may deceive many; but good actions would astonish everyone.

To Ponder

If there is honesty in the heart,
you would be honoured openly by God.

JUNE 13

BE STILL

Exodus 14:1-18

See the salvation of the Lord
Exodus 14:13

There are times when we fail to find solutions for the problems in life, by doing something or the other. There are times when we think of a way to come out of problems but find it closed. There are times when we cannot do anything useful, except to be still. But, such times are not bad times for all those who believe in the Lord. In a way, this is a good time for them. This is a time which says, "There is nothing more you could do about this. Be still and watch what the Lord does

When we feel that a particular chapter is closed unless God does something, is indeed an anxious moment. But, what can we do? We may say like Elijah, ""It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life…" (1 King 19:4). But the Elijah's incident proves that such pleas are not pleasing to the Lord.

But, we can do something else. We can remind ourselves of the words of God which said, "Be still in the times where you cannot do anything and know me to be the Lord". Just as Moses said, "Be still and see the salvation of the Lord', we too can say within us, with faith. In the times, when our strength cannot do anything much, we can find a great deliverance by placing everything at the feet of the Lord and to be still.

Once a believer said to his pastor, "Pastor, there is no way before me". The Pastor said, "In that case, wait patiently, till a new way which you have never seen, appears before you". Yes, for those who truly seek God, God has to show a way, in the time when every way seems to be closed.

Whose eyes first saw the way in the Red Sea, or the way to cross the river Jordan and the way to cross Jericho? Only when there seemed to be no other way, God showed them. Yes, a way is surely there in the sight of God. Waiting till it is revealed is the glorious thing to do.

To Ponder

Series of failures plunge man into sorrow, series of success plunge him into pride.

JUNE 14

HARD TO UNDERSTAND

ICorinthians 13:1-13

It always trusts, always hopes....
I Corinthians 13:7

When God told Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away, he would not have understood why God wanted him to send the loved ones away. He would have wondered why God gave him the suggestion. But, he obeyed God. He had the spiritual attitude that whatever God asked him to do, would be for his good. So, he obeyed with faith.

We may not be able to understand certain things that God allows in our life. We may be baffled by some critical situations we face. We cannot explain those things with our limited worldly knowledge. It is so because, they occur according to God's wisdom and His plans. It is impossible to understand God's thoughts with our mental capacity.

But, surely in God's view, such things can be justified. Though we may not be able to understand and accept them in the beginning, we believe that they are for our good. This is the sign which will prove that we have Godly attitude.

We suffer very much because we are not able to understand some of the situations that face us. Our conflict increases when we are not able to find reasons as to why such problem occur .We begin to wonder why they happen. If we believe in God and learn to accept them with the attitude that we can not understand God's thoughts fully , our mind will become free. The heavy burden will be removed.

Joseph was righteous. Yet, when the brothers rose against him God allowed that. When he was unjustly punished by Potiphar, God did not stop that. Only later it could be realized that God permitted them so that God's plan would be executed in his life at the right time.

What we cannot understand now, we will understand later. So it is very essential that we act and live with the faith that what God wants us to do will be good and reasonable.

To Ponder

The easiest way to forget the pains of the past is to keep focusing on what has to be done.

JUNE 15

WE NEED TO LISTEN ALSO

II Timothy 3:1-17

If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law,
Proverbs. 28:9

Recently I had to travel in a bus for two hours. A commuter who was seated opposite me, was talking about many things with his friend. The other one went on listening and nodding his head. He never spoke a single word.

he prayer life of some people is also like this. They keep on talking to God and never give Him an opportunity to speak to then. They go on expressing their needs and wishes to God and never consider that God also would like to express His expectations and wishes.

True prayer consists not only in talking to God but also in listening to Him. Primarily God shares His feelings and thoughts with us through His word and messages. Hence, the same importance we give to prayer, we must give to reading the Bible and meditating on that.

Only then, we will come to know what God wants to reveal to us. Only then, He can inform us His thoughts and advice and show us how to receive what we ask for. So, we need to be concerned about listening to God and not be so engrossed in our prayers alone. If we want our prayers to be heard, we need to listen to what He says.

Nowadays, people who seek the prayers of preachers, do not go to them to receive good messages. They go only to be prayed for. So they ignore those who share good and effective messages and flock around those who pray for them.

Those who believe that they will be benefited by prayers do not realize that they can be blessed by listening to words of truth. Peoples' expectations from God are numerous but they do not possess knowledge of God. They don't want to know Him so they lack blessings.

If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law,

even his prayers are detestable. (Proverb - 28:9)

To Ponder

If the trials trouble you, learn to relax, leaning on the Word of God.

JUNE 16

LET US IMPROVE

Galatians 2:11-21

He was clearly in the wrong…
Galatians 2: 11

A mechanical engineer took up a job in a car manufacturing company. As he was not very efficient, some of the staff made fun of him.

He felt humiliated very much yet he bore all the insults patiently.

A friend of his who was watching this asked him, "Why don't you complain to your boss about the way these people tease you?" He replied,

"They tease me because I am not efficient. I realize that I commit mistakes and therefore I must improve. What is the use of complaining?"

Sometimes, people treat us very badly. They do not trust us and keep on finding fault. They have wrong opinions about us and insult us.

At such moments, our natural response is to oppose them and prevent them from making such nasty comments.

But, mostly the reason for all these insults lies within us. Instead of being grieved, we need to correct ourselves. We need to take the necessary steps to improve our efficiency.

We must try to prove our trustworthiness, instead of complaining that no one trusts us.

We need to find out why others do not trust us. If we correct ourselves, others may not get an opportunity to blame us.

If we maintain a good relationship with God as Jesus did, others' criticism will not upset us.

To Ponder

We need to respect truth in our heart,
otherwise our life becomes a refuge for lies.

JUNE 17

FULL SURRENDER

Genesis 22:1-13

Abraham built an altar there...
Genesis 22:9

When God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son, he did not hesitate. How did he reach this state of readiness to sacrifice his precious son? It not only reveals Abraham's devotion and depth of piety but also makes us understand how God has trained and moulded him in the past so that he would respond in such a wonderful way.

God led him through a long spiritual journey, to equip him to meet the situation like the one he encountered on the mountain. His response and obedience reveals the extent of his intimacy with God. He did not flinch because he knew the goodness of the provider. He was ready to do the hard task because through his experiences in the past, he knew that whatever He did, it would be for his good.

God takes us through diverse situations so that we will know and understand Him in a better way. He allows us to realize that He is good. Our experiences with Him mould us and prepare us to make any great sacrifice for God.

God takes us towards deeper commitments based on the strength of our relationship with Him. Before He moves us towards great commitments, He moulds us suitably. Hence, we need to pray that God prepares us to make similar commitments. When we are true to God in our smaller commitments, He will lead us to greater tasks.

Some people in their excited moments decide to undertake great works for God, but give-up and withdraw as they are unable to continue in their determination. This failure is because they venture into great commitment before they actually seek and establish a good and lasting fellowship with God. If we wish like Abraham to lose something for God, we need to experience a long time spiritual walk like Abraham had.

To Ponder

A Christian without readiness to sacrifice, and a soldier without bravery, can't achieve anything.

JUNE 18

ABILITY AND INTEGRITY

Luke 16:1-16

He (the dishonest manager) acted shrewdly…
Luke 16:8

The owner of a big shop was looking for a manager for his shop. One of his friends recommended a man who he said, was efficient and experienced. But, the proprietor of the shop hesitated to appoint him.

The manager who worked for him earlier was also very talented and efficient but he used his skill to defraud the owner .So the owner became skeptical of efficient people.

Of course, skill and experience are much needed but honesty and dependability are greater virtues than mere efficiency.

Joseph was not only efficient, he was dependable too. That's why Potiphar trusted him with everything and gave him full responsibility.

Jesus spoke about a steward in his parable. He was efficient but not honest. So he was dismissed.

If an efficient one lacks honesty and integrity, it is like the presence of one drop of poison in a cup of milk. Many Church leaders, in the present time, exhibit great enthusiasm and efficiency.

They think wisely and act excellently. But, they tragically lack honesty, integrity, humility, love and faith. Their heart does not possess the goodness which God expects to see in those whom He wants to use. The depraved condition of their heart brings dishonor to God and disgrace to themselves.

It is true that God wants us to be efficient and skilful. But, along with that he wants us to have honesty, integrity and honourable objectives. God can use weak and inefficient people .He can impart skill to people who lack skill. But, He rejects those who lack integrity and honesty.

To Ponder

How close we live to Christ is more important, than the number of converts we proudly list.

JUNE 19

LOVE FOR HUMANITY

I Corinthians. 13:1-13

If I have not love, I am nothing...
I Corinthians 13:2

Mr. Thayala Seelan was known for his excellent service for the welfare of the community. He established many social welfare programmes to uplift the weaker section of humanity. He was given numerous awards in recognition of his services rendered with humanitarian consideration. But, what did the people who knew him very closely and those who work for him say about him? They said that he did not have any regard for others and never spoke kind words.

We can be involved with social service even without love, compassion and humility. This we can do with desire and enthusiasm but since it springs from self-centred motives, it will not be pleasing to God. Unless we have sympathy and compassion what we do will be meaningless. I know a person, who was rendering a lot of service for the poor. Once he humiliated his driver before others because of a negligible mistake. His inconsiderate manner and rude treatment saddened me. Then I understood how easy it was for a person without innate love for others, to gain reputation as a great philanthropist and be acclaimed as a lover of humanity.

We may be ready and enthusiastic to support a particular organization or a particular group of people but showing concern for one individual is more important than overt involvement in service, .Our attitude is revealed in the way we accept and treat an individual.

God will not be pleased with any good act of ours, if it is not based on love. First and foremost, one should be connected with God and nurture love, compassion and sacrifice within the heart. Induced by such qualities that operate from within, one must embark on service for humanity. Others must see our love not only in our actions but also in our attitude and approach.

To Ponder

Understand first why you do some thing because, why you do is more important than what you do.

JUNE 20

WRONG OPINION

Acts.28: 1-9

This man must be a murderer.
Acts 28:4

We may be tempted to brand Moses as an irritable man since he hit the rock impatiently instead of speaking to that. But, actually he was a person commended by God for his patience and humility. When Abraham went to Egypt he gave wrong information about himself, in order to safeguard his life. It looks as if he was a man who did not trust the Lord. But, his faith was much appreciated by God Himself.

Sometimes, based on one single act, we label a person and make a general evaluation of his character. When we see a person doing something good, we call him good and when somebody does something bad we immediately conclude that he is bad. This sort of verdict that is based on one single act can be erroneous. When a viper clasped Paul's hand, the people thought that he was a wicked criminal but when he shook it off and was not harmed, they called him 'god'. One isolated action of a person cannot adequately determine a person's total character.

In Tamil there is a proverb that says that one grain of rice can indicate whether the full pot of rice is cooked. But, one act of a person is not enough for a correct evaluation. A wicked one cannot become good by a single good-work. A good person cannot be branded roughly for a single slip. Opinion of a person's character must be based on long-term observation.

We may lose blessings if we hastily pass judgment regarding a person's character because of our loveless and critical attitude. The Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus times were keen on finding fault with Jesus. So, when he healed a person on the Sabbath day, they questioned Him how He could break the Law. Because of their loveless cynical attitude they were waiting for an opportunity to frame charges against Jesus. When our motive is evil, even for an isolated act of fall, we make judgment on others.

To Ponder

A fool reacts violently after he finishes reading a page, but the wise waits till he completes the next page.

JUNE 21

SITUATIONAL PIETY

Hosea 6:1-11.

Your love is like the morning mist…
Hosea 6:4

I know a person who would go about without taking bath even for 4 or 5 days. He was seen in dirty clothes because he never bothered to change his dress. But, whenever he decided to take bath, he used to spend at least 2 hours in the bathroom.

Some of the devout people are like this. When they attend meetings, they are convicted of their sins and are grieved. They plead to God begging for forgiveness. They humble themselves and cry for mercy. At such moments, they become conscious of their sinful nature and shed tears of repentance.

But, once they come out of such a situation, they cease to think of their sins. They never bother about it, though their acts and thoughts will be sinful. That looks very normal to them. The stench of sin, does not trouble them.

They are like some diseased people who remain ignorant of the disease that afflicts their body. They will continue in their blissful ignorance, until some doctor declares rudely that he cannot do anything for them.

Similarly, when some preacher's frank messages seem to break their hard hearts, some people begin to realize their sins. They seek forgiveness immediately but very soon their awareness vanishes.

The Pharisees of the ancient days too were like this. They used to tear the garments, roll in ash and shed tears. But, once they quit this situation, they became hardened. Their numbness made them insensitive to their sins.

We need to examine ourselves in the light of the word of God and correct ourselves. Our sensitiveness to sin and desire to be holy need to be constantly kept alive, and must not be influenced by situations.

To Ponder

**He who does not hate falsehood,
is incapable of loving truth.**

JUNE 22

FOUND FAULTLESS

Daniel 6:1-28

They could find no corruption in him ...
Daniel 6:4

Once, some income tax officials raided the house and the office of a business man. They ransacked the place and conducted an elaborate search. He wondered sorrowfully why such a thing should happen in spite of his total honesty in tax matters. But, the raid was a blessing in disguise.

The officers who came on the raid were surprised to see that the way he had maintained the accounts was above board and excellent. They were convinced that he would not do anything dishonest. So in future, even if people gave false complaints, they would not heed.

Daniel saw a quick growth in his status in the Babylonian palace. Those, who were envious of his incredible progress wished to block his advancement by bringing false charges against him. They went about trying very hard to find some defect in him.

However hard they tried, they could not find even a single defect. Their efforts to accuse him, brought to light the impeccable quality of Daniel. The more they tried to find a mistake in Daniel, the more they witnessed his innocence and integrity.

Though we may be innocent, there will be some envious people who want to prove that we are wicked. They will be very alert to discover defects in us. But, if we remain innocent consistently, their efforts will only reveal our goodness.

God's children will be like an open book. We need to believe firmly that no one can blame us, if we remain straight forward and honest.

Instead of wasting our energies on such efforts, it is wise to continue in our goodness until finally truth is understood and openly acknowledged.

To Ponder

The best way to expose falsehood,
is to continue in our integrity.

JUNE 23

MIRACLE AND PEACEFUL REST

I Corinthians 10:1-13

Nevertheless God was not pleased with most of them...
I Corinthians 10:5

Receiving miracles from God is one thing. But, getting the love of God is a different matter. Receiving God's blessings in life is one thing. Enjoying the peace of God in life is different. Those Hebrew people who travelled to Canaan experienced various miracles in their life. Yet they failed to get God's love. The people didn't care to lead a life pleasing, to God though they received miracles. That's why they didn't enjoy the love of God.

Though God did many good things to them through miracles, He could not give the blessing of peaceful rest. God may have done many miracles in our life, yet we should possess the greatest blessing of peaceful rest. We need to have peace. Even the wicked Ahab had seen God's miracles. Yet, he didn't have the love of God and didn't possess Gods' peace. It was so because he didn't care to please God.

Some miracles may happen to us due to God's compassion. God might give us opportunities to commit ourselves to leading a life pleasing to Him by performing some miracles for us. Every good thing that God permits in our life, is to induce us to lead a life conforming to His will. We might thank Him for His miracles openly and we might even share such testimonies. Yet, if we are not prepared to live in a way that pleases Him, we can not enjoy the peace that comes from Him.

It is true that there are many people like those Hebrews who didn't enjoy peaceful rest though they witnessed great many miracles. Such people fail to lead a witnessing life though they speak about the miracles. Therefore they fail to inherit the peace, joy and contentment. They may enjoy miracles like the Hebrews did, but only those who lead a life pleasing to God, with a keen desire to get His love, can enjoy the divine peace and rest.

To Ponder

First strive to receive what God wants to give you.
Then God will wish to give you what you like to have.

JUNE 24

WHO IS FOR WHOM?

Acts 9: 1 – 16

Lord, what do You want me to do?
Acts 9: 6

A factory-owner appoints a man as an employee on monthly salary. Now this man says, "This factory has been started to give me a job and this factory-owner is here only to give me wages.Overall, this factory and its owners are here only to enable me and my family to get good income and to lead a good life. Is this a correct statement? It is not correct. This employee is appointed to help his boss in that factory. Yes! This factory is for its owner and not for its employee. The employee is there to assist his master and not to boss over him.

The people who have spiritual faith should know the basic rules of spirituality. It is not right to think that God is there to bless us and our lives only. We did not seek Him but He came seeking us. He is not there for our sake but we are here for His sake. Fulfilling our plans is not God's duty but it is our duty to fulfill His plans.Yes! We are in this God-created earth only to fulfill His will and goals.

So we should not go on asking selfish questions like what will God do for me? Or what will He give me? Or how should I use Him? Or how will I fulfill my goals through His power?The first thing we should do is to understand that we are here for His sake. We should always think about what he expects from us and what should we do to achieve it. It is His will in our lives that matters most.

We are unable to fulfill His will in our lives because, we always concentrate on using Him to fulfill our purposes. That is why, we are unable to receive all the blessings given by Him. We must stop thinking that God is there only to bless us and heal us. We must stop feeling that God's only work is to hear our prayers. We are in this God-created earth only to do His work and will. Our duty is to obey and follow Him. We are here to be used by Him and not vice versa. When we have this attitude, we can see His perfect will being fulfilled in our lives.

To Ponder

The heart that does not accede to the voice of God can never ever know His will.

JUNE 25

THESE LIONS WILL NOT BITE

Daniel 6:13-28

They have not hurt..
Daniel 6:22

*D*aniel who was a devoted child of God was thrown into the lions' den but was not harmed by them. God shut the mouth of the lions. Even in our life, Satan approaches us like a roaring lion. Our adversaries may surround us and various anxieties and sorrows may face us like lions. If we are true children of God we can remain undaunted in the midst of dreadful situations. They may look huge and threatening, yet they can not hurt us. The God, who shut the mouths of the lions, has already done what is needed to render them incapable of hurting us.

In my life too, I have seen such menacing lions and have gone through anxious and fearful situations. But, on so many occasions, I thanked God as I found that their mouths were shut by Him. God did not stop Daniel's entry into the den but gave him a safe landing. He had to land there because it was God's plan that the whole nation should know that no lions could harm a man who was intimate with God.

When ominous lions confront us, we need to stay calm focusing on God and remain connected to Him. Then we will experience the sustaining grace of God in alarming situations. Instead, if we shift our focus from God to the appalling lions, we will be upset. At such moments, though the lions can not harm us we become weak and disoriented because of our fright.

While Peter tried to walk on the sea, the roaring waves and mighty winds could not disturb his progress as long as he remained focused on Jesus. But, when he shifted his gaze from Jesus and saw the swirling waters and violent winds, his heart was filled with fear. The devil directs our attention to our anxieties. Driven by him, we fail to look up to God and seek His help in finding solutions. Instead of seeking God's grace we allow ourselves to be disturbed by our worries.

To Ponder

If we attribute all our failures to others, many more will continue to make us fail.

JUNE 26

MODEL IS ESSENTIAL

I Corinthians11:1-16

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ…
I Corinthians 11.1

A man who was considered to be very pious used to tell a young man he met often, the benefits of following Christ. He explained the way of salvation and highlighted the privilege of leading an honourable life as the follower of Christ. He went on encouraging the young man to accept Christ as His Lord and saviour. One day he asked a very direct question to the young man about his delay in responding. He said, "I have spoken to you about Christ many times. When are you going to accept Jesus Christ as your saviour? "

The young man said, "I will do that most willingly when I come across a person who leads the honourable life which Christ can give and about which you keep saying." This reply made the senior man think deeply about his condition. He wondered whether the young man's delay was due to his failure to lead the kind of life which he was recommending.

It is not enough if we just keep on talking about the possibility of leading an excellent life with Christ. It must be proclaimed through the way one lives. Speaking about love, humility, joy and patience does not help a person to covet such a life. It is not enough if we speak about salvation. People must know about the excellence of a saved life through the life we lead. We need to live in such a way that others can understand the benefits of leading such a wonderful life. When we speak about holiness, others must see holiness in our lives.

Even in a saree shop, the salesman drapes the saree on a doll, just to help us see the beauty of the saree. The saree must be displayed so that others want to own it. People talk about the excellence of Christ and the desirability of receiving Him in their life but fail to show Christ in their life.

To Ponder

Christianity is not following the ideas of Christ.
it is holding the hands of Jesus and walking.

JUNE 27

IGNORANCE

Hosea 4:1-19

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.
Hosea 4:6

*R*ecently a special Prayer Meeting was held in Chennai for the students who were appearing for their exams. Thousands of students had been brought there by parents and the teachers of schools/ colleges. Many students had come from far off states and hence much time, money and efforts were spent for this. The reason why they attended, the prayer meeting conducted by a reputed servant of God was the belief, that the students would score high marks.

Is there any proof in the Bible that God would grant a special favour on them for travelling such a long distance to attend the prayer meeting? Two reasons are there: One is ignorance. People wish to get some benefit or the other by going somewhere. But they don't see whether the Bible approves of such a belief. This is because they do not have any interest in the truth. Their selfishness makes them seek for benefit somehow. So they easily fall a prey to the snares of men laid down with cunning designs and selfish gain.

Secondly, today's Christians easily believe lies since they do not have a clear knowledge of the truth. They don't have the spiritual knowledge or discernment to analyze what is said in the light of the Bible. However much they learn, they are ignorant and easily get caught in the snare of those who entice them with lies. Jesus is the One who does good things for us. Jesus is the One who does miracles for us. We need not go anywhere to get His benefits. He is close to us. If it is true that we believe Him, why don't we ask for that benefit through prayer?

If we have that faith, why can't we pray for our own children? Why should we run here and there? We have not known God and His power personally. We know only about the servant of God and the advertisements concerning his power. Hence, without seeking the Lord, we go far away, trusting a servant of God.

To Ponder

When God's laws are not respected,
it is easy to fall into satan's enticing snares.

JUNE 28

PLEASE THINK

Ephesains 5:1-21

Fruit of the light consist in all goodness
Ephesians 5:9

You go to church every week. But, please check if God likes your worship. You sing beautifully and worship God with a loud voice. You seem to be praising God with all fervor and zeal. You are in ecstasy because you think that the Holy Spirit is in the midst of your worship. It is all good of course but please come to your sense.

Give time to think in the midst of your ecstasy. First take some time to think whether these things are enough to glorify God? Will such worship programmes please God? Does God expect only these things in your life? We may confidently claim that we praise God. That is not the real praise which God will accept. We may repeat the word 'glory' several times but that alone will not bring glory to God.

God can not be won over by mere words. He does not become emotional, listening to your praise and glory. He does not accept the words of your month on their face value. These statements are made not to find fault with the way you worship God. They are made out of real concern for you. You must not continue in these empty forms of worship and lose the blessings to which you are entitled. Real worship ushers in blessings.

God is not glorified not by words of your mouth but by the characteristics and attitudes you develop in life. God delights not in your eloquent and vociferous worship but in the way you lead your life. Please do not look at the time you spend in worship. Look at the essence of your life. The life that God likes is the best worship to be offered to him. He is delighted with the kind of life that pleases him. Can people find the fruit of the spirit in your life? Can they see love, humility, patience, and compassion? If the answer is doubtful, stop your worship and spend time in conducting a self-examination. Pray that your life should become a real worship that will glorify.

To Ponder

It is not difficult for man to realize the truth.
It is hard to digest and accept it.

JUNE 29

KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERIENCE?

Matthew 3:1-17

We have Abraham as our father.
Matthew 3:9

A person, who was benefitted much by reading my books, gave a copy of my book to another person in Puducherry and suggested him to read it saying it was good. Immediately the other man had said, "Oh! Are you introducing Samson Paul's books to me? I know him for 25 years. I guess you know him only now. Ever since he started his ministry, I've known him…" So, this person had asked him about his opinion about my books for which that man had said, "Oh! Do you mean the books by that Puducherry man? I've never read his books…"

This is the state of most of the Christians. If we go and say something about Jesus to them they'd react in such a way to imply, 'Why are you telling me about Jesus? I know about Him…' This is because they have been traditional Christians. They are involved with so many Christian pious deeds.; they have built churches; they have built Bell Tower; they have sent missionaries. To speak about Jesus to them is ridiculous!

"Are you saved? Do you have the experience of being born again? Do you know about the leading of the Holy Spirit? Do you succeed in your holy life? Do you reflect the virtues of Jesus? Are you full of honesty, faithfulness, love and humility?' – When these questions are posed, there is no answer; no such experiences.

'Where was Bishop Azariah born? Bishop Caldwell did ministry in our town; our church was built by Ringel Tobb; Ragland was a friend of my grandfather'. – Many boast of their traditions thus. But, when we ask them, "Have you accepted the Jesus whom those people experienced in their lives and testified?', they would not understand its meaning. Not the knowledge about Jesus, not about Christianity, not about theology, not about church history but about knowing Jesus as the One who lives in us, is more important.

To Ponder

Not how much you do for God,
but do you do what He expects is more important.

JUNE 30

FOR WHOM ARE YOU DOING?

Psalm 81:1–16

If you will listen to Me
Psalm 81:8

Small children obey. They follow some rules. They do some work. They study the school lessons. As instructed by parents, they bathe before eating their meals. All these things are good but they do it only for the sake of their parents. They do these things either to please their parents or to escape from their anger. Yet, all these things are meant only for their good. They are the ones who get the ultimate benefits. And in course of time, as they grow up, they continue to do these for their own good only and not for the sake of their parents

We should have good thoughts. We should live with good attitudes. We should do good deeds. We should learn to leave the evil ways and to follow the good ways. But, if we think that we are doing all these things for the sake of God and for the sake of Jesus, it shows only our religious and devotional thoughts. But, we should believe that all these things are needed for our spiritual growth and they do only good things for us. We should not just presume that we are doing something good for God and ignore their real benefits in our life.

You abstained from wrath. You walked patiently. You gave up enmity. You did not do wrong things but only good things. All these things are good in the sight of the Lord. Yet, all these things do good things only to you. They help you to live a contented life. They give you joy and peace.They help you to avoid the guilty conscience. They help you to get good human relationship and fellowship. You get a unique strength to go nearer and nearer to God. That is why God called you to live a good life.

Do not think that these are burdens that you have to carry on for the sake of God. They are your duties for the good of your life only. When you do these with the grace of God, they become your great blessings.

To Ponder

If you hesitate to walk in godly ways,
you will fall into the traps of the devil.

JULY 1

CONVICTION OF SIN

I John 1:1-10

If we walk in the light, as He is in the light
I John 1:7

A friend of mine used to suffer from occasional stomach pain. His friends suggested that he should immediately consult a doctor as the pain could be a symptom of serious illness. But, he ignored the suggestion and took pain killers off and on, whenever he had the pain. Once, the pain became so intense he went to the doctor immediately. The scan revealed a large tumor in his stomach. On seeing that, he got ready for further treatment.

He knew about the problem much earlier but decided to go for treatment only after the scan revealed the severity of the situation. Similarly, we are aware of our sinful condition. We know very well our faults and depraved mind-set. Yet, we do not feel any urgency to correct ourselves. We continue to live with our unchanged sinful attitudes without any desire for a better way of life. But, we can never be complacent if we look at the enormity and ugliness of our sins in the light of Jesus.

There was no chance for Isaiah to be ignorant of the fact that he was a man of unclean lips. But, he began to hate his condition only when the glory of God exposed his state of absolute depravity. As a result, God took away his sin and cleansed him. If we accept Jesus Christ as our saviour, our sinful nature will be brought to light in His radiant presence. Once we become conscious of our sinful state, we hate it and ask God to cleanse us. Only then, the sins will be wiped clean.

When Jesus, the light of the world, shines on a sinner, he or she will identify the sinful state. That light, like a scan report, will disclose the short comings and blemishes in our nature. This discovery of our real state of misery will expedite the process of repentance and consequent salvation. When we are connected to Jesus who is the light, truth cannot be hidden.

To Ponder

He who knows God, knows himself, he alone can tell others about God.

JULY 2

EXERCISES ARE ESSENTIAL

Philippians 2:1-16

Continue to work out your salvation
Philippians 2:12

I know a very affluent man who used to be munching something all the time. He was very obese and could not do anything continuously for ten minutes. He sought the help of others for every thing that had to be done. The exorbitant amount of food that he ate made him fat but rendered him unfit for any job. It was because he did not exercise in proportion to the amount he ate.

This is exactly the condition of many people's spiritual life. They show great enthusiasm in spiritual matters. They gather extraordinary Bible knowledge by listening to numerous messages and reading a lot of books. In spite of all these, they lack pleasing characteristics and desirable attitudes in their life.We read spiritual books, listen to messages and participate in devotional meetings so that there can be spiritual growth and depth within us. If we are not focused on this development within us, there is no use in hearing messages and reading books. Bible knowledge is not just to be stored in the brain. It must act in the heart and generate good attitudes.

Excessive Bible knowledge is not of any use unless it is used properly in one's life. What we know must be expressed in life through our nature and action. Listening and learning are unprofitable until we practice hard to express through our life, what we have gathered from books and messages. We must be ready to live as God desires and execute His will in our lives. Only then our spiritual life will be healthy and strong.

Some may have abundant Bible knowledge but may lack the salvation that will usher in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That's why the Bible knowledge can not initiate changes within them. A person must have the assurance of being a child of God after he is born again through the Hoy Spirit. Only then he will have the desire to implement what he has heard and read.

To Ponder

The number of books we read does not count;
are our lives, a good book, to be read by many?

JULY 3

BURDEN AND SPEED

Hebrews12:1-17

Let us throw off everything that hinders....
Hebrews 12:1

If our outlook is rooted in the Godly attitude and if our visions are spiritual, there will be no tension and worldly sorrows in our life. When we focus on God's exalted plan and run our race, God will be enough for all our needs. If we have this faith, our spiritual life will never encounter defeat and discouragement. A sick man can not walk very fast. Similarly a person carrying a heavy burden can not walk fast. Sin like a disease, makes a person weak. A person affected by this disease can not progress fast in his spiritual life. A person who can not separate himself from a sinful life can not reach the goal of a holy life.

We may not be sick yet if we burden ourselves with the worldly things, we can not reach our goal. Too much of involvement in worldly matters concerning money, wealth and status and the consequent worries can burden us. If these worldly goals take predominance over heavenly goals, they will reduce our speed. That's why the Bible says that while we run the heavenly race, we need to avoid not only sins but also burdens.

There are so many who do not progress in their spiritual journey, though they have involved themselves in heavenly pursuits. This is so because their heart becomes cluttered with expectations of a prosperous life and various other desires. All these worldly ambitions and aspirations become a heavily burden that impedes their zest and zeal in their spiritual life. Though some of these things are not sinful, they hinder our progress. Unless we learn to throw these off, our progress will be very slow.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do : Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Phil - 3:13, 14)

To Ponder

Today's imagination about the sorrows of tomorrow, will be more grievous than the actual sorrows.

JULY 4

RITUALS WITHOUT MEANING

Amos 5:18-27

I hate, I despise your religious feasts
Amos 5:21

Many members in the congregation were highly educated in a church. There were many doctors, engineers, officials and college lecturers. Once, their Christmas celebration lasted for one week. They celebrated with great pomp and show. The pastor of the church knew very well that they all were leading a life which was not pleasing to God. He was not happy about the celebration, which did not have the essence of Christmas. He was highly dissatisfied by the mere ritual and said that they were doing something foolish when they celebrated the birth of Christ.

The members became wild with anger. They asked how he could call them foolish. He replied, "You may be highly educated yet you are foolish. You have not received the salvation which you should have received from Christ. You do not live according to His teachings and are not walking in His way. You have not received any benefit from Him. In that case, is it not foolish on your part to celebrate His birthday?" From that day onwards, they started persecuting that pastor.

Jesus called the Pharisees as fools. He wept when He saw the Jews celebrating Passover in Jerusalem. Paul called the congregation of the church of Galatia as 'foolish Galatians'. (Gal.3:1) Any spiritual activity undertaken without knowing its meaning and without understanding the will of God is a foolish venture.

Jesus came into this world to deliver us from the bondage of sin and to make us all the children of God so that we will inherit and enjoy God's blessings as His children.

Giving importance only to external things like dresses, feasting and other meaningless activities, do not make us think of the purpose of Christ's birth. Then the celebration itself turns out to be a foolish act.

To Ponder

Man is not cheated by others as much as he cheats himself.

JULY 5

ENDURING EXPERIENCE

Acts 7:51-60

He fell on his knees..
Acts 7:60

Jesus Christ hung on the cross pierced and bruised on all sides. Even in that excruciating agony, He breathed his last, with a prayer on His mouth. Stephen, who was stoned, was close to death. But he died saying a prayer. Praying all the time is an evidence which proves that a person is a child of God.

It is something which stays with him forever. It is an experience that lingers until he/she dies and is a proof for their identity. It continues in the midst of trials and tribulations. Prayer is an evidence that shows that one is born of God and remains a spiritual child of God.

Daniel faced a crucial question, "are you going to face death amidst the hungry lions or are you ready to give up prayer?" Daniel chose the lion's den. He was prepared to face death in the den but rejected the suggestion of forsaking prayer. Even the threat of death did not make him swerve from his prayerful devotion to God.

It was because of the indwelling Holy Sprit. He belonged to God. It is true that our prayer life staggers and stumble when we face disappointments and defeats. But, it is also true that then the praying instinct tapers down. If we overcome that with faith, we will experience a fresh flow of spiritual energy which will revitalize and renew us.

Psalms are just pouring of heart in the time of David's acute painful situations. They are just painful cry of his agonized heart. They can be aptly called prayers of David. He could withstand and face all trials with equanimity because he had the habit of pouring all his woes and worries at the feet of his shepherd, the Almighty God. Consequently, he experienced God's peace and comfort in the midst of all his troublesome situations.

To Ponder

Losing the love of God is a permanent loss,
losing the love of others for God's sake is a temporary loss.

JULY 6

WHO IS GOD?

Isaiah 29:13-24

These people honour me with their lips…
Isaiah 29:13

A business man adopted many crooked and devious shortcuts to prosper in his business. He did not follow the path of God. His business was his god. He believed in Jesus and attended church. He worshipped Jesus. But his god was his business. It doesn't matter whom we trust in and whom we praise with our mouth, what gains our priority has to be considered .That which is of great importance to us is our god. The importance we give to certain things indicates our priority in life. That, which gets our greatest attention, becomes our god.

Our regular attendance in church, the songs that we sing, our confession of faith and involvement in ministry are not as important as that which we consider as the important aspect in life. What we consider as essential absorbs our attention and we seem to spend our time and energy for that.

We may worship God but do not walk in His way. We attach great importance to money, status and prosperity and follow ungodly ways to attain them. Then it is obvious that money, status and prosperity are our god.

We say that we believe in Christ and extol His ways. We follow the Bible that contains His percepts but in our practical everyday life we do not follow them. Our desire for wealth, riches and popularity pressurizes us to choose ungodly ways and lead us to promote our selfish goals.

Such a choice dishonours God, though we might be under the illusion that we are honouring Him. So, let us not be misled by the thought that we are worshipping God, while we are pursuing other gods in our heart. Let us examine ourselves and find out what our priority is and what gains our supreme attention.

To Ponder

He who seeks His security with wealth,
is in danger always.

JULY 7

QUALIFIED TO ACCUSE

John 8:1-11.

If any one of you is without sin...
John 8:7

A married man in an office was enamored of a lady who worked in his office. His colleagues reported this to the manager and as a result, he lost his job. The behavior of the married man must be condemned of course.

But, those who exposed his misconduct and threw him out of his job were not in any way, people of good character. They had been caught in other offenses.

People brought to Jesus a lady caught in adultery and pointed out that she should die according to the Law of Moses. Jesus said that he, who was without sin, could throw a stone first. So all of them were condemned by their conscience and left the place.

Jesus did not say that one without the sin of adultery should throw the first stone. He first said one without sin. They may not have committed the sin of adultery as the woman had done but may have possessed other sinful traits like greed, deceit and injustice.

Sin is the same though it may appear in any form. Jesus explained, that those who live in one particular sin are not fit to expose somebody else to punishment for a different sin.

When somebody else commits a sin which we usually don't, we appear in our eyes as saints, and view him as a sinner. We blame others while we are unconscious of the fact that we too are soiled with different sinful acts.

A liar has no right to blame a thief. They who practice deception are not fit to judge people who commit sexual immorality. Hypocrites should not condemn people who practice deception. Only a person who is free from any sinful indulgence is fit to question about others' sinful nature.

To Ponder

Before we discover others' mistakes and blame them, let us become aware of our defects and correct.

JULY 8

GOING ALONE

Luke 5:1-16

Jesus often withdrew to lonely places...
Luke 5:16

Prayer is the breath of Spiritual life. Prayer makes our fellowship with God a real experience. So, we must never avoid it. We need to be concerned about speaking to God and sharing our matters with Him, in any situation, wherever we go. Those who lack in prayer cannot have the fullness in Spiritual experience. Those who give up prayer very easily, can not be strong in their faith life.

Read Luke 5:15, 16 Very carefully. Jesus Christ was in the midst of active ministry. He was surrounded by a large crowd of people who had come to listen to His sermon and also to witness miracles and signs. But, He isolated Himself from the crowd and went to the wilderness to pray in solitude.

This incident shows the necessity of separating ourselves though we might be in the midst of a busy schedule. We need to give great importance to prayer; we need to go separate to be alone with God, in the midst of our personal work or official work.

Sometimes we forget our prayer time when we are surrounded by people and avoid prayer when ministry is in full swing. We blame the situations for our lethargic disinterested mindset. But, we need to take the necessary steps to do what we consider to be very important, in spite of the unfavourable situations. Jesus did that.

When guests come to our house, can they find us firm in maintaining our prayer time with regularity? When we go to our relative's house, can they see us as people who give priority to prayer time? We need to have the conviction that fellowship with God matters a lot for us, though we may be surrounded by many. If we do not cherish and nourish this feeling, we may not prevent our spiritual life from becoming weak and dull. Only when we are keen in prayer, our spiritual life will be bright and sparkling.

To Ponder

Prayer reveals us to God,
Bible reading reveals God to us.

JULY 9

ALL POWERFUL AND GOOD COUNSELLOR

Luke 11:1-10

Your Kingdom come...
Luke 11:2

Many people seek God's power alone, they do not seek His will. They want all that they desire to be carried out. So, they believe in the power of God which will help them achieve what they desire. But, they do not like to know what God wants them to have in their life, in the midst of their desires.

We don't want God to question the desires of our heart. We just want Him to bless all our desires. We need to seek God's counsel. Before we try to grab blessings from Him, we need to know what God considers good for us to have.

We can buy the medicines that we ask for, from a medical shop. But, we can not demand the same from a doctor. We can not get what we want. Instead we must allow him to examine us and prescribe the right kind of medicines which will be good for us.

One person who was bent upon going abroad, believed that he would go. So he fasted, prayed and requested many people to pray for him. But, he never bothered to find out God's will in that matter. When it did not materialize, he was discouraged. He wondered why the matter failed, though he trusted in the power of God.

Before we ask God to bless a particular matter in education, employment, business and marriage, we need to ask "God, reveal to us your will in this matter.

God is not only powerful. He is also our counsellor. His power will operate only in the lives of those who seek His advice and counsel.

Where God's guidance and counsel are sought, there He will act and reveal His power. Gideon sought God's guidance when he had to attack the Midianites. So, God stood beside him and gave him great victory. He was able to vanquish the Midianites.

To Ponder

Those who have eyes to see God within them have ears to hear His will.

JULY 10

IN THE 25TH ROUND

Hebrews 10:32-39

do not cast away your confidence
Hebrews 10:35

In the year 1992, World Junior Championship Athletics was going on in Seoul. 10,000 meters should be run in 25 rounds. Kenya's Josphat .and Ethiopia's Gebrselassie were running. Until the 24th round, Gebrselassie could not run ahead of Josphat; yet, in the final 25th round, when only 400 feet remained, Gebrselassie overtook Jos phat and won the gold medal. He got the chance for winning which was not there till the 24th round but at the 25th round.

In life, we too run with the intention to reach something. But, when we have run a for long time, with no result we conclude that it is not possible for us anymore and we stop. We slow down in the belief that we would not win anymore as nothing could be achieved despite so many efforts.

Not losing heart, not stopping half way, and not getting dejected to run till the last are very important for life's successful journey. We can reach great heights by the grace of God, by His strength and by His guidance. We can surely attain that which God says as important. We can surely reach that which God says is possible. But, we cannot say that this would happen even in the first round. Perhaps, like Gebrselassie we need to run many rounds, without losing hope. Sometimes, we can walk even after we feel that there is no more chance.

Abraham was in a state where he could have wondered as to how many years he would have to wait for a child, with faith. Yet it happened. There might have been times when Moses was dejected thinking for how long he should wrestle with Pharaoh for deliverance. Yet, Moses who was led by God achieved as God said. Success cannot be attained in the first round even in the mabtters concerning honesty, morality, self control, principles, high qualities and patience. Yet, it would not fail to reach us since God has said that it is possible. So, running till we attain is the limit.

To Ponder

Success will not come in search of you.
But, it will not fail to come if you seek it.

JULY 11

DIFFICULTIES AND JOY

Acts 20:17-28

'But none of these things move me'
Acts 20:24

A man, who had all the comforts in his country, went as a missionary to one of the African countries and ministered amidst so much of difficulties and discomforts.

Once he was told, "You are doing a splendid sacrificial work" He replied, "I am doing this only for a selfish reason' and then further said, "Yes, since I am doing this most difficult service, I get immense peace, joy and satisfaction. I don't want to ever lose this and so I am continuing here".

It is difficult to live for God with faithfulness and integrity; it is difficult to do God's work; it is difficult to live without deviating from God's truth.

Yet, behind all these lie a great joy, peace and satisfaction without which we can neither continue to live for the Lord nor do His ministry.

Both the Lord Jesus and Apostle Paul did God's work amidst so many difficulties and struggles. Yet, both of them enjoyed great peace, comfort and joy by doing God's work.

Apostle Paul not only describes the difficult situations he faced in doing His work but also the contentment he experienced while doing it.

When we live according to the Word of God and do ministry for Him, we get a peace, which the world can ever give.

Those who have experienced this peace never worry about the difficulties because God is with them, who live for Him.

To Ponder

Spirituality is not seeking God, for your own life but living for God.

JULY 12

HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

Isaiah 60:1-13

All assemble and come to you.....
Isaiah 60:4

Aalways write and say that we need not depend on any human being and we should not rely on anyone's help. I have repeatedly mentioned that there should be no one whom we consider as our back bone. The reason why I reiterate this idea is not to undermine human relationship but to drive home the idea that we can depend only on God and our dependence on human beings can disappoint us.

But, at the same I highlighted the idea that it is wrong to ignore human ties and bonds. It is improper and unwise to ignore people and their favor saying that God alone is enough for us. Getting favour and help is one thing, total dependence is something different. We might hold a very high position and we may be in a state of self sufficiency yet we need human relationship and favour in some form.

Though we may rely on God, whatever He does to support us, will be done through human beings. Elijah depended on God. Yet, he needed a Zarephath widow to support him. David lived in total dependence on God. Yet, he befriended many and formed a group to support him. But, he never depended on their help fully. When his own men rose against him in Ziklag, he did not lose his calm. Instead of being thrown off his balance, he steadied himself in the Lord. Though he was surrounded by men, he depended only on God.

Some people become so independent that they just don't bother about maintaining relationships. This can go on for a while. I have noticed that when there is a wedding or when they undergo treatment in hospitals, such people will not have any one to help them.

God wants us to cultivate human relationships. He does not want us to be alone, living as isolated individuals moving in small circles. There were twelve disciples who walked with Jesus. We too need a few to walk with us.

To Ponder

It is not good to depend on people but having fellowship with them is not bad.

JULY 13

LISTEN AND ACT

II Samuel 6:1-14

They set the ark of God on a new cart.
II Samuel. 6:3

A believer was very much impressed by the sermon on patience that was delivered in church and began to share the ideas with the members of the family. But no one seemed to pay any attention to his views on patience. He became very annoyed and impatient and began scolding them all.We need to listen to good ideas first and then implement them in our lives, for them to be effective.

There are some who run after good messages and excellent expositions of the Bible. For them, piety ends in listening. While they are avid listeners, they never bother to reflect any of these ideas in their life. Some others are not interested in listening or receiving anything. They show an absolute lack of interest in listening to messages. They give top priority to action. They may derive satisfaction from their performance, but fail to realize that God is not glorified through them

David desired to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. It was an excellent idea but he did not bother to find out God's commandments and strict stipulation regarding the conveyance of the Ark. He showed genuine interest in the effort and was enthusiastic about that but he had to face grief and disappointment. It was because he did not bother to listen and follow certain rules and regulations regarding the conveyance of the Ark. He plunged into action without adequate information about what the process required of him.

There are some believers who give liberally to ministries. They are involved in ministry day and night. But, these people who are so action-oriented, never pay heed to God's word regarding how to do His work. They never bother to be enlightened in the proper way of supporting ministries. Therefore though such action-minded people do a lot of good work, they remain discouraged and disillusioned.

To Ponder

The desire to die for Christ is piety,
but the desire to live for Christ is wisdom.

JULY 14

WHY FEAR?

Psalm 46:1-11

We will not fear though the earth give way
Psalm 46:1,2

One night, a young man was walking alone along a forest road. He became so scared. He was totally upset by the rustling sound of the wind, movement of the trees, and surrounding darkness. The very next day the young man went through the same way. But he was not a bit scared. He was not disturbed. Neither was he upset. What made the difference? How did he overcome his fear and walked on with boldness? The previous day he was walking alone. On the next day, he walked with his strong and close friend. That was the secret.

The problem was neither the darkness nor the path in the wood. It was not the rustling leaves that scared him. Walking alone was the problem. That alone caused the fear. A man of God in the old testament times said that even if the whole world was upset, he would not be scared. Why? Was he very bold? That is not the reason. Such people had the assurance that the Lord of the hosts was with them. The certainty of his presence gave them the confidence to be calm even in the midst of dreadful situations.

We think that the situations should change for us to help us lead a life of calm and satisfaction or we think that we ourselves should strive hard to get rid of fear .But in this world we cannot expect to be surrounded by peace. Sometimes we cannot avoid dark moments and disturbances in life. In those situations we cannot get rid of fear and anxieties depending on our own mental strength. On our own we can not banish fear.

The best solution is to resort to doing the things which would give us the assurance that we have a suitable companion and helper with us. So we have to get the certainty of deep relationship with God. Then we also will be able to say like David. "Though I walk though the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Yes, the feeling of loneliness brings in fear. Relationship with God banishes the fear.

To Ponder

Anxieties are like a dog.
They will chase a man who runs in fear.

JULY 15

GUILTY CONSCIENCE

Jonah 1:1-17

Every man cried out to his god
Jonah 1:5

A great wind attacked the ship in which Jonah was sleeping while sailing. Everyone in the ship started praying to God, out of fear for the impending danger. Though their religious beliefs were not correct, they had the thought to pray to God. Yet, Jonah, the servant of the true God did not pray. He, who should have had more faith in the power of prayer was simply there, without praying, though he was prepared to die.

It was because his guilty conscience made him hesitate to look up to God. He, who departed from the presence of God, could not look to Him with confidence. He should have wondered how he could face the Lord and pray and how he would get help from God, when he was going in the opposite direction to what God wanted.

Yes, when our relationship with God is not proper, we cannot look up to Him boldly at times of crisis. When we deviate from the paths of God, our mind will not allow us to look to Him, when winds of trials blow in our life. Though God may be willing to help us, our guilty conscience would spoil our feelings of trust on Him. David was the one who repeatedly faced temptations in his life. Yet, whenever he plunged deep into distressing situations, he used to plead to the Lord since he was not attacked by a guilty conscience.

We need to live close with the Lord in such a way that we could have the conviction that our conscience is clear before Him. Then, when trials attack us, the confidence and trust that God would look after everything and that He will never forsake us, would be strong in us. Yet, guilty conscience should also be overcome.

David was much afflicted by guilty conscience in the matter related to Bathsheba. That's why he begged the Lord and prayed that He should create a clean heart in him. Psalm 51 was born out of this.

To Ponder

He, who realizes his mistakes, lays foundation for success,
He, who rectifies his mistakes, raises up a building on it.

JULY 16

KNOWING GOD

II Timothy 1:1-14

I know whom I have believed…
II Timothy 1:12

It cannot be said with certainty how the coming days would be. Many may arise to skillfully explain to prove that the Christian teachings and Biblical incidents are imaginary and that Christianity is an imaginary religion. Many may rise up to convince majority of the people that the Bible is false. Times may arrive when the Biblical truths and incidents could not be theologically explained and proved to be true. 'When such a time where it could not be proved that the Biblical matters are true arrives, and when everyone concludes that Christianity is false, how would I be at that time?" – This question rose within me.

Even at that time, I would firmly say that Christianity is true and that Christ is not an imaginary God. I may not theologically explain and prove the Biblical truths. Yet, I know strongly that the Christ whom the Bible mentions is in me and that He leads me on the basis of the Biblical truths. Nobody can point it out to be false.

A person may strongly prove that there is nothing called brain. But I know the brain within me. I know the good things that happen because of that brain. Hence, though someone may deny and declare that brain is an imagination, I could thousand times say about the truth in me.

Similarly, though some people may come up to prove that the truth of the whole Bible is imagination, the truths about the Lord which the Bible speaks, could not be separated from a person's heart. It is not man knowing God with his intelligence. Rather he can know the Lord to be within him, working in him and revealing Himself in him.

A man, who knows God, cannot be separated from that knowledge. A time may come when truths about Christ cannot be explained and described with Bible knowledge. But, a personal experience of God about whom the Bible talks, can confirm that knowledge to be true.

To Ponder

If you are ready to walk with God,
you would feel Him walking with you.

JULY 17

NOT ONLY ANGER

Ephesians 4:17-32

While you are still angry..
Ephesians 4:26

Once I posed a question to a group of believers who were continuously listening to my messages. I asked them, "could you please tell me how you have been affected by the messages you have been receiving so far?". Some of them shared the changes that had occurred within them as a result of reading my books.

They were really excellent testimonies indeed ;yet I was not much pleased. It was because most of them said how they were able to give up anger. The only trait many of them highlighted was anger. It is true that many problems are caused by anger and therefore it had been considered as the greatest sin that victimized them. Anger for the right cause is an essential characteristic. He who does not get angry is insensitive to what is good and wrong. But, when anger goes beyond a limit, it will have serious repercussions.

Some don't get angry easily. They do not express their anger in words but they express it silently in many ways. They hurt others in different ways. Anger alone is not a serious sin. Lack of humility is a sin. Greed is sin. Indulgence in luxury is sinful. Passivity in the midst of evil and lack of resistance to evil, are bad. Failure to give importance to truth is sinful. Not helping those in need is a sin. Irritating others and making others angry with words is also a sin.

It is not wise to measure the power and triumph of Christian life by the way one overcomes anger. Moses struck the rock in his anger. God did not like that. But, what the Israelites did also was not correct. They annoyed a man who was considered to be meek and made him angry. Their act too is sinful. Control of anger alone is not the right measure to gauge the depth of a Christian life. There are after traits which are equally important. Honesty, integrity, maturity, Justice and helping attitude are some of the characteristics which Christians must possess and develop.

To Ponder

When prayer and Bible reading are absent, fear and worry can fill the heart.

JULY 18

WITHOUT HIDING SIN

1 Johh 1:1-10

If we say we have no sin....
1 Johh 1:8

A friend of mine became diabetic. But he did not want to confirm that he has diabetes. So he did not go to any medical check up. He did not make any changes in his eating habits. But, when there was a small wound in his leg, he thought it to be a small problem and kept applying ointments to heal it. But, the wound did not heal, but became severe. Finally he had to go to the hospital and everyone came to know that he had diabetes.

Some may not have been delivered from the power of sin yet. But, they do not want others to know their sins. Hence, they take much care to show themselves as those who are saved and who live a holy and sanctified life. Under normal conditions, they appear to be holy people without any flaws. But, their inner sinfulness will not remain hidden for long. One day, suddenly their holy façade will be revealed.

Till problems arise, everything will be fine. But, when troubles come knocking at the door, when others annoy them, when temptations arise, their hidden sinfulness will come out. Yes, we can not hide our unrepentant sinful state for long. When situations change, vices like anger, annoyance, envy, covetousness and stubbornness will betray the inner disease that is plaguing us. Judas was a disciple of Jesus for three years, but he was a slave to greediness. Though it remained hidden for long, when the time came, it was brought out.

Some try to hide their sinfulness, but, do not seek the spiritual ways to change it. They try to hide their hidden wickedness through various spiritual activities like prayers, worship, ministries, offerings and other devotional activities. Yet, they will not come out of the bondage of sin through true repentance, by seeking the experience of salvation. Yes, let us not try to hide our sins by vain pious acts; but get rid of sin by true repentance.

To Ponder

It is easy to show yourself as a good person. But, it is difficult to show goodness in you. Do the difficult thing.

JULY 19

INBORN NATURE IS THE CAUSE

James 4:1-10

Your desires for pleasure that war in your members
James 4:1

The root-cause for majority of human sufferings is the nature of man. Man must examine the real reasons for his sorrows and sufferings. If he does that he can easily find out that his wrong nature plays a major part in his sufferings. Anger, hatred, enmity, pride, jealousy, greed and the absence of self-control are the evil nature that becomes the real-cause for human sufferings.

Generally man wants to find solutions for the problems he faces, but, does not care to notice the cause for them. Hence, the problems and trials that were solved earlier reappear. When we point out the wrong nature and attitude found in some people, they do not take them seriously. They feel that man's wrong nature is something that is normal and part of his life.

A person can take the wrong nature and bad character as something normal. But, it will be difficult for him to find solutions to the problems of life with this kind of attitude. A servant of God spoke about the evil nature of mankind for an hour. A man who heard about this told him, "Sir, people will be like that only but you could have spoken about the love of God or the power of God or the grace of God" Many people have that attitude only.

They feel that evil nature is something normal but the power, love and grace of God are very important. But, they do not know that when human nature is not transformed, there is no use in hearing about the love of God or seeing the revelation of the power of God. When the Israelites were journeying towards Canaan, there was a great revelation of love and power of God among them but they were not of any use to them. They had to face lot of sufferings and trials in the wilderness, only because of their evil nature and attitude. Yes! It is our bounden duty to seek the grace of God to transform our evil nature and attitude.

To Ponder

When sufferings hurt you, your mind matures into good nature and character.

JULY 20

HONESTY

Revelation 2:1-10

Be Faithful (Honest) Until Death
Revelation 2:10

*D*on't be upset that nobody comes running towards your honesty, be firm that you do not run away from it. The sound of honesty that comes out of you may be feeble; yet ensure that the noisy, clamouring sounds around you do not smother it.

Honesty or faithfulness is a rare seed; it does not grow in everyone's heart; so don't be upset that it is not growing in all the places where you sowed it.

Unless and until you are prepared to stand alone for the sake of your love for honesty, that honesty will not draw many towards you.

Don't forget that even though there is none in your town to deeply admire your honesty, the God who called you is delighted over that and admires you.

It is far more excellent to lose few friends for the sake of holding on to honesty than to gain thousands of friends by losing your honesty.

There is nothing to be ashamed living in a dishonest world; but it is a shame to live with a dishonest heart.

Don't be pained that there is nobody to believe your honesty, if you have full trust in that, there is nothing to be worried.

Honesty has the ability to make many live; but it does not have any attractive feature; so it is not easily drawn by others.

The tongues which are accustomed to tasting dishonest things will not immediately realize the delicious taste of honesty;

The world never immediately accepts honesty. Sometimes it keeps quiet until the one who is honest disappears.

To Ponder

It is more honourable to live good among a few, than going all over the world to talk about good.

JULY 21

COMMENDATION FOR WHOM?

Acts 3:1-16

Why do you stare at us?...
Acts 3:12

Once a Christian believer helped a person who was in great crisis. The man praised him saying. "Sir, you are not a human being. You are like god". The believer said. "If I had not accepted Jesus as my saviour, I would not given even a four anna coin. (twenty five paisa) The help I rendered to you now was due to the love that was put in my heart by that Jesus. So if you want to praise and thank, give praise to that Jesus"

If we have accepted Jesus, we need to possess some good attitudes and good characteristics, which can not be seen in many people in the world. But, we need to know whether they are part of our nature by birth or whether they were developed within us by our relationship with Jesus. If our goodness is due to impact of Jesus, when it is commended we need to behave in such a way that the praise is due to Jesus.

Once at a railway station, the person who issued the ticket, gave me excess money when I received the balance. When I found that he had given me more, I returned it and was commended for my honesty. But, I felt that I did not deserve the praise. If Jesus had not changed my attitudes and life, I would have retained the extra money. The honour of the situation was due to my salvation.

When Peter and John healed a lame person at the Jerusalem Temple, that act attracted the attention of many towards them. But, the two tried to direct their attention to Jesus immediately. They were in haste to tell the people that the miracle was not due to their power or godliness but because of Jesus. They did not hesitate to belittle themselves because they realized that it was wrong to accept the honour which only Jesus deserved. But, today many people consider looking up to the preachers as a matter of pride instead of looking at Jesus. It is because such servants of God project themselves as great and powerful before the people.

To Ponder

It is easy to earn the name that we are good people.
But, it is very hard to maintain the level of honesty always.

JULY 22

IS WEALTH BAD?

I Timothy 6: 1-12

Love of money is the root of all kinds of evil..
I Timothy 6:10

David reigned as a mighty king and enjoyed immense wealth. Yet, he always sought God. In the lives of all these Bible heroes, wealth did not make them forget God,who is the provider of all their riches. But very sadly, Solomon forgot God and lost his relationship with Him, while he was enjoying his riches and material abundance.

Possession of riches and excessive wealth is not a sin. They remain harmless as long as they do not affect the person's relationship with God. But it is true that when wealth increases in a person's life, his dependence on God and his tendency to give importance to his relationship with God, will gradually diminish and will be ultimately destroyed. Wealth sometimes prevents some from establishing a good relationship with God. It can also separate one from the love of God. It alienates people from God. Abraham and Job were exceptions to the general rule and only a very few fall under this category.

The Bible warning, "The love of money is the root of all evil" must not be treated in a very casual way. Money can enslave very easily those who have not tasted fellowship with God and those who do not delight in walking in God's way. Those who live a ritualistic, religious life will fall easy prey to the love of money. Only those who understand God's blessings in terms of a relationship with Him will maintain their close walk with God even if wealth and possession increase. Only those who realize that a good life and good ultimate relationship with God is the greatest blessing one can ever receive from Him, will never abandon such a life when they become affluent.

Abraham lived in close fellowship with God and was able to derive great joy and fulfilment in that. That is why even when his finances improved and increased, he never grew less in love, humility and integrity. Hence though he had the resources to build a palatial house to live in, he preferred to live in a tent with all his children.

To Ponder

God does not have anything for him who keeps everything for himself.

JULY 23

NECESSITY OF FORGIVENESS

Ephesians 1:1-13

we have…through His blood, the forgiveness of sins
Ephesians 1:7

In many churches, as a part of their service, people are called to confess their sins. The congregation too confesses that they are sinners and ask the Lord to forgive them. Bu,t they would be doing this without any remorse about their sins. They would ask God to forgive them even without the expectation that He should forgive them. After the service, they do not go back with the joy of forgiveness of sin. The next week, they attend the church retaining their state as sinners, with no assurance of forgiveness of their sins.

All these are followed as religious rituals. Here, there is no experience of genuine repentance. The joy of real forgiveness is very great. To attain this, true repentance is needed. To have this, the burden of sins should be genuinely felt in the soul. Admitting oneself as 'sinner' should not be a duty; there should be a hatred for the state of remaining as sinner and a desire to move forward should be there. Learning to live with sins and pleading to God for forgiveness, without any conviction amounts to mocking God.

We need to have an expectation from God regarding what we ask of Him. While seeking the Lord's forgiveness, we should do it with real desire and expectation that He should forgive us.

Forgiveness of sin is priceless. The Lord Jesus shed His blood in order that we receive it. The forgiveness which was created by bloodshed should not be asked as a duty, without proper awareness. It is not good to ask forgiveness without realizing the sin.

Many do not consider God's forgiveness as the greatest gift to us. Instead, they have a wrong notion that this is something that they should do to please Him. Seeking the Lord's forgiveness without any genuine desire, just as how a child eats without interest because of the mother's compulsion, is not right on our part.

To Ponder

God never accepts and takes into account,
the pious deeds of those who do not walk in His ways.

JULY 24

THINK GOOD

II Chronicles 19:1-11

Good things are found in you..
II Chronicles 19:3

There is a pure white wall; there's a small black spot in the middle of the wall. Now, everyone's attention will be drawn only towards that small spot. Likewise, most of the areas in our life may be guarded pure with no faults or wrongs. Yet, when there is a small error or stain, everybody's attention and eyes will be drawn towards it. This is a weak tendency; yet this is human nature. So, we need to be careful not to give room for black spots however clean we are in so many other areas

Accordingly, many aspects in certain people's lives may be good. Yet, certain weakness or situation or carelessness or foolishness may make them faulty. Then our eyes focus only on that and our heart hastens to judge them on that basis. It may even appear reasonable for us to brand them as sinners.

However, those who know God should not act here with a weak mind. When our mind hastens to conclude someone as wrong, looking at the small error in him, we should not fail to consider the other areas in his life. Here we should not use the yardstick of, 'A sample of one rice is enough to see whether the rice is cooked or not'. Here, those who are spiritual should not evaluate the other person like any other people but should know the necessity of using the proper measure to asses him. .

Peter was an honest and faithful disciple. He desired to even give up his life for Jesus. He wanted to stay with Him, at any cost. But, the compulsive situations prevented him from acting boldly as he desired. So, he had to deny Jesus. This alone is a justifiable cause to discard him as a disciple and brand him as unfit. But, Jesus never did that. Neither did He fail to notice the other areas of his life. Jesus Christ who pointed out the shortcomings of the church of Ephesians did not fail to notice the good things there.

To Ponder

Unless your eyes see the good things in others, others would see only the faults in you.

JULY 25

WANTS OR DESIRES

Proverbs 30:7–23

Feed me with the food allotted to me
Proverbs 30:8

The present day marketing strategy of business companies is to create a desire in the heart of people for the possession of their products which they really do not need and then make them buy those products.

A man saw that an Oxford English Dictionary worth Rs 1000 being sold for Rs 500.He immediately bought it but he has no need for it now and he is sure not to use it in the coming days also. He bought a thing, which is not needed, just because it was being sold for a huge discount.

Today many of the things which man desires to possess are neither necessary nor useful to him. The world and the devil stir up desires in various ways. And people struggle hard to possess those things which are neither necessary nor useful for them but because of their desire to possess them.

A man who uses only a two-wheeler bought an expensive car but he was not using it all. It just remained as a show-piece only. Many things create a desire in us but they are not needed for us. Man works day and night only to fulfill his desires and not his wants.

Surely every product has a use but we do not need every one of them. God is more than sufficient to meet our all wants. But, if we go on focusing only fulfilling our desires, we will still be dissatisfied even when God gives all our wants. We have to pray only for our wants not for our desires.

Sometimes we have more blessing and goodness when God meets our needs and not our desires.

If we know clearly what our needs are, then there will be no need for us to carry on the burden of our unwanted desires.

To Ponder

The mustard-size love which is revealed through the mouth is more useful to someone than the mountain-size love that is hidden in the heart.

JULY 26

KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD?

Psalms. 25:1-22

Show me your ways, O Lord...
Psalms 25:4

If we want to act according to the wishes of God, we must know His will. If He does not disclose that to us, there is no way to understand that.

Many people are eager to know God's will, before they take important decisions in their life. Many people who send their prayer requests to me, write their problems and finally request me to tell them God's will in those matters.

But, in spite of their eagerness to know God's will, nothing is revealed. Why? They want to know God's will only in specific matters.

God has revealed in the Bible what He wants us to know in our life. God has already written about all that He wants to see in our life and reminds us about that daily. He wants us to repent, lead a holy life, help others, pray, forgive and live truthfully.

Do we give priority to these aspects? How much of importance do we give to them? Are we fulfilling these wishes of God?

What does the Bible say? God will instruct the man who fears Him in the way chosen for him. (Ps - 25:12). God will show His way to the man who fulfils His wishes that are revealed to him.

If we are not concerned to fulfill His will, God will not reveal His will to us in our matters. It we go seeking His will in matters of our choice, suppose He asks "Have you fulfilled my desires that I have revealed to you?", what answer can we give?

Only when we fulfill His wishes which are expressed in the Bible, God will reveal His will in our life. Only when we establish a spiritual relationship with God, He will reveal through the Holy Spirit what is good and healthy for us.

To Ponder

Do not worry what your future will hold for us.
Check how you live in the present.

JULY 27

UNNECESSARY FEAR

I Samuel 18:6-30

Saul was afraid of David
I Samuel 18:12

Several years back, a person, chosen to be the President of India removed a very important person from his Party, the moment he took charge as the President. What was the reason? He felt threatened by that person to his post. Today, the most terrible thing that torments many people is the unwanted fear in them. Looking at certain situations, many are those who are gripped by fear that some harm may befall them

This unnecessary fear leads them to wrong decisions and finally ruins their lives. The main reason for such fears is lack of trust in God but trusting one's own talent and wisdom more. Saul was afraid of the sudden popularity of David. This fear weakened him and ruined him. Jeroboam was scared that if his people went to the temple in Jerusalem, the King of Judah would draw them towards him. That fear made him seek refuge in fleshly plans. The end result was that God's wrath came down on him. Today, many pastors are afraid that someone may break their church or pull the believers from their church and hence resort to various fleshly efforts to prevent this.

If Abraham had been afraid that his elevations would be hindered by Lot, he might have hastened to cut off Lot's wings. But, Abraham had a different mind. He believed that when God had plans to lift him up, Lot could not affect that. He believed that when God wanted to bless him, no human plan can hinder that. That was why, he was patient and calm in the matter regarding Lot.

If we truly trust God, fear will not affect us. If our elevations and achievements had come from our faith in God, fear will not affect us. Man can never change the elevations that come from God. Nobody can pluck away what He has given. Nobody can break what He has built. This is the faith of those who trust Him.

To Ponder

He, who has learnt to trust God,
cannot be made miserable by situations.

JULY 28

DECISIONS

Daniel 1:1-21

Daniel resolved not to defile himself…
Daniel 1:8

A young man met his pastor and said, "Pastor, the fear that I might commit a grave mistake is lurking within my heart all the time and I go through this stress daily." The pastor replied, "You have not committed the sin, why are you then so obsessed? Why don't you decide that you will not do it? That resolution will make you free." The young man confessed, "Pastor, I have made the resolution several times. Every time I make the decision, I am painfully made conscious of my weakness. I have never been able to stick to my decision."

It is good to lead a life of resolutions. But the tragedy is that, many people live under the illusion that they can overcome the tendency to commit mistakes, just by making a few decisions. They feel that they can do good things through their decisions. But it must be borne in mind that man's lustful nature, force of his evil desires and intensity of his passions are more powerful than the resolutions he makes to stall them.

Daniel was resolute that he would not eat the royal food in Babylon. Even before he took the decision, he was a man who lived in close relationship with God. The fellowship with God gave him the power to make such a resolution and stand by that. Only when we receive and enjoy deep spiritual strength through a strong fellowship with God, we can face any trials and still stand by the decisions we have already made.

There is another important thing to be considered before we try to fight wrong acts and attitudes. We need to involve ourselves in good things and get ourselves saturated with them, if we wish to avoid bad things. That's why when Paul wrote to the believers at Philippi, he wrote that they should be thinking of whatever that was pure, noble, lovely, admirable, excellent, praise-worthy and right. (Phil.4:8)

To Ponder

Evil will spring within us spontaneously,
but we need to try hard to acquire good things.

JULY 29

TESTING IS NECESSARY

Ephesians 4:11-24

With every wind of doctrine…in the cunning craftiness
Ephesians 4:14

It is wrong to blindly accept a matter as right without examining it. It is also not correct to oppose it without giving any thought to it for a moment. When a false thing is said, it will be easy to accept it but when a truth is uttered, it will be very difficult to believe it. That is why, people often exclaim as "Is it?" or "Really?" when a truth is told.

You can tell a lie only once and make a thousand people believe but you have to tell a truth at least one thousand times to make one person believe it. That is why people speak more falsehoods than truths.

When you look at history, you can see how it has taken hundreds of years for people to accept some of the truths that were discovered by some famous individuals. Some of the discoveries about our earth by Galileo and Copernicus were really true but it took a very long time for this world to accept them as truths.

One can easily utter an appealing falsehood from a stage and attract a big crowd in a moment. But when an honest man utters a genuine truth, it may take a generation for the world to accept it as truth.

There are many intellectuals, scholars, philosophers and researchers among the present day Christians. But, even among them, there are many who blindly believe when it comes to faith in God or spiritualism.

In these days, when the numbers of false prophets and false preachers have gone up, some people do not examine what they say.

We just need some commonsense and not spiritual wisdom to find out this kind of falsehood but many do not have this also. It is wrong to treat the blind acceptance or the opposition as a sign of spiritual devotion.

To Ponder

Look at the one who lives in faith and not the one who speaks about it.

JULY 30

LET US KNOW GOD

Hosea 6:1-11

Be Let us press on to acknowledge Him.
Hosea 6:3

The Book of Exodus may be called as the Book of God's Revelation. God revealed Himself in different capacities to the Israelites ever since they left Egypt till they reached Canaan. He wanted the people to understand Him in different situations before they reached Canaan during their travel in the wilderness and characters in wonderful ways. It is so because only when we have the right understanding of God, we can trust Him and live in such a way that He is pleased .Consequently we will receive His blessings.

But, the Israelites failed in their efforts to understand. They didn't have the serious attitude to understand Him properly since their eyes were focused on getting from God what they needed. They lacked proper knowledge of God. Hence they did not try to lead a life that pleased Him. Neither did they glorify God by leading such a life.

Many believers are fervent in praying and believing, just to receive God's blessing. Their zeal to know God more is very limited. So, they do not know what will please God and how to honour Him. If we do not try to find out one's likes, dislikes and attitudes, we will never know how to behave and act to please him.We need to give importance to knowing God more.

Holy Spirit is given chiefly to help us know God. Through the Spirit we will know God's nature and attitude deep within us. That's why when Paul prayed for the spiritual growth of the Ephesians he prayed that they be given the spirit that would grant them wisdom and clarity to know God. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully. (Colo - 1:10, 11)

To Ponder

Until you know yourself fully, your knowledge about God will remain useless.

JULY 31

NUMBED CONSCIENCE

Hebrews 3:1-19

You may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness
Hebrews 3:13

The smell of fish in an area where fisher- folks live is very normal and natural. But, if an outsider may find it hard to bear the smell. The people who live there are so used to the smell that they are quite comfortable there. The smell is not a problem for them.

Same way, when a person starts living in a way that is displeasing to God, his conscience points out to him the fact that he is straying. He feels guilty within and may lose his peace of mind. But when he continues in that direction, he gradually becomes insensitive to the promptings of his conscience. After that, even if he commits a series of sins, he will not be troubled. He gets accustomed to the stench of sin.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins but if we continually ignore His warnings, He will become silent. Hence, even in the midst of heinous sinful deeds, we will not experience any discomfort. The Israelites were warned several times but they lived just as they pleased. So, God allowed them to follow the dictates of their own hardened heart. (Ps. 81:2) When God stopped warning the people, they met their downfall. The baneful degeneration was very quick.

Some people, who progress steadily in sinful ways, do not look at their sins as serious failures because of their insensitive heart which does not react to the presence of sin. So, committing a sin does not appear as a great offense against God. Just because we do not feel the sense of guilt, we cannot approve of all the mistakes we commit. When our conscience through which the Holy Spirit points out our sins, becomes numb, we lose the guidance of the Holy Spirit and we become accustomed to the presence of sin. So, we can't justify all our actions, because we do not feel guilty any longer. We may live in sin but we may not feel uncomfortable because our conscience has got used to the stench.

To Ponder

If we are under the control of the Holy Spirit, we will not be enslaved by sin.

AUGUST 1

NOT EXPECTING REWARD

Matthew 6:1-15

Father...will reward you openly
Matthew 6:4

A patient, who was taking treatment in a hospital, highly appreciated the doctor who lovingly took care of him. The doctor replied that he did only his duty, for which the patient said, "You not only treated me but also spoke to me lovingly and were of a great comfort to me". The doctor again said, 'It is one of the most important thing needed in my service"

Looking at the few good works that we do and the good nature we sometimes exhibit, we feel as if we have done something very rare and beautiful. So, we expect appreciation and gratitude from others. We feel that every good deed we do deserves praises.

However, doing good and showing forth our good character is a part of our reasonable duties. They are needed to identify that we are indeed human beings. The most essential identity that man needs to show that he is a human being is his good character. Unless we reveal this, we are not humans though we may be wearing the garb of a human.

Others need not give us gift for showing our love to them. Nobody needs to conduct a ceremony in appreciation of us for doing good. Nobody needs to praise us for walking with honesty and integrity. Rather, when we exhibit our good character, we feel happy within us. God too blesses us as we conduct ourselves in the way we ought to. Hence man's appreciation and praises are not compulsory.

The sun has to shine; the wind has to blow; the trees have to give fruits; man has to reflect the image of God. All these are duties and not for appreciation. If we do good, expecting something in return, it means that we don't have the natural tendency to do good. If we conduct ourselves good, expecting something in return, it means that we are behaving artificially and not naturally.

To Ponder

Don't be upset that there are not many to appreciate your good character. Don't forget that there are only few good people here.

AUGUST 2

FELLOWSHIP MORE IMPORTANT

Hebrews 11:6-19

By faith Abraham
Hebrews 11:8

*I*n the days of Abraham there was no book on faith or preaching on how to grow in faith; yet Abraham was strong in faith. In the days of David and Nehemiah, there were no books or conference on how to pray. Yet, they stood as mighty prayer warriors.

In these days, countless are the speeches and books which give guide lines on receiving spiritual experiences.

Unfortunately, there is no real spiritual experience which can never be obtained by gaining knowledge or reading all sorts of explanations or doing theological studies.

Of course, our spiritual knowledge may increase but to go deep in to our spiritual life, we need to have close relationship with God. Mere spiritual knowledge is useless.

Abraham, David and others never knew any spiritual elements. However they had rich spiritual experience because of their deep relationship with God.

It is this fellowship with God and the awareness to live for Him that made men of God like Abraham and David become warriors of faith and prayer.

It is true that Abraham's life was beautified by excellent qualities and divine nature; but all those wonderful characters were born out of his intimate relationship with God and not because of listening to lot of preaching.

Yes, as long as we don't have any relationship with God, there is no use even if we read and learn about experiences.

Only the spiritual standard where we truly dedicate ourselves would form in us the divine experience of faith, prayer, holiness and love.

To Ponder

When the relationship with God is not strong, strong faith on Him would not yield much result.

AUGUST 3

EVERYWHERE

Romans 2:11-29

You who brag about the law…
Romans 2:23

A person who wanted to obtain approval for construction of his house went to the Town Planning office. There he gave some thousands as bribe and got the approval. A beggar approached this man for alms and this man without any hesitation chased him saying, "You, lazy fellow go find a work and earn your food". He commented to his friend saying, "It is wrong to encourage beggars" .He who knew that giving alms would encourage begging tendency, did not realize that giving bribe would encourage the tendency of receiving bribe.

Some principles which are good must be followed and applied in all places. Christians believe that jewels are evidence of extravagance and ostentation and therefore they are condemned by the Bible. But this principle becomes ineffective and does not operate while they travel in a posh car and choose to show off their gaudy dresses.

Some are humble in the matter of wearing jewels but live in showy pompous manner in other areas. They organize grand functions to show of their opulence. Their preference to simplicity does not show in their luxurious and extravagant life style. Some people are enslaved by liquor and other bad habits. We are vexed by their bondage but some of us are slaves to TV and TV serials. Some become addicted to games and tournaments. Some are not able to get out of gossip and some are slaves to unnecessary telephone conversations. Why don't we condemn love of money and greed which have made many captives?

Addiction does not necessarily mean only addiction to liquor .People are addicted to TV, games, money and gossip. We need to be cautious. Any sinful indulgence that we condemn in one form can haunt us in different forms. We need to identify the source and try to avoid that.

To Ponder

Unless we identify our weakness,
it is impossible to retain our strength.

AUGUST 4

WHY SHAME?

Jeremiah 2:21-37

You will be disappointed by Egypt as you were by Assyria...
Jeremiah 2:36

Recently a sister was sharing her sorrows with me. Again and again she kept on saying. "God puts me to shame before those who hate me and those who dislike me" Of course, it is true that when God takes us through a particular path, He allows us to go through shameful experiences before those who oppose us. David and Joseph had to go through such path of shame. But, we need to remember that it is only temporary. Surely one day God will help us stand victoriously before whom we were put to shame.

We have to face such shameful situations in the life of faith. But, there may be other reasons also for facing shame. We see this in the history of the Israelites in order to bring the people who had gone to astray, back to His way. God allowed such situations when they were put to shame before the enemies. He chose this method, to punish and correct His people.

At the time of Eli, the Israelites brought the Ark of the covenant to the battlefield with great faith. They thought that as in the olden days God would defeat the Philistines and give them victory. There they were defeated and were ashamed before the philistines. Why? They had failed to honour God in their life.

When people who were known as people of God" do not lead a life suited to the name, God's name will be scandalized. and dishonoured. When God's children do not walk in His way, God's glory is tarnished. So, God allows us to stand in shame before the people He chooses to teach us a lesson.

If our enemies taunt and make fun of us, first we need to examine whether we live as God's friends and we have to realize our defects and humble ourselves before God. Then God will raise and honour us again.

To Ponder

If we do not regard the commandments of God in our life, we may have to fall into the snares of Satan.

AUGUST 5

WHEN OTHERS FALL

Proverbs 24:15-34

Do not gloat when your enemy falls.
Proverbs 24:17

When a dried leaf fell off a coconut palm tree, the green ones made fun of it. Seeing the green leaves giggle in scorn, a sparrow gave a mocking smile. The green leaf asked, " Why do you laugh at me?" .The sparrow replied, "the leaf that fell down now used to laugh at all the falling leaves. Now it is fallen. The thought that one day you may also fall made me laugh"

The fact that we could rejoice over another person's fall or failure shows that we lack humane consideration. What happens in the life of another person today can happen to us tomorrow. Saul was David's sworn enemy but when Saul fell David did not rejoice. David wept and felt sad about Saul's death. This is the sign of Godliness.

May be a person reaps the consequence of his wickedness and even in that context, the thought that he gets what he deserves might appear very normal. But, God does not approve of the attitude of rejoicing over another person's calamity. We need to sympathize with the one who undergoes pain. There are people who think, "He reaps the consequence of his bad actions. Let him endure the trial. I can not do anything." In the time of trouble, instead of justifying the cause of his pain, comforting is required of us. God delights in such a kind response.

Lot didn't care about his relationship with Abraham and chose to leave him to go to a better looking place. They parted but very soon Lot was caught in a difficult situation. An enemy king captured him. When Abraham came to know of this, he did not rejoice.

He did not think that Lot got what he deserved. Instead, he rushed immediately to save Lot. The commandment of Jesus that we should love our enemies seems to have been fulfilled even in the Old Testament days.

To Ponder

If you expect God to do something for you,
you need to know what you have to do for others.

AUGUST 6

LET THEM SEE

John. 13:21-38

That they may see your good deeds...
Matthew - 5:16

Suppose you see a tree without any fruit and a man tells you "Do not conclude wrongly that there is no fruit on this tree. Though you do not see any fruit externally, it is an excellent fruit - bearing tree." Will you be able to accept what he says?. If the tree is good, there will be fruits to be seen. There are many good Christians among us. Sometimes we keep saying "What if people entertain different opinions about me? God knows me. He knows my heart. My conscience is clean"

We console ourselves saying all these. Of course, this is not wrong but it is not enough if God alone knows our inner most thoughts. It is not enough if our conscience is clear.

There should be something that reflects our good heart. Jesus reveals Himself to those who accepted Him in their heart. (John - 14:21) When God reveals Himself to one person, it cannot be contained within himself. Others will see God's glory in and through Him. Jesus said that those who saw Him, saw God. Those who see us must see the glory of Jesus. That is spiritual life.

A fruit - bearing life or a good life of values is not to be seen by God alone. People also must see that. That's why Jesus said "Your light must shine before men" and "all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John - 13:35) what is the meaning of this? If we love one another, that can be seen by others.

Characteristics like love, patience, humility, compassion and generosity are not virtues that can be felt in the heart alone.

If they are in the heart, definitely they will find an external expression and will be apparent outside. Growing to this extent is the accomplishment of fruit bearing life.

To Ponder

The inner beauty can be seen on the face.
But, the beauty of the face does not indicate inner beauty.

AUGUST 7

ENDURING IS IMPORTANT

1 Peter 2:14-25

If a man… endures grief, suffering wrongfully…
1 Peter 2:19

*B*efore God exalts us in due time, we may have to humble ourselves before some and accept certain slights from others for sometime. A certain official working in a business group is an honest, upright and God- fearing individual. But the newly appointed manager was an antithesis to him in everyway. Once he came to know that this official is a Christian, he picked on him and troubled him directly and indirectly in all possible manner. Because of this, the official was distressed and started to pray with faith that either the manager or he should get transferred to another branch. But, none of that happened. Finally, he resigned his job and joined another company; but it was worse than the previous job.

We can not expect that this evil world will throw a red carpet welcome to those who are honest, righteous and pious. It is natural that justice, piety and truth will suffer various tests. We can not say that God also will immediately solve all those problems and will order comfort to those who have these virtues.

Because He wants that those who are honest and truthful should mature, so that they are be able to face and accept those situations that arise against them. In such situations, chances arise where God's name will be glorified. By facing such situations, it is made clear that those who depend on the LORD always win at the end. David was righteous and was truly God-fearing. Yet, the unrighteous weapons of Saul were fashioned against him. Yet, God guided him in a way where he faced them with patience, endurance, humility and with the faith that one day God would deliver justice.

Hence, for a particular time, He did not prevent those wicked schemes that arose against David. Before exalting him, God wanted him to be prepared and through these tribulations, He wanted to make David into a polished diamond. Yes, it is true that God leads us in miraculous ways and makes us see His wonders.

To Ponder

If you want to do evil to the one who did evil to you, both of you are one and the same.

AUGUST 8

PIOUS WORK

Luke 11: 37-42

You clean the outside of the cup, and dish…
Luke 11: 39

Very often in our desire to lead a holy life, we take excessive care to correct and polish our external behaviors. We exhibit desirable traits externally to impress others with our Godliness. Others may view as saints while God sees the dark spots in our heart.

Such an attempt to present a glorious outside, while the wickedness at heart remains unchanged, affects the mind. Exhibiting good traits which we do not possess inherently, calls for laborious efforts which are tedious, hard and difficult. Moreover, such efforts cannot be consistent and create a guilty feeling.

One, who wishes to be considered as a patient person, may with his own effort try to be patient all the time but at the exact time when he is required to be patient, he may fail. The bottled up emotion burst forth at times.

Similarly, we may try to give the appearance that we are loving people but if it is a quality that is not genuinely felt within us, at the most significant and crucial time, our capacity to uphold our image may fail. A person who puts on the veneer of saint succumbs to temptation very easily. All this is the result of our efforts to cleanse our outside. We get frustrated with such efforts as they do not spring from within.

We need to experience change first in out heart. Change of heart occurs when we are connected to God. External changes take place spontaneously without any conscious efforts, when the heart is touched by our intimacy with God. What is in the pot is taken out by the ladle. If the content of the pot is unpalatable and bitter, what is scooped out in the spoon also will be bitter. Inner change is essential for outward goodness. Retaining the content of the pot as it is and washing the spoon will not improve the content that is taken out.

To Ponder

Mere verbal declaration that Christ lives is not as effective as showing it in living.

AUGUST 9

WEAKNESS IS STRENGTH

I Corinthians 1:18-31

God chose the weak things of the world
I Corinthians 1:27

We can commit our administrative skill, academic excellence, music talent, oratorical ability and materialistic affluence to God and use them all to glorify Him. This is an excellent experience. We can believe strongly that God will use them in a very blessed way. But, above all these, it is a matter of great surprise to note that God can use the weaknesses of men in a powerful way.

His power is made perfect in our weakness not in our strength. (II Corinth 12:9). Hence, it is needless for us to worry that there is no strength or great power within us… If we do not possess anything about which we can be proud, let us be satisfied with the weakness that we have. That alone is enough and we can attain God's blessings through that.

At one point of time Moses possessed intelligence, wisdom, youthful vigor, royal background and ability to perform great things. He wanted to use them all for God but God was not impressed by all that. One day Moses lost all that he had considered as his asset and strength.

He was just a shepherd and was in a very low position and asked 'who am I' (Exodus 3:11) He considered himself unfit for any great task but God accepted his low and week stage and performed great things through him. In order to use him in a powerful way God did not look for his assets. He chose him when he was weak and low.

This was so because he who acknowledges his weakness will not depend on his ability but will rely on God. He who realizes his weakness will not boast about himself but will glorify God. He, who knows his weakness, will not like to do things his way but will trust in God's way. Let us accept our weakness, confess it and rely on God. Then our weakness will become source of blessings.

To Ponder

Success that follows failure stays with men.
Failure that follows success destroys man.

AUGUST 10

WHAT IS TO BE SOUGHT?

Judges 6:14-24

I will be with you
Judges 6:16

*O*nce during my morning prayer time, I asked the Lord, 'Lord, what should I seek diligently, in this world?" The answer given by the Lord in my heart is very simple. He said, "Seek the experience of having the assurance of having Me with you". It is a fact that the prayer, "O, God, every day give me the assurance that You are with me' is the request I ask Him often.

It is not a general belief that the Lord is with us; it is not the faith that He is with us. It has to be confirmed within us. The Lord has to do something to make us have the strong assurance in our soul that He is with us. This conviction alone would act as the fortress, wall and anchor of our life at times of crisis. When we have the assurance that He is with us, we would face any trials boldly.

Gideon was concerned to get convinced that it was God, who spoke to him. Hence, he placed two tests before God. It cannot be said it is due to unbelief. Rather it was an experience of having the conviction that God is with us. Since Gideon proceeded with this assurance, he was able to face steadfastly all the oppositions that rose against him.

David did not have the general faith based on religious belief that God was with him. He interacted with the Lord daily and knew for sure that He was with him. That's why, when there was a situation to face the giant Goliath, he boldly confronted it, with no fear. The belief that God was with him gave him the courage that he would be able to overcome all the trials before him (1 Samuel 17:45-50).

The basis for all blessings is God's relationship and fellowship. God was in the midst of the Israelites who were journeying in the wilderness. This fact was proved everyday by the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire. There the Lord was sufficient for them.

To Ponder

If you find who you are before God,
others would find who they are before you.

AUGUST 11

EXPECTATIONS OF REWARD

Deuteronomy 16:11-22

Each of you must bring a gift
Deuteronomy 16:17

A sick man was seated on a road in Paris, waiting eagerly for some one to give some help to him. A man by name John Steve, who took pity on him, gave him five euro currency. Another person met John soon and gave 50 euro note saying "This is the reward for your good work". John Steve was surprised. Next day, John Steve passed the same way and met the sick man. He gave 100 euro note. After he walked a few yards, he met the man who gave him a reward on the previous day.

He kept quiet and there was no sign of giving any reward. John Steve told him that he gave 100 euro that day. The other man replied "What you did yesterday was help but what you did today is business" John Steve who expected to get back five fold of what he gave, was disappointed.

Yes, we will receive the reward for what we do for God. Whatever we do for others in His name will bring great dividends. But, if we do that with the sole intention of receiving rewards, we will be disappointed. Offering, giving and helps must spring out of a sense of commitment and sacrifice. It will become business if it is focused on rewards.

In the modern Christian journals we can see strange advertisements. It was reported in one magazine that a person who gave Rs. 100 to a ministerial organization got Rs.1 lakh profit in his business. Underneath there was a question, "Don't you wish to be blessed like this?" Won't people be induced to experience similar rewards through their offertory? But, if money is given with that view, it is not offertory but business investment. Neither is it spiritual giving. It is essential to believe that God will suitably reward our good works and generous attitude. But, at the same time, what we do must not be based on expectations of reward and self- promoting desires.

To Ponder

He who is focused on his goals,
can not be discouraged by oppositions.

AUGUST 12

PROBLEMS IN FELLOWSHIP

Genesis 13:1-18

And they separated from each other
Genesis 13: 11

For many people, it is also true that family life is not always a jolly experience. It is also true that in a family set up, people are forced to face a lot of problems and troubles. Yet, when husband and wife leave each other, the resultant life is neither a comfortable one nor a peaceful one

A wound in leg will surely cause pain. A swelling in hand will cause suffering. Yet, we cannot chop off the leg or hand to get relief from pain and suffering. All the men who complained about the loss of peace because of their wives did not get that peace when their wives passed away. All the wives who grumbled about the loss of their happiness because of their husbands never regained happiness when their husbands died. On the contrary, they felt they had lost everything.

In midst of fellowships and relationships, wives may also cause many problems. Yet, avoiding fellowships and relationships is not the correct solution for this problem. We should pray to God seeking His grace to have the patience in some troubled times and also to learn to live with certain inconveniences but we must not try to break our relationships. A few people think that isolating themselves is the right solution but it is not right. We need a lot of effort and strength to save our fellowships and relationships. We need more patience to maintain unity. Breaking relationships and fellowships to lead a lonely life is very painful and also extremely irresponsible.

The godly man Abraham also had to face many trials in the realm of unity. The Apostle Paul who advocated meekness also had to face challenges in his relationships with others. Yet, they depended on God Almighty only to solve their problems and did not shrug off their companionships and relationships.

To Ponder

When you show wrong attitudes to counter the improper attitudes of others, it means you have not gained the right outlooks in your life.

AUGUST 13

WHO ARE REALLY LOVING?

1 Johh 4:7-21

He who does not love does not know God.
1 John 4:8

There are some husbands who love their wives a lot. Even their wives would testify that their husbands are very loving. But, that does not mean they are the embodiment of love. Many husbands who love their wives do not show even an iota of that love towards their parents, Children or others. Many parents who love their children as their own life do not have any compassion for others. Hence, we can not say that their 'love' is true love.

There is love inside every man. But, you can not love everyone with that love, because most of the time, it is selfish. Just because you love your husband or wife, friends and parents, you should not think that you personify love as such. Only those who love God can love everyone else. Only they can cross the borders of selfishness and self- love so that they love everyone. Only those who have realized that they are being loved by God will be able to love God back. And the love of God will be poured in to their hearts.

Some say that they love God very much. As a result, they will worship Him well. They will give offerings to His ministries. But, they do not have any true love, concern for others. Because, their love of God is a result of a religious belief, but they never get closer to Him and enjoy His love personally.

During the days of Jesus, the Jews had the zeal for God and for their religious beliefs. They had so much love for God, they were ready to die for Him. But they were unable to love others. Hence Jesus pointed out that they did not truly love God. (John 5:42) Jesus had the love of the Father; hence He was able to love everyone. That's why He called His betrayer Judas as 'Friend!" That's why He was able to love those who crucified Him and prayed, "Father! Forgive them."

To Ponder

One who has personally enjoyed the love of God will not be able to hate others from his heart.

AUGUST 14

SOLOMON'S EXPERIENCE

Ecclesiastes 2:1-17

All of it is meaningless
Ecclesiastes 2:17

We learn more from Solomon's life experiences than from his writings. I am not used to living in luxury, enjoying high status, exalted position and commanding authority. I do not possess unmanageable riches. Yet, I was teaching that all these things will never make us happy and peaceful. But, Solomon enjoyed every possible pleasure in the world. He had abundant wealth. He was a king and consequently, enjoyed all comfort and authority. But, what did he arrive at finally? He found them all to be meaningless. They brought only grief and sorrow.

But, even today people who claim to be devoted to God, consider riches, status, authority and money as God's blessings. They still continue to honour and desire such vanities while Solomon who received all these things in abundance from God, termed them as vanity and meaningless.

If somebody tells us that all the food served in a particular hotel is very bad, we might not be tempted to develop a liking for that restaurant. Hence, when Solomon says that the worldly glamour and glory is bad, we need to pay some attention to his point of view.

The book of Ecclesiastes seems to answer some questions. It appears as if God wants us to read the book to find out Solomon's opinion. Suppose God asks us "What will be your gain, if I give you extensive wealth and covetable authority? Find out the answer by asking Solomon",

But, we need to remember also that Abraham who was endowed with great riches like Solomon was not desperate. It was because he had learnt to enjoy his relationship with God. The source of his happiness was not his riches but his intimacy with God. We also need to derive our joy from leading a life pleasing to God. Then riches will not disturb us. Abundance will not appear sickening. Life will not be meaningless.

To Ponder

Seeds sown on hard ground will be wasted, blessings in the life of an immature person are also wasted

AUGUST 15

FREEDOM

Psalm 119:1-16

To keep Your precepts diligently…
Psalm 119:4

In foreign countries those who travel by car and those who drive car should wear seat belts for security reasons. However, in India, many do not like restrictions like this. They prefer to travel freely without wearing the belt. So, in case they happen to meet with an accident, they cannot avoid getting seriously injured. Freedom is essential for man. But, not accepting any restrains desiring for freedom everywhere and in everything would cause us danger.

In western countries like America, freedom for an individual is much stressed on. They demand for a freedom by which they want to live as they like, with no restrictions and enjoy things as they like. These days, such thirst for freedom is rampant all over the world and an indiscipline that does not like any moral ethics and code has multiplied. As a result man is made to wander without mental peace and contentment.

The Word of the Lord, His Scriptures, His commands related to morality etc., may appear to be against our freedom. Hence, we may not like to be restricted by them. But, if we are not thus restrained, our life would be hurt in many ways and there would be much agony when negative situations arise.

In the midst of the situation of much blessing, King Solomon, was keen on enjoying all the comforts, without allocating any control for himself. He took pride in his state of not denying anything that his heart desired. He went to the shameful extent of marrying thousand women. As a result his life invoked God's wrath.

Yes, it is essential that we are built up by the Lord's Scriptures and commandments in our life's journey. Or else, many harmful, confusing and peace wrecking things that destroy us will attack us relentlessly, with no restrain.

To Ponder

Your knowledge about the world is little, until you know about yourself well.

AUGUST 16

WITNESS FOR TRANSFORMATION

I John 2:1-17

The man who says 'I know him' but...
I John 2:4

The books written by an evangelist were read with great admiration by a group of people who were interested in literature. His ideas were relished by them. They wanted his books to reach a wider circle of readership. Therefore, they wanted to have his books printed on a larger scale. One day, they went to the writer and expressed their desire to widen the distribution of his books because his ideas were found to be very useful to humanity. The writer replied "You don't have to do such thing for me. First, please let me know the good changes my ideas effected in your life." They were not able to give any specific response.

There are some who identify what is good. They are attracted by good ideas and are moved by excellent teachings. When they are touched by certain ideas, they want those ideas to be spread everywhere. But, their life remains untouched by these ideas which they find good. They identify the good ideas but, do not allow their nature to be transformed by the ideas. On the surface they are moved but remain the same in their inner being.

We want everyone to come into the saving grace of Jesus. We want many people to enjoy the salvation granted by Jesus. But, if we cannot show the result of this salvation in our life, there is no use. If we wish others to enjoy salvation, we need to show how our life has undergone changes after our salvation.

Suppose a man wearing dirty clothes, speaks at length about a brand of soap that washes well, who will believe him? If the number of people who accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior has not increased, the reason is not because gospel has not been proclaimed. It is because those who have received Jesus as their savior do not show the impact in their lives. They do not lead a life which reflects Godly attitudes.

To Ponder

There is no doubt that God is light, but are we light for somebody?

AUGUST 17

THOUGHTS MUST CHANGE

Acts 9: 17 – 29

Did not believe that he was a disciple
Acts 9: 26

You firmly believe that someone is a loveless person. Thereafter if you feel that he would love you or if you desire that he should love you, it is a waste of time for it would never happen. Sometimes, we are unable to see the things we would like to see in them. However hard we pray for them, all our efforts are in vain. The main reason for this is their unwillingness to change. Sometimes, the reason may be our disbelief that we will be able to see some change in them. Though they have changed, our eyes are unable to see any changes in them because we have already made up our mind that they would not change.

A pastor was praying for a man who was accused by his wife as very cruel and quick-tempered person. He continued to pray for him and also counseled him for a long time. After some time, he saw radical changes in him but his wife would not accept it. She continued to accuse of not changing in his behaviour. Yes! The pastor was able to see the changes in him but not his own wife.

What is the reason? It is true that the husband had changed but the wife was not willing to see the truth because of her unchanging attitude. She continued to accuse him of a stony heart and adamant spirit. It is not enough if we just go on expecting changes in others but we should change our own preconceived notions about them. Our attitude of not accepting the signs of transformations in others should change. Just because the changes are not up to our mark, we cannot reject them.

A minor change in the initial stages alone would pave the way for a major transformation at a later stage. So we should respect that minor change and also accept it. But, if we make up our mind that someone is a hard nut to crack, then, it would be very tough to change that impression even if he changes a lot.

To Ponder

He who knows to love good people alone is a man, not the one who knows to hate the bad people.

AUGUST 18

SUPPRESSION OF TRUTH

John 12:35-50

They would not confess their faith for fear.
John 12:42

Copernicus was a Christian preacher of yesteryears. Besides being a pastor, he was an astronomer. He discovered many truths concerning the universe but those truths were contrary to the established beliefs of the religious leaders of his times. He did not like to earn their displeasure. So, he suppressed all his findings and did not disclose them. But today, the modern astronomers are proving that what all Copernicus discovered are true.It is not enough if one discovers new truth. He needs a special boldness to speak about that. He might earn the anger and hatred of others. Though such repulsive reception is inevitable, truth at one point of time will be received, recognized and commended.

Many of the Pharisees believed that Jesus had come from God (John 3:2) Nicodemus also believed that, yet he could not affirm that with courage and act on that. Mary believed that Jesus was Messiah and even when He was alive, she proclaimed that openly by pouring the expensive perfume on Him. That's why her fragrant act permeates the whole world even today.

Nicodemus must have spent more than Mary did on perfume but what he bought was used at the time of the burial of Jesus. Fear of rejection silenced him when Jesus was alive. He could not show forth his devotion when the opportunity was available. He could pay his obeisance only after the death of the Master.

God reveals truth to many people but they do not disclose that because they fear that others will be offended. Fear of incurring the displeasure of others and fear of losing their good will and the connected advantages makes them suppress the truth; but these suppressed truths will constantly trouble them and disturb their peace. Those who do not speak out the truth that they know, later on, begin to believe lies and become victims of deception.

To Ponder

Either stand for truth or reject it,
wavering between truth and lies is hazardous.

AUGUST 19

SUFFERING IS ALSO NEEDED

1 Peter 1:1-13

If need be, you have been distressed...
1 Peter 1:6

If a physician desires not to inflict any hurt to the emotions or the body of a patient, the patient will never be healed. Undergoing certain treatments and taking few medications will be difficult for the patient, of course, but he has to accept those difficulties if he wants to become alright. If God decides that we should never suffer any difficulties, then we will never be healthy in our spiritual life. And the purposes of the LORD will not be fulfilled in our life. Only through certain difficulties and sufferings, God can make our life holy and useful to others.

It is because our natural instincts, ideas and traits are changed according to the desire of the LORD only when we walk through the path of few sufferings. Just listening to sermons, preaching and lessons may give us an indication about the changes we have to undergo, but they do not change us completely.

King Solomon did not pass through such a path of affliction. He enjoyed the goodness of a prosperous life wholly. Yet, his life did not reach greater heights. The circumstances of a prosperous life prevented him from developing better virtues and more character. Though he possessed great wisdom, he did not possess any exemplary character that others could follow.

That was why, God first led His chosen people like Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and David through path of afflictions. That was why, though He had promised Canaan, the land of honey and milk, He led the Israelites through the wilderness filled with troubles.

At times, our prayers asking for certain difficulties to be removed from our life may be justified. Yet, God permits them in our life because through them, our ways are mended according to His will and we learn the knowledge of God.

To Ponder

Do not see how many times one has fallen.
See how many times he got up.

AUGUST 20

GOD'S EYES

Psalm 139:1-24

You know when I sit and when I rise...
Psalm 139:2

A married woman got a call from another lady. The voice on the other side asked, "Is your husband a man of good character?" The lady who received the call replied, "Yes, he is very good". The woman on the other side asked, "Hasn't he ever cheated you". The answer of the wife was, "No, I have never been deceived by him". Then the voice asked "How can you be so sure of this?" The married woman said "Don't I know my husband who never hides anything from me? But, why do you ask me such questions in the morning hours?"

The woman at the other end said "Nothing great. For the past ten years your husband was friendly with me. Now for the past few months, he is friendly with another lady". Many hypocrites behave as innocent righteous people before others and they succeed in this kind of drama. Many people mistake wicked ones who are like Ahab in reality, as saintly Elijahs. Some are gifted with the ability to deceive others. May be they received this gift from Satan. There are many who deceive others by their innocent exterior.

Man may conceal his real nature from other human beings but we need to remember that nothing can escape the eyes of the omniscient God. Joseph could have yielded to the lust of Potiphar's wife and still continued as a righteous person outwardly. He could have deceived everyone very easily.

But, he desisted from entry into sin because he knew that God's eyes were watching everything. Since he was aware of the fact that His eyes were on him, he wanted to please God. He who has the feeling that God watches him is a real saint. That knowledge helps him to escape from hypocrisy and the deceitful traps of the hypocritical world.

To Ponder

When we are focused on pleasing God, we cease to worry about man's opinion.

AUGUST 21

VERSE BOARD

James1:16-27

Do not merely listen to the word...
James 1:22

Once I happened to visit the house of a renowned Christian. There I found the verse "I am holy so you also be holy" written on a beautiful board, hung on the wall. It was attracting the attention of all those who went to his house. But, the atmosphere of the house, the dress, speech and behaviour of all those in the house looked far different from the content of the verse. It looked as if their attitude and conduct did not have relevance to the idea expressed in the verse. May be they who lived according to the worldly standard, thought that such a verse would fetch for them the blessings of God.

Many people consider that filling the house with scripture verses, buying verse stickers and memorizing numerous verses will usher into their lives great blessings. Yes, of course it is a blessed thing to do all these. But, we need to bear in mind that to the extent we honour and regard the verses, we are expected to lead a life pleasing to God. It is because Bible verses are not magical charm. Bible is not a book of magic. The Bible was given to us to help us know God's heart, His will ,guidance and counsel. The important question is how far this knowledge helps us to understand God and His ways so that we live according to His will.

The Bible is a mirror. Through this we must find out who we are and what changes need to be made in our life. We must come forward to correct ourselves. We might consider ourselves better than those who don't read and meditate on the Bible. Because, we know and regard Bible as an important book, we may consider ourselves superior to those who don't give any importance to the Bible. This attitude is not wrong.

But, let us not forget that God's anger will be directed more at those who know and respect the Bible yet do not live according to it, than those who are ignorant of it.

To Ponder

If Self dominates in the place where God ought to be, chaos and confusion will reign where there should be peace.

AUGUST 22

CLEANLINESS AND BEAUTY

Galatians 5:13-26

Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...
Galatians 5:22

A friend used to keep his house clean and tidy. Nobody who visited him could see any dirt or dust there. He had earned a good name for his clean house. Yet, the scene of the house was not pleasant. It was because he was a miser; he would not buy even the essential things; no curtains; nothing. It was devoid of any beautifying artistic things. There was nothing in the house to attract the visitors.

Yes, it was a clean house, but was not a beautiful one. Some Christians are truly clean Christians. No one can see any fault or wrongs in them. They would not do any sin that is condemned by the Bible. Likewise, they cannot tolerate if other Christians have such faults or wrongs. Yet, they are not beautiful Christians. It is because nobody could see their loving deeds. Nobody could see them acting in such a way to make others happy; nobody knows that they have a kind heart; nobody has seen humility, meekness, long suffering and an encouraging attitude in them.

They have not given room for their spiritual garment to be stained; but there is no colour or artistic designs in that garment. In short, they do not have the excellent divine characteristics that show spiritual beauty. Spiritual life is not a tree that does not give bad fruits; rather it is a tree that gives forth plenty of good fruits. Spiritual life is a life that has good qualities based on love, which attracts others.

We don't talk with hatred; but do we talk with love? We don't take anyone's possession; but do we give for others? We don't carry ourselves with pride; but does our humility shine when it is put to test? We don't pull down anyone; but how many do we lift up? We don't talk bad about anyone; but, how many do we understand? Yes, besides avoiding wrongs, we need to beautify our spiritual life with good qualities and works.

To Ponder

**He, who is firm in his noble principles,
will be excellent in his actions.**

AUGUST 23

THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 Corinthians 11: 20 – 31

Whoever eats this bread…in an unworthy manner…
1 Corinthians 11: 27

I have seen the Holy Communion sessions in some churches. I know many of the people who stand in the line to take part in the communion the moment the pastor announces that the Lord's Supper is ready. Some of them do not know what repentance is. Some others do not know what redemption is. Some have the habit of drinking alcohol;some boldly steal the offerings given in the church; some are famous for leading factional fights in the church; some deceive their wives; some are dishonest to their husbands; some illegally make money; yet some others are habitual bribe-takers. This list can go on. But, the pity is that all of them live with the name tag of Christians.

The Bible clearly lays down the requirements to take part in the Lord's Supper. Many people take part in the Holy Communion thinking that it is a religious rite that brings blessings to them. But in the Bible, the Apostle Paul cautions that those who take part in the communion should not be unworthy people.

In the past, we might have been very bad sinners but that is not a restriction for taking part in the communion. But, at the time of taking part in the communion, we should have the assurance of having received the forgiveness of sins, the assurance of redemption and the assurance of having become the children of God through born-again experience.

Those who have been washed by the blood of Jesus and made holy alone must take part in the communion. Those who lovingly desire the divine relationship and the divine deeds alone must take part in it. Those who have good and strong fellowship with Christ and His children alone can take part in it. Those who have the goal of living a pure, witnessing life for God and who act accordingly alone can take part in the communion.

To Ponder

The only excellent way to substantiate a falsehood is nothing but to stay grounded in the truth at any cost.

AUGUST 24

HASTY DECISIONS

I Samuel 13:-1-14

As soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering
I Samuel 13:10

She realized that she had missed her hand-bag. She handed over her other luggage to another woman in the Railway station and went in search of her bag. In a short while she recovered her hand-bag. However, within that time, the woman to whom she gave all her belongings had vanished with her things.

Sometimes, the hasty efforts we take to solve a problem pave ways for many more problems. Some people seek the guidance of fake pastors to solve their family problem and end up in bigger problems. Some, who seek the prayers of false servants of God to get delivered from the clutches of the demons, fall a prey to their deceptive snare.

The distress caused by some problem makes us believe wrong people, go for wrong solutions and wrong ways finally ruins us. Yes, at any situation we should not give room for anxiety and hasty decisions but be keen on seeking solutions in God's ways.

Out of fear and anxiety that the Philistines may defeat him, king Saul offered the sacrifice instead of waiting for Samuel. As a result he lost the support of God. Yet another time, he sought after a medium to find a solution for his problem. Hence, the wrath of God came upon him.

A person went to a gifted minister of God to get prophetic words concerning his life problems. Whatever that servant of God said as from God, seemed to be correct. So, trusting that he is a mighty servant of God, he again and again went to him. That minister of God swindled all his money and jewels saying, "The Lord spoke this; the Lord spoke that…" Anything should be kept in the presence of God and we should be keen to receive His counsels. On whomever we place our trust, we need to examine whether it is correct on the basis of the Scriptures.

To Ponder

Search for the reasons for your failure in you, seek God for the secret of your success.

AUGUST 25

IF SINS ABOUND

Luke 17:20-37

Just as it was in the days of Noah-
Luke 17:26

We live in a world that is filled with bitterness, wickedness, corruption and debauchery. Sinful things operate with great force and apparently it looks as if man is powerless to avoid temptation. The situations appear as if it is impossible to lead a good life.

In the days of the past, people had to control their feet from walking to sinful places but now one need not go to places of sin. All temptations come to our door step and surround us. Now one has to strive hard to push these away. They stand in our way and block our progress.

Opportunities for indulgence in wrong worldly pleasures and sexual sins surround a person and continue to entice him. Every thing is within his reach. All forbidden pleasures can be reached with a mere click. What does this time indicate? Some say that the message of the time is that it is impossible to lead a saintly life.

Some say that it is quite hard to lead a really spiritual life. But in reality the modern time conveys a totally different message. The modern days stress the necessity of an intimacy with God. It seems to say that man needs more strength and more grace from God to fight a good fight. These are the warnings of the time.

God is powerful enough to make us lead a good life in the midst of surrounding temptations. He can protect us from devouring sin. So, instead of focusing on the power and presence of sin, we need to focus on the power of God.

We need to become aware of the prevailing grace of God. This is available for us if we posses the right vision, reliance on God, and adequate faith. Even if we were to be alive at a period like Noah's time, we can be righteous like Noah.

To Ponder

Let us, not worry about what we can't do,
but, let us not be careless about what we can do.

AUGUST 26

REASONABLE? OR PURPOSE?

Isaiah 53:1-12

Yet He opened not His mouth'
Isaiah 53:7

Once, a group of passengers were waiting for quite a long time for a particular bus. When the bus finally arrived, they all rushed ahead and in the melee two persons started to argue.

Ultimately it resulted in assaults and the bus left the place, leaving them behind. Since both failed to yield to each other, they could not get into the bus for which they had been waiting thus long.

Most often when families are wrecked, it can be seen that it is because each member claimed that she/ he was right. Many families are strong in their stand that they are correct and rational.

Hence, many relationships are broken; many fellowships end up in failure; However, if we keep on fighting for justice, we can never fulfil the purpose in our life.

Sometimes, more than the good reasons, good purposes are very important. Many husbands and wives could have avoided divorce if one of them had given up their reasonable cause. Had they been submissive a little, so many good establishments could have been prevented from great wreckage.

Think of Abraham! He did not fight for justice with Sarah or Lot. As a result God's purpose was fulfilled perfectly in Abraham's family and spiritual life. God exalted him in every way.

Joab, who was the commander of David's army, was confident that he had a sensible reason in the matter concerning his brother's murder.

However, since he did not have the attitude of yielding, he lost the chance of being honoured though he was in a great position.

To Ponder

Be patient until others see the good in you; be quick to remove the evil in you before others see it.

AUGUST 27

CHANGE OF MIND

Romans. 2: 12-29

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly
Romans 2:28

A man, who had been living in America for quite some years, was visited by some of his relatives from India. They found him totally changed in appearance. He was dressed typically like an American and ate American food. The impact of the American culture on him was obvious. What one of the relatives said about him was interesting.

He said "More or less he has become like an American but his mind remains the same. He continues to be the same person. He continues to possess the same qualities that he had while he was in India. He has retained his anger, envy, jealousy, greed, lack of respect for others, bitterness and ego."

Some peoples' spiritual life too is in this state, very similar to that of the man who had not changed inwardly. After they are saved and start worshipping in a church, there may have been several changes. Pious activities and appearance may make them look different. Of course new factors like prayer, Bible reading, some good acts, involvement in ministry, pious words and confession of faith may have started showing in their life. But, one sad thing is that self and self related attitudes that had been dominating before they were saved remain unchanged.

The most important event in the life of a Christian is the inward change. Whatever be the external changes and outward appearances, if the inner attitudes have not changed it is like washing the vessel outwardly. In some critical situations in the life of those who profess to be very religious, their real attitudes will be expressed. Their reactions are found to be stained with sin. This is so because they have not reached the proper spiritual experience which will result in inner changes. Unless and until we go through the inner changes, the good appearance we put up outwardly will not be permanent.

To Ponder

Efforts can produce changes,
though not total but a few.

AUGUST 28

A CHRISTIAN

Matthew 5: 1 – 16

That they may see your good works
Matthew 5: 16

Someone had robbed money from a person working in an office. Many people suspected that the peon in that office, who was a Christian, would have done it. When the non-Christian manager of that office heard about this,he said, "Do not unnecessarily suspect him. He is a Christian and a Christian would not steal"

These words broke the heart of that peon. He felt very sorry that he had spoiled the confidence, a non-Christian, had on the Christians. His guilty conscience made him go straight to the manager and say, "Sir, please forgive me. I am the one who robbed that money" The manager calmly said, "You accepted your mistake because you are a Christian for Christians will not hide their faults"

Some are not Christians but claim respect and regard because of their Christian names. people presume that Christians are different kind of people. It is here our responsibility goes up. When a Christian lives a non-witnessing life, he becomes a faithless man.

A police official reprimanded some people who broke the traffic rules but made one man pay the penalty also. He told him, "You make me pay a fine because of your aversion for me for I am a Christian" That official who was not a Christian said, "Christians hear teachings about laws and the need for obeying them. You are fined for failing to respect the law and to follow it"

Christians have the responsibility to shun mistakes. In case they commit them, they must regret for them. There are a lot of Christians living in the southern districts of Tamilnadu like Thirunelveli, Nagercoil and Tutucorin. But, when we see many Christian names among the list of criminals of these districts, we are forced to hang our heads in shame. Christians are to be trusted with closed eyes but their sinful deeds are a disgrace to our Lord God.

To Ponder

No one doubts that God is light.
The issue is to whom are you shining as light.

AUGUST 29

SILENT KILLERS

Psalm139:1-24

If there be any way in me that is grievous…
Psalm 139:24

When our body is afflicted by certain ailments, we immediately know of that. We are able to identify the sickness by the weakness and distress it causes and are able to find a cure for that. But there are certain diseases which we will not be able to realize nor identify though they are affecting us as these are very silent. Most of the time, people discover that they have cancer only much later, because it does not give any trouble initially, but acts slowly on the background.

Likewise, we are able to easily identify certain sins and transgressions and are able to realize them for what they are immediately. But, there are certain sins which are not easy to recognize as they mask themselves and keep acting on in a 'sinless' manner. For example, when we have an altercation with someone, we will realize that it is a sin. But nurturing enmity against that person in our hearts will not appear as a sin right away. When we lash out at someone, we are able to know that is a transgression. But if we harbour bitterness in our hearts, it may not appear as a enormous transgression.

Similarly, an unforgiving nature, envy, non-compliance, materialism, pride and being worldly-minded are sins that hide deep inside us and kill us eventually. It is difficult to identify them easily. But they are like cancer. They are viruses that are silent killers. Our heart is the birth place of all sins and transgressions.

Many sins and violations do not manifest directly in our actions. Most of them stay in our hearts in the form of thoughts. When God rejected Cain and his offerings, he had not done any sinful deeds. But deep inside him, he had stored the bitterness, anger, envy, aggravation, hatred and enmity that were needed for those sinful deeds.

To Ponder

One who shows off a non-existent virtue,
loses those virtues he already has.

AUGUST 30

LESSONS TO LEARN

Hebrew 11: 32-40

Through, faith they conquered Kingdoms
Hebrew. 11:33

We need to learn many lessons from the failures of others but on the other hand, we need to teach others good lessons through our success and accomplishments. Those who achieved great things have learnt numerous things from those who had met failures in life. These lessons have encouraged and enriched those who wish to do better.

David's indiscipline and weakness in one particular area continue to serve as a warning for us. We learn that even a valiant conqueror can slip into a despicable sin and the trap can be subtle, silent and invisible. A conqueror may travel far and wide to claim new honors and victories but all the time he might be close to failure. The possibility of failing will be with him even at a time when he is making great conquests .So, we learn a lesson from David's failure and are cautioned to be alert.

We can learn many lessons from Joseph's victories. However much temptation tries to overpower the man, with a strong relationship with God, it can never make him yield to its power. This is the lesson we learn from the life of Joseph. His victory is a challenge to all those who justify their sins giving lame excuses like, "My youthful force made me fall. I was forced to do that. I was not able to avoid".

Numerous people fall victims very easily to greed, materialism, love of fame, carnal desires, extravagance and sexual sins. Their miserable fall warns many. Just being warned is of no use in climbing the ladder of success.

We need to make necessary efforts to become people of success who could inspire others. We need to conceive in our mind that nothing can overcome our wish to succeed. We need to believe strongly that love of money can be overcome, extravagance can be avoided and worldly lusts cannot uproot us.

To Ponder

If others cannot learn something from us,
we need to question whether we have received anything from God.

AUGUST 31

DAILY EXPERIENCE

Matthew 6:5-18

Give us this day our daily bread…
Matthew 6:11

I know a motorbike mechanic who on some days used to be working unceasingly day and night. He was so focused on his work that he never gave himself time to eat, sleep and rest. People who saw him stuck to his work with so much of commitment thought, that India needed such workforce. But he did not much benefit from his work, because on other days he just idled away his time. He was not involved even in a minor work. He watched TV and wasted time in unprofitable conversation.

There are some people who do not read the Bible and pray every day. They seem to lack spiritual fervor on ordinary days. But when they face some problems in life, they become very busy attending meetings of all sorts wherever they are organized. Such spiritual idlers spring to action when problems press them.

Suppose we fast for four days and take highly nourishing food on the other three days we will not much benefit by this sudden consumption of nutritious food. Prayers, desire to seek God and hunger for the word of God must not become acute only on particular days. They must be present in a person on all days. A sudden spurt of such desires and a period of indifference to such activities will not be of any use. A person must seek God daily, enjoy a good relationship with Him and walk in His ways. Only then, his life will be blessed and he will acquire spiritual power.

Some people look like blazing torch on Sundays and remain cold logs on other days. Some people spend time in reading the Bible and other religious look at a time but do not read the Bible systematically. Some even read my meditation book at a stretch, at one sitting but do not like to read it daily. This is like gulping at one time all the coffee that one would drink for ten days. We need to seek God in a systematic way on a daily basis.

To Ponder

We need God's grace and mercy everyday of our life.
So, we must seek Him everyday.

SEPTEMBER 1

IS PRAYER ENOUGH?

Luke 9:12-17

You give them something to eat.
Luke 9:13

A lady member of a church was affected with lung problem and she needed a huge amount for her treatment. Immediately, as per the Pastor's advice, the prayer group of the church got ready to pray for her with fasting. All of them prayed that God should send her monetary help and meet her needs. After the prayer, a member of the group shared his view thus: "The answer for our prayer is in our hands. If the Lord has to work in response to our prayer, then He has to first of all work in us. He has given all of us sufficient finance to help for her medical expenses". This was bitter to some people; but this is a fact.

A particular person, when he wants to help someone, would never take anything from his pocket. He would do it only through other who are wealthy friends. Many Christians have the burden and desire to help others. But they would pray to God and ask Him to do that. They, on the other hand, would not do any thing to help others. Certain churches have funds to the tune of lakhs and crores. Yet, they would not buy even a fan or chair that is needed for the church, with that fund. They would ask the congregation to donate for that.

God needs instruments to do good. We are the instruments. We are His body. We have to be prepared to work, when He desires. It is not spiritually proper to command God without doing the least we can do, on our part. How can God answer our prayer, if we are unable to do even that which is possible for us?

Some people are ready to pray for others. They are ready to fast. They are ready to collect money. But they are not ready to lose even a small portion of what they have. The Samaritan, who did not know God, helped the man who was lying half dead, with what little he had. No elders came forward when there was no food for anyone. But, a little boy willingly gave the bread and fish he had with him.

To Ponder

If you want God to do something for you, first know what you can do to man.

SEPTEMBER 2

FOCUSED ON EVIL

Hebrews 6:1-20

We are confident of better things
Hebrews 6:9

When we see a single bad trait in a person who possesses several good characteristics we are generally grieved. When we just see one flaw in a person, we tend to ignore all the other good traits which we find in him. One person may have said many good things about us but one bad comment of his makes us sink in sorrow and it breaks our heart. This is human tendency.

Our eyes will be drawn by something bad more easily and quickly than they are by the numerous good aspects. We are tempted to see the bad side of a person before we could see the better side of his personality. We harp on others' defects when we fail to realize that we too are deficient in some aspects. We are grieved by one single defect we see in others.

Spiritual people must have a different outlook. We need not close our eyes to others' defects but we need to develop the mentality to identify their good characteristics also. If a segment of a fruit is rotten, we don't throw it away. If a small part of a brinjal (Vegetable) is rotten; we don't just discard it totally. We remove the bad part and use the rest of it.

Unless we love a person, we can't see the good in them. We must see what good they have and be satisfied .We must not just discard them on the basis of their small negligible defects.

If our heart lacks love, we will try to find a reason to hate others. If there is love in our heart, we will try to find a reason to love others. People seek to find some reason to hate a person when he is alive.

But, after his death, they try to discover some good aspect in him which can be commended. Let us not discard a person just because of some small defects.

To Ponder

Anyone can condemn evil;
But, only a few can commend the good.

SEPTEMBER 3

GOD'S MINISTRY

Acts 13:17-36

After he had served his own generation
Acts 13:36

A person retired from the Transport department after serving for several years. Once he told a servant of God, "You are blessed, for you are doing good ministry for the Lord. I did not have the privilege to do ministry" That servant of God replied, "You surely must have got chances to do ministry; but I guess you failed to use those chances" At once he said, "Where did I get the privilege? I don't know to preach or write a book…"

The idea that those who know to preach, write books and lead a church alone are ministers of God is not correct. God's ministry is not merely preaching, conducting worship services, establishing churches and conducting special Gospel meetings. Any work or act that manifests the Lord and His divinity is a ministry.

Was Abraham a preacher? Was David an Evangelist? Was Joseph a pastor? Was Daniel a High Priest? Was Nehemiah a Bible Scholar? We see all of them as great ministers of the Lord, in the Bible. Today, preaching ministry is not enough; writing ministry is not enough; ministry that conducts worship is not enough.

There is more need for ministers of God who can fulfil the responsibilities given to them with fear of God and manifest Him. Plenty of ministries that do their business with integrity, honesty, with the concern for public welfare and with the attitude of respecting the laws, are needed. Ministry of living a life of reflecting Christ among the family, with good qualities and characters is needed.

Stages alone are not the places that accomplish the will of the Lord. Worship spots are not the only places for people to see the Lord's glory. The places we live, and wherever we work should become ministerial spots that manifest God's glory.

To Ponder

If you want to run away from evil,
first learn to run hastily towards good.

SEPTEMBER 4

TRANSFORMATION

Ecclesiates 2:1-17

All of it is meaningless,
Ecclesiates 2:17

A person accepted Christ and saw many good changes in his life. He used to share about the changes with people of other faith. One day one of then told him. "You lived in a rented house in the past and even now you continue to live in a rented house. You used to ride to work spot on cycle. Even now there is no change. You used to work in a factory and you continue in the same job. There has not been any visible changes in your financial status. If this is so, how can you claim that there have been changes through Jesus Christ."

The child of God replied "I did not have peace in the past and lived in anxieties and confusions. Today the house I live in hasn't changed but there are no quarrels and conflicts. I am living in peace. While I rode on cycle I used to be grumbling all the time. Today I sing while I ride. I used to work in the factory with great burden and bitterness cursing myself all the time. I was not committed to my work but today in the same place I work with great joy and satisfaction.

Of course, there is no change in my financial position. but now I am contented with what I have. These are the changes I have experienced through Jesus Christ". The other friend could not say anything after this. Yes, the greatest blessing we receive through Jesus is the change that occurs in our mind.

The new heart that we receive from Jesus, offers hope, peace and satisfaction in the midst of situations that may continue to remain constant and unchanged. Our attitudes do not fluctuate through the situations that are hard and unpleasant. There are the precious things which are not attained by many. Real blessing is to have full contentment with whatever we have and peace which Paul experienced. This is better than acquiring abundant wealth like Solomon.

To Ponder

If material possessions multiply one time for a person, desires also will multiply several times.

SEPTEMBER 5

IDEAL TEACHER

II Timothy 3:1-17

You know all about my teaching, my way of life…
I Timothy 3:10

I was thinking deeply about the meditation I should write for Sep 5, 2012. As I was in deep thought, the telephone rang. It was Sister Jonah who was working in a School in Delhi who called me to convey wishes on Teachers Day. So far, no one had greeted me on Teachers day, because I was not a teacher. In the course of the conversation, she said that we don't commend a computer just because it teaches more than what a teacher does. At the same time, anyone who does something that impacts others in a noble way deserves to be commended as a good teacher.

Teacher's job is a very noble one but verbal teaching alone is not enough. We must live in such a way that others learn something from our life. Just like a computer that is programmed to do something, we can teach others. It is a work like that of a computer. Other's brains can be polished by such a work but their nature will not be impacted by the effort. Teaching can impart knowledge and sharpens the efficiency of the brain.

But, a man's life can shine and sparkle only if he imbibes good values and godly traits. In order to help him do that, his heart must be illuminated. This can be achieved through the teacher who is virtuous. Only such a life ignites another life and kindles the fire. Many people function as teaching machines. They do not offer anything to others.

Among the teachers who have been teaching in this world none can be compared with Jesus .He taught more by his life style than by His words. People were impressed by the way He spoke. His disciples were encouraged to live like Him because they were impressed and impacted by His unique nature. What thousand books can't teach, one good life can. A saint who walks in the ways of God can impact others more than many others who have secured high degrees.

To Ponder

Let us not bother about the source of a good idea;
Let us check what it conveys to us.

SEPTEMBER 6

FAMISHING

Isaiah 44:1-8

Water on him who is thirsty
Isaiah 44:3

Once, I went to a shop to have a cup of tea. There I was drawn by the banana bajis and I, who usually avoid oily foods, bought one and had it. The reason was I was famishing and the hunger pangs forced me to have a food item that is not healthy to me.

Similarly, the hunger pangs in man's heart compel him to do things which are not good to him. However, God quenches such hunger and thirst that arise in man, with His love and fellowship. When they are thus quenched, the wrong pleasures, comforts and desires of this world cannot pull him much.

It is the insatiable hunger and unquenchable thirst in man that makes him run head long towards many evils and harmful pleasures. TV, cinema, social networks, modern man's way of life etc., increase the hunger and thirst in an average man.

As a result, love for luxury, sexual desires and lusty needs enslave man. Ultimately, many wrongs, crimes and irreparable damages are caused. What is the way to avoid this? Resisting them forcefully and trying to control the mind would not yield much result.

First of all, we need to find a way to satisfy and quench the hunger and thirst that compel man to run towards these wrong things. There is no other way except the fellowship of God to quench the thirst.

The Lord Jesus Christ offered His life on the cross in order to bring His relationship with man. As a result of His atonement for sin, man got the privilege of inviting God within himself.

When this divine relationship is sought after, the hunger and thirst are satisifed in a healthy way. Such a heart alone can easily overcome the forces that try to make man run in wrong worldly ways.

To Ponder

Listen to the sound of the holy Words of God, the noise of filthy desires will die down.

SEPTEMBER 7

THE RICH BEGGAR

Luke 16:19 - 31

When it is in the power of your hand to do good...
Proverbs 3:27

In a church, they decided to help the poor and needy among their members. So they came forward to prepare a list of those who are really impoverished and need aid. Then a committee member mentioned of the name of a particular believer. He said according to the church records, this particular believer had to be the poorest of all of them.

When he mentioned the name of the believer, everyone burst out laughing. Because, that particular believer was the richest of all the members of that church. Then, why did they call him the poorest of all? Because he was the one who gave the minimum offerings to the church and the ministries. He was the only one who did not give anything to the charity that aids the poor and needy.

This is the condition of many. They will have lot of money. But, their heart will be dry, without any mercy, compassion or love. If one has abundant wealth, but still is stingy, he is not a rich person. He is a pathetic beggar. Those who have money and wealth should give generously to others like a fruit bearing tree. Those who are unable to give to the poor and the needy may have much wealth. But in reality, they are suffering from a kind of poverty. Nabal was a rich person. But during the troubled times of David, he was not ready to do even a small favour to him. He did not have any compassion or love or concern in his heart that is needed to understand the difficulties of others and help accordingly.

If God has given us the ability to earn, then we have a duty to give generously to those who are in need and to the work of God. If one thinks that he will keep whatever he has earned as it belongs only to him, then it means that wealth is going to become a curse unto him and will distress him. The Bible says when it is in the power of your hands to do good and if you don't, then it is a sin.

To Ponder

One who does not spend money is not rich.
He is just a caretaker who is taking care of it.

SEPTEMBER 8

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Nehemiah4:7-23

We will put an end to the work.
Nehemiah 4:11.

*T*here are many to make him fall but there is none to prevent him from rising again" This comment was made about a person. It doesn't mean that a hero or conqueror will never fall. He can be defeated but no force on earth can prevent him from rising up again. A true hero can fall but never stays in that condition. He will rise and proceed. Yes, we may have been defeated by some.

The first part of David's life was a jubilant and victorious time. The news that a shepherd boy annihilated the cruel giant pushed Saul to the second place. David enjoyed a short period of success, commendation and recognition. But, after that he went through a series of disappointments. But, he never whined and thought that his life had come to a stand -still. His desire to prove his might as well as his faith that God will help him to succeed took him to the summit of victory again.

We may have failed in our hopeful endeavors to lead a peaceful life. Our dream of leading a joyful life may have been shattered. Our inability to cultivate good virtues may trouble us. We may have yielded to temptations several times. We may have failed to maintain good relationships. Progress and promotion may have eluded us. But, all these need not stamp one as a person incapable of winning. Let us not be branded as a failure or quitter.

In the places where exactly we may have failed we can establish a victory if we try again with the help of Jesus. As a child of God, we can claim victory in acquiring and maintaining joy, peace and hope since our victory in these aspects is assured. So, while enjoying these blessing we can keep on trying to sustain them in our lives. We may have been defeated several times but we need not lose joy, peace and hope. With undaunted courage we need to march forward hoping to win next time.

To Ponder

Many will benefit when the righteous prospers,
many will fall when the unrighteous flourishes.

SEPTEMBER 9

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

I Corinthians 2:1-16

But the natural man…
I Corinthians 2:14

The Pastor of a church had the habit of repeatedly preaching about one's transformation of heart and nature, which he considered to be the most important. Some of the members, who were vexed with his preaching on repentance, began to object to his practice. They said, "You are again and again preaching on repentance. Hence, we are unable to know much about other spiritual matters". The pastor replied, "Those who have had true repentance would know many more matters, even without me preaching. But, there is no use even if I preach hard about these matters to those who have not repented".

Excellent teaching on how to win a race in the Olympics could be given to a totally handicapped man, who cannot walk. He too can listen to the teaching with rapt attention. But, the teaching alone cannot make him run. Similarly, excellent preaching can be made to a person, who has not received the experience of being born again. Through a genuine repentance, deep spiritual truths can be expounded to him. He too can listen to it with keen interest. Yet, he cannot live with good spiritual qualities, conduct and with excellent deeds.

Those who have become new creations through repentance, and the experience of born again, can learn many matters through the Spirit of God, without the help of anyone's preaching. This is because the anointing of the Holy Spirit gives the spiritual knowledge of knowing many glorious truths. Some people are highly learned theologians.

Yet, it is difficult to see good qualities such as love, honesty, patience, humility etc., At the same time, certain people, who cannot read plenty of other books except the Bible, live with a good nature. This is not because of the ability to learn but by the experience given by the Holy Spirit.

To Ponder

He, who learns not merely to learn,
but to observe what he learns is the perfect student.

SEPTEMBER 10

IS THIS POWER?

1 John 4: 1-12

Do not believe every spirit…
I John 4:1

A dunkard who became very weak, felt as if he got back his strength whenever he drank a little amount of liquor. But, he could not continue to drink assuming wrongly that he got fresh vigor because he consumed liquor. If he continued like that he would end up in a miserable state.

In the spiritual scenario too, many Christians think that they are anointed at certain meetings. They feel great power descending on them when preachers lay hands and pray for them.

They may experience inexplicable excitement and a state of euphoria. What they go through is not the result of Godly power.

Even when they claim that they are the recipients of such power they do not possess the power to overcome self-directed passions, and greed.

They become powerless when the pressures of sin come upon them. The power that they evince during worship, does not help them to overcome sinful thoughts. It is because it is not genuine power of God

The Holy Spirit is given not only to prophesy, to cast out devil and to see visions. It is not to help one reach an excited state. The main mission of the Holy Spirit is to mould the inner man so that one can develop godly attitudes and live victoriously overcoming sinful desires.

The Holy Spirit indwells so that we can obtain inner purity and be empowered to lead a life of witness. Instead of giving priority to this aspect if a person seeks only the external excitement he can never lead a powerful life. They may feel the power occasionally like the drunkards.

To Ponder

If we do not hate man's hypocrisy,
we have not yet grasped truth.

SEPTEMBER 11

FAMILY PRAYER

John 4:19-26

true worshipers...
John 4:23

That family had regular family prayer; they used to sing a few songs; read the Bible; read the portion in a daily devotion and conclude their family prayer by praying for the needs in the family. They also regularly attended Sunday services.

But, the Bible portion they read, the daily devotion they read, and the messages they heard in the church never had any impact on their way of life or standard of living. They are as they were. They live as they want to live. The standard of their life is no different from the standard of life of the people of other religion.

In that case, what had they gained by their regular family prayer and church attendance? Most of the other religion people have a pooja room in their house; they live their life as they like but are regular in having poojas.

The family prayer of many Christian families is similar to these vain poojas. They have family prayer in order that something good should happen to them or that evil should not befall them. Prayer, Bible reading, devotional reading and songs are followed as rituals just as pooja is. There is no use in this.

What's the use of singing, reading the Bible and praying, like a tape recorder, without giving a thought to, "What did we read in the Bible? What did we read in the daily devotion? What do they tell us? What should we do?' and so on.

Whatever we do, like a religious ritual, without the desire to read and examine the Scriptures and put them into practice, amounts to lifeless idolatry. There is not much difference between them and other religion. All the prayers that we offer in our house or shop or work spot become vain rituals, when we do not walk in the ways of the Lord.

To Ponder

Prayer is a sharp arrow;
It should be shot only from a bow of clean heart.

SEPTEMBER 12

DO NOT COVER UP YOUR MISTAKES

1John 1: 1-10

If we confess our sins...
1 John 1:9

Some are experts in covering the mistakes they commit. Some are skilled in justifying their mistakes. Some will just brush aside their mistakes saying "Oh, this is ok. Every one is committing mistakes". It may be easy to cover up, justify and consider mistakes as very normal but we must bear in mind that a mistake is a disease. Covering up, justifying and ignoring it will not yield good consequences. Acknowledging the mistakes is wise.

King Ahab tried to cover up his mistakes and he prided on his achievement. But, later it led him to tragic end. David also committed a mistake. But, when it was pointed out, he neither denied nor ignored. He did not justify it. He realized that he had committed a sin, repented and sought the grace of God who pardoned him. He, who covers up his mistake and justifies his sin, continues to commit the sin. He is encouraged to linger in that sinful attitude. In due course this tendency in him pushes him into grave mistakes and offenses which can never be covered up, ignored and justified. Then he will never be able to correct himself. It will be too late to rectify himself.

One can conceal diseases for some time .It may not be openly seen for a short while. Yet a day will come when one cannot hide it any longer. Then even if he seeks remedy, it may not be possible to cure the disease which has reached an advanced stage. It is correct to say that God punishes those who do not realize that they have sinned. This is better than saying that God punishes those who sin.

Ignoring God's grace that is ready to forgive and continuing in the diseased state is the greatest sin. God has given to us the inherent tendency to realize that we have sinned. Let us not suppress this consciousness and sensitiveness in order to continue in our sin. When our diseases are not diagnosed and treated at the right time, they can't be cured at a later stage.

To Ponder

One needs skill to speak lies but he needs courage and honesty to speak truth.

SEPTEMBER 13

IS IT RIGHT OR WRONG?

Mark 14: 1 – 9

Why was this fragrant oil wasted?
Mark 14: 4

He loved to be calm and quiet. But, his wife was a loud-mouthed chatter-box.He derived happiness in a peaceful and calm atmosphere. But, she was happy only when some loud songs and jarring music were always played around her.Even a small noise would upset him and he shouted that it spoiled his peace. But, his wife retorted that silence and quiet atmosphere spoiled her peace.

A certain environment may not make everyone happy. The surroundings that make us happy might make someone feel miserable. So, we cannot decide about everything from our view point alone. We cannot give a guarantee that what is right to us will be right to others also.

The act of washing the feet of Jesus with fragrant oil costing 300 denarii seemed acceptable to Him but for others it was not the right thing to do. The woman felt it was a necessary thing to do but those who were there thought that it was waste of money. This act gladdened the heart of Jesus but saddened others.

Yes! When we look at everything from our own view point, we will not be able to see the correct and judicious view point of others. The woman who had experienced valuable conversions through the Lord Jesus felt that expenditure was reasonable. The Lord Jesus who was in a sorrowful frame of mind at that time felt the act of that woman was a comforting and soothing one.

Yes! It is not proper for us to assume that what is good for us would be right for others also. Our Lord Jesus alone has the power to assess the suitability of a thing according to the situation. Discovering this truth and living according to this truth alone is spiritual prudence.

To Ponder

Do not worry when others work against you. But do not close your eyes when your works are against the Almighty God.

SEPTEMBER 14

EFFORTS ARE ALSO REQUIRED

James 2:14-26

His faith and his actions were working together …
James 2:22

Spiritual life is leading a life pleasing to God. We cannot succeed in living such a life with our own efforts. But, at the same time, we can not do that without our efforts. God will reward our efforts but without our attempts, nothing will happen. We cannot hope to lead a godly life without our hard efforts.

Our efforts must be dependent on God. This can be called efforts of faith. Faith and action must work together. Effort is defined as taking the first step of faith into a task which we believe to be given by God. When everyone was scared by Goliath, David took the step of faith into the great task of defeating the giant, though he did not have the required strength. God strengthened him and helped him reap a great victory.

The task of rebuilding the broken walls of Jerusalem was a huge one. The circumstances looked gloomy and discouraging yet, Nehemiah believed that God would help him.

He progressed with that faith and God blessed his efforts. While we wish to lead a good life, we need to have introspections and remove undesirable and unhealthy attitudes that run contrary to the nature of God.

We need to make special efforts to uproot such bitter qualities from us. When we try, God strengthens us. We cannot hope to get good and healthy attitudes spontaneously into our life without our efforts. We need to work for them with faith.

When we strive to possess such godly virtues, God himself will bless our efforts. Efforts accompanied by faith are essential to undertake great tasks and also to develop a good character within us.

To Ponder

When a person does not try, failures result; they do not signify absence of ability.

SEPTEMBER 15

RESTRICTIONS

I Samuel 16:14-24

The Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul
1 Samuel 16:14

Few years back, following the threats from terrorists, an important political leader was given tight security. According to the security codes, the person who is provided the security should be under the full custody of the concerned security officials.

But, that leader did not like to be constrained for security reasons. The officials warned him several times; yet, since he acted in his own way, the terrorists shot him dead one day.

In this world, we are endangered by the powers of sin and evil. We have dangers from evil spirits and the designs of satan. It is the Holy Spirit who protects us from these dangers. Through Him our joy, peace, hope and holiness are protected. There the evil spirits cannot approach us.

At the same time, we need to accept the restrictions drawn by the Holy Spirit who gives us protection, for our good. If we live as we like, after receiving the Holy Spirit, the protecting Holy Spirit will depart from us and we will be surrounded by evil spirits and powers of sin. As a result, problems such as lack of peace, lack of joy and lack of holiness would crop up.

The devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Like the wolves that are waiting to grab the sheep that comes out of the flock, which is under the control of the shepherd, satan is keenly watching when he would get the chance to devour those under the rule of God.

The Lord was a fortress and protection to the people of Israel. But, He had said that they had to follow God's words to be seen under that protection. But, they were not diligent in following the Words of God. Hence, the protection given by God was removed from them.

To Ponder

There is no one who is as free,
as the one who has enslaved himself to God.

SEPTEMBER 16

VISION IS NEEDED

Titus 2: 1-15

In everything, set them an example by doingwhat is good.
Titus 2:7

Both Abraham and Lot were righteous men. They walked in the ways of God. Abraham left behind a heritage. His descendants were all used by God and they fulfilled the purpose of God. But, Lot had left curses for ten generations. His descendants inherited only curses. What was the reason for this? Not only was Abraham a righteous man but he was also a man of vision. Though Lot was righteous, he did not have clear vision.

Since, Abraham was focused on his vision, he did not step beyond the boundaries fixed by God. He was self-controlled. He chose what was in line with divine will, as he was a man of vision. He was able to do what God wanted him to do because he was focused on God. That's why he was able to live as a model for his generation and also accomplished the task of raising a generation that was blessed by God.

Though Lot was righteous, his focus was on money. Though he was good, he did not choose to live in a place that was conducive to godly living. Though he was good, he had not known God to such an extent to receive His guidance. That is why he raised a generation that was cursed. A Pastor of a church may lead a life of piety, but if he is not focused on being a model in order to lead his people in the right way, the congregation will be unfit to lead an effective Christian life. If parents are not focused, their reckless irresponsible way of life can usher curses into the lives of their children.

A pastor who lives without proper vision and focus, cannot raise a Christian congregation. If our children do not see what is right in our lives, later the world cannot see anything good in them. If believers do not see good things in a Pastor, later on, others will not see anything good in them.

To Ponder

Pretension is more attractive than reality;
but for sure, will not last long

SEPTEMBER 17

TO REMOVE PREJUDICE

I Peter 2:11-25

Though they accuse of doing wrong...
I Peter 2:12

A particular family used to be quarrelling most of the time. Invariably, the cause of those fights was the wife's suspicion about her husband. She could not trust the man and the man believed that she was the cause for the family disunity. He shared this problem with others and wanted suggestions to help face the situation. Once a person said, "You say that your wife suspects you. Have you done anything to remove that suspicion in a constructive way?" The man said with a stubborn note, "Why should I do that, when I am innocent?" Sometimes, others misunderstand us and start looking at all our actions with suspicion. They may even doubt us without any solid reason.

During such times we just ignore their hurt and go on saying, "Why should I be doubted? Why should I be misunderstood?" But, we never take time to patiently explain that the doubts are baseless. We do not try to remove the mistaken notions. So the misunderstanding and consequent rift grow. Anger, resentment and lack of humility prevent us from proving our innocence in a peaceful way.

Sometimes, our innocent activities may appear suspicious. Sometimes, our words and actions might have been misleading. This can be due to some psychological weakness as the impression seems to have been deeply embedded in the mind. Hence, argument and fight will not bring any solution. Instead, there should be an effort based on divine love and humility, to remove the mistaken notion from the other person's mind.

Those who know God must correct everything through love by humbling themselves. Very often, these wrong ideas and prejudices will spontaneously vanish by our consistent life of integrity and patient waiting on the Lord. When we humble ourselves, God will honour our thoughtfulness and reward our integrity.

To Ponder

God will lift you sky high,
when you humble yourself.

SEPTEMBER 18

LOVE FOR OTHERS

I John 3:14-24

Let us love with actions and in truth…
I John 3:18

A woman loved her husband very dearly and he was greatly excited about her love. But he, who delighted in her love, gradually began to develop a hatred for his parents and brother. The love of his wife made him hate others instead of encouraging him to love them. This is the weakness of human love.

When some body loves us, that love cannot induce us to love others. We can give our love only to that person who loves us. But when a person is filled with divine love, he can even love those who do not love him. This is the difference between human love and God's love.

So, even though we are loved by many people, we can love others only when we have the divine love within us. God who loves us has asked us to love not only Him but also others. Only when we love others, we lead a real meaningful life. We need God's love within us, in order to lead such a life.

The wife who loves her husband, the parents who are very dear to their children and friends who are very close to their friends are not able to share the same love with others. It is so because they are selfish and can love only those who love them. God calls us to reach to others, transcending our small world of self.

We need a special power of love to be able to do that. Our life must be intertwined with Lord Jesus and we need to experience His love in our heart.

When we do so, the divine love which fills our heart and our being, empowers us to love others and endure happily others' resentment.

To Ponder

When the hypocritical human love turns bitter, we will feel the sweetness of the divine love.

SEPTEMBER 19

HONOUR WITHOUT AUTHORITY

Isaiah 1: 10 – 17

Your appointed feasts My soul hates
Isaiah 1 : 14

The children in a family treat their father with great respect and honour. They have provided him with an air-conditioned room, luxury car, costly dress and delicious food. All the family functions are held with his blessings only. But, he is not involved in any decision making. He has no control over others. He lives without interfering in any family matters. Yes! He is given all the honour and respect but he has neither any authority nor any power at all.

Same is the case with our Lord Jesus in the lives of many people. He is praised, blessed, worshipped and adored through songs, thanksgivings and offerings. He is glorified through the display of Bible verses written in His honour. But, He has no authority at all in their lives. He has no say in their personal matters, decision-makings, thoughts and deeds. They live as they like and do what they want to do. But, they praise Him and pray to Him with all respect and honour both in the morning and evening.

They deceive themselves with their useless and bogus devotional lifestyle just to gain some temperory satisfaction. Our Redeemer Jesus Christ is the Lord of Lords and King of kings. He cannot be made to stay aloof without any power like a grandfather at home. He is our Creator who is active always. He is not with us to get our honour but to get involved with us to shape and mould us.

Today many people want to enjoy beautiful worship services but do not want to be controlled by our Lord Jesus in their lives. He is our shepherd who wants to lead us. The important thing is to see whether we are prepared to be led and controlled like the sheep by our shepherd Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

To Ponder

If we hesitate to honour the commandments of God, we are sure to fall into the trap of the devil.

SEPTEMBER 20

FOR OUR GOOD

Philippians 1: 1 – 21

Brethren, the things which happened to me…
Philippians 1: 12

It is God who does good things for us in our lives. He also does things that turn about to be good for us. What is the difference between these two? We can see the good things and understand that they are good for us but the things which turn about to be good will bring good results only in the end though they may not initially appear to be good. We know that some failures, confusions, losses, conflicts and regrets may appear to cause us great agony but God would have allowed them in our lives only to turn them out to be good for us in the end

Whatever God did in the life of David till he defeated Goliath are only good things. Thereafter the troubles given by Saul, the situations in which there were none to comfort and console him and the totally abandoned conditions were permitted by God for his good only. At first they did not appear to be good but it was through these that God exalted him to become the great king of Israel.

Joseph faced many afflictions before reaching the prime position in Egypt. Then he acknowledged that God sent him ahead to save the lives of many people. Those who have a strong relationship with God would never hesitate to believe that the hand of God is with them not only in good times but also in bad times. The ingredients in food like salt, chilly and tamarind are not relished in isolation. When added with food, they give a delicious taste. Some of the things allowed by God in our lives may look bitter in the beginning but it is true that He allowed them only to give us sweet results in the end.

The injustices done to Joseph by his own brothers are painful. But God in His own wisdom transformed those tempests into opportunities to exalt them in their lives. If our lives are under the control and will of God, even the things that appear to be harmful become advantageous to us in the end.

To Ponder

For good people, bad becomes good;
for bad people even good becomes bad.

SEPTEMBER 21

CULTURAL INFLUENCE

Romans 12: 1-12

Do not be conformed to this world
Romans 12:2

When I go to European countries, I used to observe the many good things that are seen in those people and think how we need to learn from them. Of course, their stand towards sexual matters like unbridled horse is an abomination. It is true that their immodest and free way of dressing raises up questions in us.

At the same time, the importance they give for humanity, certain disciplines, responsibilities, hygiene and neatness, their honest approach and their willingness to act without seeking others' help are deeply appreciable. All these ought to be followed by us.

But most of the people, who go to those countries from India, soon get influenced by the wrong culture prevalent there and turn upside down. Wrong dress culture and wrong sexual culture affect them so quickly and when they are questioned they say, "This is the culture of this country; this is not India. When in Rome, we have to be like a Roman"

However they would retain all the wrong matters such as love for money, disrespect towards others, poking the nose into others' affairs, caste discrimination, dishonesty, not being concerned for others, not being transparent, slandering, miserliness etc., which they took with them when they left India and guard these things safely. These things are not affected by the American or European culture.

But, God's children will never lose the influence of a holy culture wherever they might be. Their habits may change; but their stand to reflect holiness will not change. Their clothing may change; yet their thoughts about modesty, wisdom, discipline, morality and good appearance will not change. Wherever they go they have the desire to live a life pleasing to the Most High God and not to the world.

To Ponder

He, who lives without any aim loses.
He, who is not steady in his aim, is humiliated.

SEPTEMBER 22

MODEL

I Timothy 3:1-16

Does not know how to rule his own house…
I Timothy 3:5

A particular servant of God was doing an excellent ministry among the youth and had brought many to Jesus. His challenging messages had transformed the lives of many youth. On the other hand, his own son had gone astray and was leading a bad life.

Many wondered about this and one person said, "The youth who heard his good preaching got transformed; but the son who saw his contradictory life had gone astray" Good advice is helpful to correct certain people's lives. But, the contradictory life of the one, who preaches, makes many go astray.

Wrong models pave way for many to stumble. These days, the children of many servants of God are going far away from Christ.

Even the children of some good servants of God are no exemption. Yet, the significant reason for the children to fall into the devil's snare is the personal life of the father, which has no testimony.

The children who see the contradictory life of the parents, who excel in preaching, lose their interest in Christianity.

The parents' lives make them lose the desire to live a good life. What a pity that the parents' lives are in such a state to prevent or destroy the spiritual desires of the children!

Dear parents, be careful about what kind of life your children see in you and not what you preach to them.

Your way of life and your characteristics are being noticed by your children.

Be careful to avoid yourself from becoming a stumbling block to them. Living an examples to our children is more honourable than preaching to the thousands.

To Ponder

The world is full of noble principles.
But, it is still vacant for people with noble qualities.

SEPTEMBER 23

IS THAT HUMILITY OR PRIDE?

Philippians 2: 1 – 16

Let each esteem others better than himself
Philippians 2: 3

A church pastor wanted to honour a few members of his church, who were really humble in nature, by giving prizes. When the name of the third-prize winner was announced, he argued with the pastor saying, "I am the most humble man in this church. It is not right for you to give me third prize instead of first"

Pride has many shapes and one of it is our presuming in heart that we are very humble. It is true that many people appear to be humble and live as humble people and that very humility itself may take the role of pride. And it is on this basis that they expect other people to treat them as great people.

A sister thinks and also speaks very ill of other sisters who are believers and wear jewels. She presumes that those who are humble and follow God's words must not wear jewels. But, she lives in a big bungalow and travels in an expensive, luxurious car. She wears costly silk sarees and eats royal food.

Humility must reflect in all aspects of life. Showing humility in some actions alone is certainly a different way of seeking pride. Humility should first come in the mind. Yes, The humility that takes root in the mind is the real spiritual humility. The reflections of this humility can be seen in all aspects of life. This humility can be easily seen in speech, character, appearance and attitude.

Humility does not expect the approval and admiration of others. It does not expect any special treatment from others. The humble people do not condemn others thinking that others are not as humble as they are. Exalting oneself is a sin and exalting the humility of oneself is also a sin. The real humility is not expecting the approval and admiration of others but to feel contented with one's own lowliness.

To Ponder

He who is humble is ready to bow down his head but the Lord will enable him keep his head high.

SEPTEMBER 24

GUARD YOUR HEART

Philippians 4:1–9

Meditate on these things
Philippians 4:8

After hearing some very good words of God about holiness for an hour, if you happen to watch a movie or a serial on TV for ten minutes, all the good feelings you gained after hearing the godly words will just vanish. But after watching a TV programme or your Facebook account for half an hour, if you go and hear the word of God even for a few hours, the things you saw on your TV or Facebook alone will take full control of your mind.

It takes a very long time to come out of the contrary influences created by your Facebook account or Internet pages or TV programmes. Yes! The good impacts and impressions created by good things will be lost easily but it takes a very long time to get rid of bad impacts created by bad things.

Yes! Bad matters have the charm to destroy the good nature of man very easily. The weeds and the wild plants grow without any upkeep or maintenance but it takes a lot of special care and attention to grow household plants and reap the fruits. After concentrating your attention on TV, Facebook and Internet for some time, if you go to read the Bible or pray or worship, your mind will not have the ability and clarity to go deep into the matters concerning God.

Hence, we must be cautious enough to come out of the modern communication tools to retain the spiritual moods and not to lose the spiritual fervor. Even before the good seeds are able to sprout, the birds come and take them away. Similarly the modern communication gadgets have also the ability to destroy all the good thoughts and feelings from our hearts and minds. The heart of man gets corrupted quickly and easily. Also the stain in the heart cannot be removed easily. Therefore we have to be very careful in retaining the noble and divine matters in our heart at all times by all means.

To Ponder

When man crosses the limits and boundaries in the name of his freedom, he again becomes a slave.

SEPTEMBER 25

STOP CRYING

Luke 23:20-33

Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me
Luke 23:28

Most of us are highly emotional. When concrete truth is communicated we can listen to it without being moved. We will not change if mere truth demands that. But, if somebody were to appeal to our emotions, we will melt like wax very easily. The serious message about why Jesus came into this world leaves us unmoved though it is repeated several times. But if somebody narrates the suffering of Jesus on the cross in a broken voice and appeals to our emotions, we will break down. The pictorial description of painful details will move us very easily.

We need to be roused emotionally so that we can lead a spiritual life. It is because we depend largely on our emotional responses and do not give importance to reason and truth. What appeals to our emotion gets our attention easily. Truth and reason which appeal to our mind do not impact us much. If we sing Lenten songs on Maundy Thursday we are satisfied. The three hour reflection on Good Friday with sorrowful music appeals to our emotion and we get the satisfaction that we have fulfilled all that our religion requires of us.

When we see the movies about to crucifixion of Christ, we are moved. We tend to feel guilty when we face the question, "Christ died for you what have you done for Him?" Good Friday and Maundy Thursday sermons move us very much because we get a vivid description of Calvary. Yes, we are all emotionally touched and disturbed.

But, Have we repented and sought forgiveness? Have we experienced the precious salvation that was bought with the blood that was shed on the cross? Jesus came into this world as a man and bled to death, so that we could become God's children and lead a life of testimony. Has this become a reality in our life?

To Ponder

We cannot taste real joy,
unless, we learn some real truths through suffering.

SEPTEMBER 26

TRUE RESPECT?

Isaiah 29:1-14

Their hearts are far from me...
Isaiah 29:13

One person used to read all kinds of secular story books and novels. But, just before he went to sleep, he used to throw them in a trash bin. He used to read one or two scripture verses and keep the Bible near his head. He probably thought that by doing that he was holding the Bible in high esteem, high above the other books.

He thought that his gesture could convey his scorn for the secular books. This is a false godliness. Even though the Bible was kept close to him, only the story books had full sway in his heart. Our piety can not be gauged by the respect we profess to pay outwardly. The things which we consider very important in our heart are the indicators of grade and extent of our piety.

Some will call money trash. But, they will spend their life time for that trash. In order to earn more of the trash, they will be prepared to sacrifice their good principles and values. In the houses of many, Jesus is a God for external show. He is not accepted as a God who reigns. In many houses Bible is worshipped as an idol. They do not accept its precepts and walk in its way.

The person who used to drink and smoke ignoring proper values, was very keen on fixing the picture of Jesus in his house. The eyes of Jesus remain open both in the day and night in the picture but he lived without any awareness that Jesus was watching his sinful life.

Such piety and external respect will usher in the wrath of God. They will never bring into our life the blessing we wish to have. Piety is not only respecting Jesus. It is following His way.

Spiritual life is not only praising and worshipping God with words. It is respecting him in the way we live and in our lifestyle. It is essential to get rid of the hypocritical piety and know the real piety.

To Ponder

An atheist is far better than a man who professes to be pious and yet ignores the right way of living.

SEPTEMBER 27

PATIENCE

I Peter 2:15-25

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate….
I Peter 2: 23

Once, a man hurled very harsh and derogatory words at a true child of God, for no reason. Though it was very obvious that the accusation was highly unreasonable, he did not react at all. He remained unruffled and calm. His colleagues told him with sympathy, "Brother, you are a good man but why did God expose you to such a situation?" He replied calmly, "This as a unique occasion to show how a child of God can bear the unjust attitude of others patiently." He took it as an opportunity to prove his loyalty to God.

Sometimes we become targets of others' unreasonable anger and resentment. They may scandalize us and inflict severe verbal wounds. Our heart may be bruised by their thoughtless words. We may wonder why God has placed us in such miserable situations when we are literally shredded into pieces. We need to look upon them as opportunities to glorify God by expressing the power of our patience, fortitude and tolerance which have been granted to us.

David, met such an occasion when Shimei abused him. David bore everything patiently and never retaliated. His patience did pay dividends. People consider that miracles are the tangible evidence of the power of Christianity. But, we need to bear in mind that the greatness and power of Christianity will be very effectively expressed through humility and patience.

It is so because the tendency to remain patient and humble and the ability to let go demand more mental strength and a deeper maturity. When Jesus was rejected by the Samaritans, James and John were infuriated and wished to display God's power by destroying them. But, Jesus made it clear that God's power and greatness can not be revealed through destruction but through being patient in that situation. So, when we meet turbulent situation, we need to consider them as opportunities to prove in action the power of Christianity.

To Ponder

God does not remember the proud,
but he does not forget the humble.

SEPTEMBER 28

WITH HOPE

Psalm 22: 19 – 31

From the horns of the wild oxen
Psalm 22: 21

A man had promised to return a big amount he had borrowed to his lender at 5 p.m. on a particular day. When that day arrived, the lender arrived at the man's house at 3 p.m. itself. The borrower of that money expected his friend to come at 5 p.m. with that amount. That is why he asked his lender to come to his house at that particular time. But, he did not turn up even at 4.45 p.m. The lender became very restless and got irritated but the borrower told him with hope that the money would come at 5 p.m. As he hoped, the man came at 5 p.m.

The man who had promised to come at 5 p.m. was known to keep his word at any cost. That is why the brorrower had so much hope on him. Sometimes our God also does the same. Perhaps He may not come at the time we expect Him to come when we face troubles, trials and tempests but He would never fail to come at the right time and deliver us in the right way.

Yes! We should look at the delays and denials of our God with faith only. Our mind may become anxious wondering why nothing had happened till this time but our faith should say that He who promised is faithful and He will also do it at the right time. If we are calm and patient, when things get delayed and God seems to be silent, it reflects the hope we have in God and His faithfulness. Nothing might have happened till now but the fact that God would help us at the right time will strengthen our heart.

We cannot say that God came quickly to save Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego but He came at the right time. God did not come fast to save Daniel but at the right time. The real faith is not getting any signs or signals or promptings but the hope that He would come at the right time. The need is to wait patiently with the hope that the Lord would never fail to come to our rescue.

To Ponder

Those who are watchful to know that they are under God's care, will have the hope of God's security also.

SEPTEMBER 29

FIRED POT

I Peter 2:13-25

When He was reviled, did not revile in return
I Peter 2:23

Yes, when we give room for the words and actions proceeding from the wrong attitude of others, to easily change our attitude and confuse us, it is we, who would be affected in our character. Hence, restlessness, anger and turmoil are caused in us. Since, our heart becomes agitated and boils within, it causes many damages in the various areas of our life.

The moment a moist pot is touched or tapped or taken up and shaken, it would lose its shape and form. But, once the pot is put in the fire and heated, its shape would never change no matter how many times you may tap it or shake it.

The moist pot becomes sturdy once it is heated in the fire. Though it is true that fire is painful, it creates strength. Sometimes, when someone tells something about us or criticizes us or behaves in a hurtful way, we at once change our shape. Our attitude changes. Certain words and actions bend our mind and make it go awry. Now we are not as we were before.

What is the reason? The mind is not matured. We are so immature that we easily lose our shape and become crooked because of others' talk and actions. For us to attain the right maturity, God allows us to go through so many fires of testing.

These fires of testing are agonizing but cause great strength in us. The matured attitude caused by this fire of testing, helps us not to get emotional but to accept and bear all lies, criticisms, slander, and unjust talk and actions against us.

Whenever lies, treachery, criticism, and false accusations rose against Jesus Christ, He faced them with the right maturity. Are we moist pots that are pliable? Let us think.

To Ponder

If you are careful not to allow patience to run from you, humiliation will not come in search of you and afflict you.

SEPTEMBER 30

DULL STATE

I Thessalonians 5:1-22

Do not put out the spirit's fire
I Thessalonians 5:19

Some children keep on eating chocolates, sweets, ice-cream and other snacks at all odd hours. Hence, their stomach is upset and they cannot enjoy wholesome lunch or dinner. As a result, their health is affected. Many of those who are saved, in due course lose their interest and involvement in spiritual matters. They do not possess hunger for spiritual food. Their superficial interest in prayer and Bible reading make them sluggish in such spiritual exercise. They do that as a matter of enforced duty.

It is so because their heart becomes dull by the worldly things in which they get involved. They spend a big chunk of time watching TV. They talk about so many trivial matters and discuss with others. They are engrossed in money making efforts. They eat in an indiscipline way and fill their stomach with trash. As a result of this reckless way of life, their spiritual yearning and interests disappear from their life. Their time passes in watching TV, eating without any control and indulging in meaningless conversations.

After spending their time in all these frivolous activities, they cannot pray with real interest and read the Bible. Prayer and Bible reading will cease to interest them. Only when people lead a disciplined and an organized life, the heart will have the desire to seek God and spiritual food.

An athlete acts with a goal. Therefore he deliberately avoids the food and other activities that will make him lose his enthusiasm and stamina. Likewise, there must be a goal for the spiritual minded. That goal is maintaining a lasting and vibrant fellowship with God. Hence, we need to give up any habit that will be injurious to our goal. It is quite impossible to lead a life as we like and at the same time maintain the spiritual fervor.

To Ponder

Instead of checking if something is good or bad, let us watch if it promotes or disturbs our goal.

OCTOBER 1

WHAT IS BIBLE FOR

Joshua 1:1-9

Do not let this book of the Law depart from your mouth,…
Joshua 1:8

One Christian used to carry the Bible wherever he went. He had one, on his office table. There was one Bible on his cot. The eyes of those who entered his house fell only on the Bible. The Bible held a very prominent place in his house. But, he who gave so much of significance to the Bible, read a very few verses occasionally. Then what is the use of his enthusiasm to exhibit the Bible?

Some read the Bible very regularly but what they read will have no impact on their life. They do not learn anything. Some will be thorough with all the rules and regulations found in the Bible but they do not bother to follow them in their life. The Pharisees who posed as devout people, had tapes with verses fixed on their body but did not obey what the verses said.

God will not bless us only because we read the Bible and have a good knowledge of the Biblical precepts. The Bible must be read and reflected on. The impact of the reflection must be shown in our real life.

Any spirituality which is not reflected in life is a mere ritual. Many people hold the Bible verses in high esteem but they serve no purpose.

A friend of mine used to collect fresh currency notes and preserve them. He never spent them. What is the use of the currency notes, if they are just kept locked? Similarly, what is the use of the Bible verses, if they are not used and practiced in real life?

God did not give us the Bible to be exhibited and show- cased. The Bible truths were not given to expand our knowledge. It was given so that our hearts will be moulded, sanctified and transformed to please God.

To Ponder

Let us not continuously study books, instead, let us ourselves become books for others to read.

OCTOBER 2

BY HIS FELLOWSHIP

Philippians 4:11-23

Everywhere and in all things I have learnt to be full…
Philippians 4:12

A villager worked very hard and educated his son to a higher level and helped him get a good job. His son who was employed in a city wanted to take care of his loving father and give him all the facilities like a comfortable house with car, TV, AC and other comforts. And the father stayed with his son for a few months in the city but somehow he did not like the city atmosphere and returned to his village to live in his old, thatched hut.

Yes! Happiness, contentment and comfort are not dependent on our luxurious lifestyles and living places but on our attitudes only. Some people think that God makes us happy by giving us a lot of money, materials and luxuries but it is not true. A good heart and His fellowship alone decide our happiness.

We may eat simple food, wear ordinary clothes and live in a small house but if we have the assurance of God's presence with us, we will surely have peace, contentment and happiness.

At the same time, if we do not have a good heart and divine fellowship, our life will be a thorny one even if we have the royal comforts and luxuries of King Solomon.

Once a man told a servant of God who was leading a simple and ordinary life, "Brother, God will give you good things someday" The servant of God said, "Brother, God has already given me all the good things" He said like this because he was already experiencing the love, peace and joy of the Lord.

God can give us comforts and luxuries but our joy, peace and contentment come only by His presence with us. Therefore we should always seek the happiness and contentment that flow from His abiding presence with us at all times.

To Ponder

He who does not feel hunger will not know the taste of food.
He who does not know what suffering is will not know the happiness given by God.

OCTOBER 3

IS THIS WORSHIP?

Amos 5:10-27

Take away from Me the noise of your songs
Amos 5:23

It is not difficult for us to live our life as we like and then gather once in a week in a church or as congregation and worship God. Here we may sing well; make much noise; dance happily; shout 'Hallelujah'; make various noises under the name of 'tongues'; as seen in this modern 'power' culture which is prevalent in many places, everyone may even fall down and shout, "power; power', 'fire, fire'. After doing all these, we may be fully satisfied that we have worshipped the Lord with overflowing anointing of the Holy Spirit. We can assure ourselves that we have honoured God and go back home happily.

However, to receive this honour, respect and worship, Jesus should come there once a week. But on other days, if He sees these worshippers in their homes or streets or in the midst of relatives or in their business spots or in the place where they work, He would be grieved. This is because they would be like the other people of this world.

There would not be anything that is pleasing to Jesus, in their characteristics, nature, conduct, and in matters related to money, materials and comforts. Will the Lord be pleased if we live as we like, when we are away from the atmosphere of worshipping as a church and shouting 'worship' while in the church? Not how we worship in the church; how we live in our area is seen by Jesus. If there are no high qualities that are according to His teachings in us, He would reject the worship service that we conduct.

It is foolishness that those who do not know to live according to the leading of the Holy Spirit to assume that they have worshipped Him, filled with the Spirit. It is an act of mocking God when those who do not realize the necessity to get filled with the Spirit and live with beautiful qualities, screaming at the top of their voice, 'We worship You…".

To Ponder

The nation is ruined not because of the bad people, but because of those who pretend to be good.

OCTOBER 4

TEACHER

Titus 2:1-15

..showing yourself to be a pattern of good works
Titus 2:7

*T*hose who teach things to us orally alone are not teachers. In our life, we learn many things through many ways. All that has been created by God teach us many things. The education that we have in schools alone cannot make us learn everything that is needed for life.

Many who are well educated fail in life, not knowing how to live. From their life, we learn the lesson that the education they have and the qualification they have earned are not able to make them live. Education that sharpens our brain alone is not adequate. We also need education that cultivates our heart.

It is an excellent service for those who have learnt with their brain to impart many things to another person's brain. Yet another service is creating good experience in other's heart by our own good experience.

A teacher should teach not only orally but also teach others through his life. A man saw Jesus to be a good Teacher. He not only taught orally but also through the way of His life. With the words of His mouth and with the way He lived, He formed a group of disciples.

Later, they became instruments for the lives of thousands to shine with good character and good works.

Students learn lesson at their young age. Something has to be done to nurture not only their brain but also their heart.

Teachers do not get much chance in schools and colleges to do spiritual preaching.

But, they can make an impact on the students with their good way of living. For this to happen, the heart of the teachers should be heavily impacted with communion with God and His preaching.

To Ponder

It is more excellent to attract the world through a noble life, than to attract it with noble thoughts.

OCTOBER 5

GENTLE WHISPER

I Kings 19:1-13

And after the fire came a gentle whisper.
I Kings 19:12

I used to wonder about the small clock that was in my room. It seemed to be very quiet in the daytime but in the night its ticking sound was quite audible. Did it produce the 'tick, tick' sound only during the night? No. Obviously the sound is there all the time. Its ticking sound continues both in the daytime and in the night.

But, during the day, its ticking sound is drowned by the other sounds. I could not hear the feeble sound of the clock because of the loud and noisy daytime. God's voice is also like that. His voice sounds all the time but we are not able to hear His soft whisper in our heart because the loud noises from the world tend to fill and echo within our heart.

When our heart is clogged with wealth related aspirations, worldly desires and involvement in relationships there will be restlessness and consequent turbulence. In the midst of this roaring turmoil, it will be impossible to listen to the whisper of God. That's why even powerful messages do not impact the people which also gets lost amidst the already existing cacophony in the heart. The heart cannot listen to the soft whisper of the Lord.

God will help us listen to His voice only when we decide to put off the drowning voices of our heart. When we start giving first priority to enjoying His presence and relationship and decide to discipline our life suitably by allotting enough time to stay in His presence we can have the experience of God talking to us.

Even those who claim to have been anointed by the Holy Spirit do not have the experience of listening to the voice of God. Sometimes they misinterpret their thoughts and feelings as God's voice. The Holy Spirit is given to us to help us enjoy relationship with God. God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit. Those who have been really anointed by the Holy Spirit will discern the soft whisper of God.

To Ponder

The heart that does not listen to the voice of God, cannot discern the will of God.

OCTOBER 6

WHO ARE OUR FRIENDS?

Luke 16:1-13

Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves - Luke 16:9

One person was talking about his friends. They all had helped him in one way or the other. Some had lent him money. Some had extended help in some other ways. His association was limited to these people from whom he had received some help. Apart from them he did not have any other intimate friends. He had not earned friends by giving something to them. His friendship was profit oriented and selfish.

It is not a great matter to befriend someone who has helped us. We need to have friends who have received some help from us. Some people ask, "Is there anyone who has given me any money?" Good question indeed. But, it is also true that no one would have received any money from them too. The word of God says "It is better to give than to receive" Most of us, like to receive than to give. This is the view of the world. Jesus suggested that we must gain friends with worldly wealth.

I have watched the funeral procession of some rich men in Puducherry. There used to be hardly ten members to say final good bye. The small number of attendees reveals that all along the deceased persons have lived only for themselves. Even their death has not moved people to grieve for them. It is because while they lived in the world, they had been insensitive and cold to others needs.

Even among pious Christians there are some who are used to giving offertory to receive blessings. But, they are not used to receiving blessings by helping others. Jesus said "Give and it will be given unto you". When they give to others, they will receive from God.

The Bible speaks more about giving to others than giving to God. Beggars alone do not require our help. We need to have compassion for those who are in miserable states yet suppress all their pains within them.

To Ponder

A tree planted in each house is good,
each one of us can be a tree that offers shade.

OCTOBER 7

ARE YOU LIVING?

Johh14:1-22

All may go well with you...
3 John 2

During a discussion, it was asked, "How long do you want to live?" Some said 100 years, some 80, others 70. Some wondered about the use in living so long, so sixty was fine for them. But one of them said, "I want to live till I die." Initially few did not understand what he was saying, but then they understood. Have you understood? Yes, only very few live till they die. Because living is not just being alive. Not everyone who is alive is living their life. Some are carrying their life; some are tolerating it. Others are just enduring it. It is only very few who live their lives. That is why some wonder why they are even living, while some others say it is better to die soon, while few more say what is the need to live such a life.

Some think that if they achieve money, riches, education and status, they will be able to enjoy their life and achieve. Yet they are unable to enjoy their lives. That was why king Solomon who led a prosperous life in all aspects said, "Meaningless, meaningless and everything is meaningless" and "I hated this life." (Ecclesiates. 2:17)

The life given by god will be a true life only with the union of God. A Godless life, though may be filled with treasures galore, will not be a satisfying life. Only by living in fellowship with God, the life that was given by Him can be meaningful and blessed. Though Peter and Paul knew their end was near, they were not worried, but with clarity of mind, used the remaining days; because, they had such a union with Jesus that made their lives meaningful till the day they died.

More than "Jesus does miracles! Jesus does wonders!", the greater truth is that He gives us life. He said, "I am the Life." To live the life the way it is supposed to be, to enjoy the life in a way it is meant to be, to live it in a blessed manner, all we need is the divine relation of Jesus. Are you living?

To Ponder

If you are careful about the matters of God,
He will be extra careful about your matters.

OCTOBER 8

MONEY OR JESUS

Romans 8:28-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? - Roman 8: 35

*E*lection was held in a Municipal ward. A man who was known to be good and a very affluent man another contested. During canvassing it looked as if the majority of the people supported the good man. It was even considered that the rich man might lose his deposit. But finally, only the good man lost his deposit. The people withdrew their support from the good man because of the allurement of the rich man's money.

Many of our people, who profess to be very pious, act in a similar way. They may claim that they are ready to give up everything for the sake of Jesus. They may even call money as trash and dirt. But, at critical moments they show definite preference to money. They will not hesitate to speak lies for the sake of money. They will easily resort to short cuts to earn money. If spirituality is on the way of earning more money, they will be ready to sacrifice spirituality.

Does money appear attractive? Does desire for money make us give up our loyalty to Jesus? Do we find it easier to shift our focus from Jesus for the sake of making money? If our answers are in affirmative, surely Jesus is not in our heart. We may glorify Him with our lips but our heart has not received Jesus. We may profess our love for Jesus but we do not possess Jesus. We have not been enjoying Him in our heart, and that's why we easily sell Him for money.

It is difficult for a person to resist the allurements of riches and positions, if in his heart he has not given an important place to Jesus. Apostle Paul was a person who reveled in the love of Jesus. He was delighting in the great honors provided by God. Hence, till the end of his ministry, he remained loyal to the Lord and Master who called him to His work. He never sought other worldly honors. He did not swerve from his path and never forsook Jesus for the sake of what the world could offer.

To Ponder

Money may give us confidence. But, that over -confidence may cause our fall.

OCTOBER 9

WHICH IS GENUINE MIRACLE?

I John 2:1-21

Walk as Jesus Did.
1 Jhon 2:6

Satan has power to perform miracles. He can even heal some diseases and foretell the future. He can also quote scriptures. We see all these in the Bible. The events that happen in the world confirm this. But one thing is impossible for him. He cannot act according to the word of God and exhibit divine qualities. He cannot walk in the way of Jesus.

Satan can empower an ordinary man to perform miracles and make his ministry appear like that of Jesus. He, who practices such deception through a person, cannot make him holy and righteous. That's why people who lack godly nature perform many miracles. This is a deception by Satan.

If people, who are known as mighty preachers, perform miracles, people evaluate them as righteous people. Though they may lead a life contrary to the teachings of the Bible, they are considered to be great based on what they do.

People justify them saying, "Who is bothered about their life? Isn't God doing mighty things through them?" But, we find that such false preachers can deceive even the elect and the chosen ones by the miracles they perform (Mat 24:24). Hence, Jesus Christ suggests that we need to identify a person by the fruit he bears and not by the powerful acts he performs.

A preacher cannot be rated by the miracles he performs. The parameters that need to be considered while evaluating a preacher are as follows.

"Does he follow Jesus Christ? Does he walk in the ways of God? Does he follow the Biblical teachings?" A genuine preacher can be identified by his close walk with Jesus.

To Ponder

The best expression of God's power in a person is through his godly acts and attitudes.

OCTOBER 10

NOT PIETY

Daniel 1:1-21

Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself, Daniel 1:8

Some people are enthusiastic to exhibit their bhakthi, wherever they go. But, showing bhakthi and showing God are different. Making others to know the end result of one's belief is more excellent than making them know his belief. A Christian, who was working in an office, was more interested in showing off his piety than in doing his office work. During the office hours, he used to argue with many that Christian religion is the correct one.

Instead of showing interest in doing his work, he was keen to criticize the poojas and rituals performed in that office. Sitting in his seat, he used to have long conversations over the phone with Christian ministers of God with whom he had contacts. Finally, he had to be transferred for it. He had to face that problem not because of his testimony for the Lord. This happened because he didn't know how to be a witness for christ through his good qualities. A pious man ought to earn a good name at his work-spot by working faithfully, honestly, and responsibly and with respect for the rules and regulations of the office.

Such a good name would reflect his Christian belief. The responsibilities given in the job should be done with integrity for the sake of Christ, as well as for the salary he gets. This is the way to show others how our Christian piety has made us good. The standard of Joseph's qualities paved ways for others to know what a true man of God he was. He did not boast about his religious belief but made others know how that belief made him live well.

When Daniel was appointed in that palace, he did not spend his time in arguing that Jehovah is the true God. But, through an excellent standard of principles, he paved ways for everyone to know that Jehovah is the true God.

To Ponder

Know yourself in trials,
then God will choose you for achievements.

OCTOBER 11

THE CONSEQUENCES IN WILLING TO YIELD

Genesis 13:1–9

If you go to the right, then I will go to the left
Genesis 13:9

There was a land dispute between two brothers. The younger brother, without any justice, desired to possess a piece of land that should go to his older brother and he was contemplating of going to court also. But, the older brother did not want to be involved in arguments, going to police stations and attending court sessions. So he gave away what his younger brother wanted to possess.

Others wondered why he yielded so easily to his younger brother's unjustified claim. But he told them that his brother was adamant to do what was right to him and I was adamant in doing what was right to me. He further told them that he preferred to have peace and relationship rather than a piece of land. It is true that we may incur losses in surrendering our rights, entitlements and privileges. Sometimes our mental agony may cause us more harm than our financial losses.It is natural for our heart to boil with anger when we see certain things like injustice, misdeeds, misuse of power, inhuman behaviour and denial of human dignity.

Yet, it is more honourable to have peace, patience and a calm mind than possessing land, money and ego. It is better to lose our rights to achieve certain things and gain peace than losing our peace and gaining the right to achieve certain things.

It was not compulsory for Abraham to yield to Lot. Yet, he understood the materialistic mind of Lot and decided to yield to his desires. What Lot received was wealth and guilty feelings. But, Abraham received peace and guiltless mind. Yes! Abraham who understood that the value of peace, love and fellowship was much greater than land and wealth yielded to the desire of Lot. Today if we yield and lose something to get peace, it will surely result in getting divine blessings in the coming days. Yes! Abraham did receive a lot of blessings.

To Ponder

Temporary are the peace and comfort of a man who is adamant to continue in his wrong doings.

OCTOBER 12

WHO IS JUDAS?

Titus 1:5-16

But by their actions they deny Him..
Titus 1:16

An organization that worked for abolishing drinking habit was projecting the evil of drinking so that awareness could be created among the people. Suppose those who organized the meeting came fully drunk, what impact could it have? Surely, its efforts would not yield any result. Such acts that go contrary to the established norms of the organization are the Judases which bring dishonour and shame to the people who tried to advocate abstinence. It is beyond doubt that the forces that work in ways diametrically opposite to the principles upheld by any organized group ruin the good work.

Christianity is a highly exalted religion way. It has the power to transform an ordinary sinner into a noble human being. It can make a person impeccably holy. It transforms the sinful nature and inclination of man and empowers him to reflect holiness in his actions, attitudes and thoughts. But, how many consider Christianity as a noble and highly exalted religion?

How many people could acknowledge the greatness of Christianity which could transform a sinful man into a different being who can lead a holy and joyful life? How many can accept it as a special religion? Its greatness is proclaimed by many preachers on the stage and over television. But, how many accept this as truth?

There are many who preach very effectively as Paul did but betray Jesus for the sake of selfish desires and petty favours as Judas did. The declaration that Jesus is the true God is legitimate and reasonable. But, if those, who raise such banners live without showing any remarkable differences in their life style, who will respect Christianity? Yes, Christianity will be let down by those who are not born again, those who do not experience any intimacy with God and those who do not have any godly desires. Is Christianity honoured or dishonoured by us?

To Ponder

He who over exalts himself will fall.
He who underestimates himself can never rise.

OCTOBER 13

RUGGED AND ROUGH PATH

Deuteronomy 1:26-38

God carried you ..... all the way you went
Deuteronomy 1:31

Once I had to travel with my friend in a car on a very rugged path. My friend went on condemning the uneven road, though we did not experience much inconvenience. The car was an excellent one and therefore we did not have any difficulty. We did not experience any discomfort, though the road was very bad. But, the friend focused only on the rugged road instead of enjoying the comfortable drive.

Some people, like this man, focus only on the problems and difficulties that they encounter. They just concentrate on their defects, physical weakness and other drawbacks and go on grumbling about life. They fail miserably to understand and appreciate the way God graciously supports them in their want and weakness. They do not realize how God enables and strengthens them to cross the difficult way.

Though the Israelites walked through the wilderness, God took care of all their needs. They lacked nothing because God enabled them to overcome all the obstacles, to defeat the enemies and to travel with confidence. They were protected by the pillars of cloud and fire. God encouraged them through Moses.

But, in spite of all these God's provision and protection, the Israelites focused on the difficulties and depressing situation and were grumbling and groaning all the time. They did not rejoice over God's care. They should have progressed further with a grateful heart but their response was negative. That's why though the God of peace had made everything easier for them; they travelled on, troubled and disturbed without any peace. We need to look at God and not at the situation. We need to focus on the grace of God, not on the oppositions. We need to look up to God with hope and learn to travel with ease, relaxing on the bosom of God.

To Ponder

Joy multiplies in one's life,
in the presence of sorrow.

OCTOBER 14

GOOD HABIT BUT

Matthew 22:1-14

How did you get in here withoutwedding clothes..
Matthew 22:12

At one time in my life, I used to set alarm before I went to bed so that I could rise early in the morning. But, invariably when I heard the alarm, I used to silence the screaming clock and resume my sleep. Though I did not pay any heed to the clock and never got up in response, I continued the habit of setting the alarm at a fixed time every day. It was like a reflex action, though it was of no use.

Similarly, we may have many good habits which are of no use and which do not produce any desirable results in our life. Some go to church very regularly, which is a very good habit indeed. But, they may not have a good relationship with God.

Some love to worship and praise God and do not miss any chance to glorify Him through their songs. But, they do not glorify Him through their godly acts and attitudes. Some attend all the available prayer meetings but never bother about being saved. Some will not miss communion even if they are sick but are never worried about building a relationship with God. People can get involved in all religious acts without any intimacy with God. If we consider something as important, we need to be impacted by that. Otherwise, what we consider important has no value.

Many people feel that going to church, participating in communion and giving offertory are great blessings, though they do not lead a holy life of noble virtues. They consider that these activities will bring blessings to them, though they remain unsaved. This is a mistaken notion. If we go to church and get involved in ministry without being saved, the external acts can not bless us like magical charms. The man who went to the wedding banquet was invited but he was punished because he did not have the wedding clothes. He was not commended for his presence but instead he was reprimanded for not wearing the wedding clothes.

To Ponder

Ministering for the holy God without worrying about being holy is a sin.

OCTOBER 15

PRIDE IN HUMILITY

II Corinthians12:1-10

It is not profitable for me to boast...
II Corinthians 12:1

One servant of God did not wear rich attire though he could afford it. He wear only dhoti and jibba (shirt). Though he could go in a car, he used to travel on cycle. Though he could enjoy rich food, he took only simple food. Though the people who invited him for conventions, were prepared to book room for him in star hotels, he preferred to stay in some believers' houses. He wanted to be a model for simplicity and humility.

But when people fail to notice his humility and when they forget to commend his simple life style, he used to get angry. Yes, pride does not lie in grand and luxurious appearances alone. It lurks behind humble and simple appearances. Real humility does not expect to be praised and applauded.

Though Jesus was the son of God, He chose to be born in a poor family. He had a simple life and was a paragon of simplicity. Yet, He didn't project His simplicity and expect to be commended. Apostle Paul was a great man. He was highly educated and had a rich heritage and family background. He never posed himself as someone great and never prided on what he had and who he was. Pride is not only expecting great respect from others, posing ourselves as superior ones outwardly. Expecting appreciation and commendation for our humble behaviour is also an expression of pride.

I have been surprised to see loveless attitude, judgmental nature, reluctances to accept others and pride that they alone are correct in people who profess to be humble. This trait is significantly obvious in such 'humble' people more than in those who lead an open luxurious life outwardly. Though their outward humility may merit appreciation, they tend to lose the blessings that should be theirs because they use the right attitudes to seek self-glory which is a wrong end.

To Ponder

A flower is known by its fragrance. A good man is identified by his characteristics.

OCTOBER 16

LIQUOR AND FOLLY

Ephesians 5:8-21

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery …
Ephesians 5:18

A drunkard is not respected even by his own wife. Even if he is a learned man who is in a good status, no one regards his words if he is drunk. If such a person talks about values, people just despise such words. The loving words of a father, who is drunk, are repulsive to the children. If a person who is a victim to this horrendous practice watches people's opinion about another drunkard, then he will understand how people view him also.

Those who drink to forget their worries get entangled in greater miseries. Those who take the glass to experience pleasure, begin to taste deeper sorrows. Those who sip the liquor, to while away the time, waste their life time drowned in the habit. Those who drink are fully aware of the evils that are involved but very sadly they continue to indulge in this baneful habit.

It is because they do not experience real joy and peace and do not know of ways to attain and retain happiness in their life. They wish to forget the reality. They resort to drinks just to make themselves happy, because they do not know other ways to keep themselves joyful.

It is similar to a thirsty person trying to quench his thirst by drinking the dirty water of the gutters, because he could not find good water. By doing so, he exposes himself to diseases. Jesus Christ has asked people who are thirsty to go to Him, to be satisfied. The peace and joy that He can offer is greater than what the liquor gives. Intimacy with Him gives full satisfaction.

Hence, there will be no necessity to seek the comfort of the bottle. Once, a person learns to relax in the love of God, he will not be drawn by the fatal pleasures offered by other cursed sources. I myself can vouch for this.

To Ponder

Let us keep learning throughout our life,
but do something for others to learn from us.

OCTOBER 17

IF GLORY IS REVEALED

Matthew 8:13-12

If we walk in the light, as He is in the light...
I John 1:7

When we take an object closer to light, we will be able to see it clearly. The brighter the light is, the more vivid will be the object viewed. All of us desire to see the glory of God and think that it will be good if God reveals His presence to us. We like to see God more revealed to us. But, if actually the glory, and presence of God are revealed and even if God reveals Himself to us, how will it affect us? That will bring more of God's light into our life.

Then what will happen as a result of that? Some people claim proudly that they see God very often and talk to Him. But, the sins they commit are numerous which will make it obvious that they have never seen God.

When there is light of God, our mistakes will become apparent. The more there is light, the more our sins will be revealed. We may have to realize that what we have not considered as sins, are real sins. Our defects will be pointed out to us. Then we may have to repent and correct ourselves. More revelation of God will generate more holy brightness and will make us realize the necessity the need to change . As a result the compulsion to purify ourselves more will follow.

In the midst of many discouraging situations, Isaiah longed to see the glory of God. But when the glory of God was revealed, what happened? There was no ecstasy. Isaiah realized with fear the need to become holy. Isaiah who was called to the tasks of identifying the shortcomings of the Israelites and warning them, had to examine and correct himself in the light of God first.

Hence, glory of God does not mean mere excitement and more power alone. We need to realize also that along with that there comes the necessity of realizing our sins and correcting them. The more we know God, the more we will be led to understand ourselves.

To Ponder

He who watches others' faults always, can not avoid going wrong.

OCTOBER 18

WHO IS TO BE BLAMED?

I Samuel 20:24-34

Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan
I Samuel 20:30

The husband looked for his pen everywhere. He said that he had kept it on the table and asked his wife and children whether they took that .They all said that they did not take that. He was very wild and shouted, "I cannot find anything in the proper place, in this house". But, the fact was that no one had taken the pen. Actually, it had fallen off his pocket the previous day.

Some people lose their joy. Some lose their peace. Some people lose their good characteristics. They always blame others for their losses.

In fact, they only are responsible for such loses. They lose their peace because of their faulty attitudes, and immature hearts. Contradiction in their nature steals their peace but they blame others.

Saul possessed a disobedient heart. He could not lead a peaceful life because he had lost his intimacy with God.

But, he looked upon David, the priests, his own son and his daughter as his enemies. He was irritated by them, for no fault of theirs.

If our heart is mature and moulded because of our relationship with God, others cannot irritate and vex us and make us lose our peace.

If we do not possess patience, humility and endurance within ourselves, we blame others for disturbing us.

The reason for our disturbances is not others. We ourselves are the cause for our inner restlessness. Without realizing our own defects, it is ridiculous and unwise to be upset by others' mistakes and shortcomings. Such an action ruins our peace and maturity.

To Ponder

We need to become aware of our own mistakes.
Otherwise, others will bring false accusations against us.

OCTOBER 19

SWEETNESS AND QUALITY

1 Thessalonians 5:11–28

Edify one another…
1 Thessalonians 5:11

Some kinds of food are very tasty to the tongue. Therefore people would love to eat and enjoy them. Though they are tasty, they may not be good for health. At the same time, some kinds of food are good for health, but not palatable to the tongue. Even if you eat considering its usefulness, still you are unable to relish what you eat. But there are some kinds of food which are both tasty as well as good for your health. These can be called as food to be desired.

Some people are good and their relationship will not cause any harm to us. But, some other relationships can be loveable but may not be healthy. On the contrary, the relationship of some people can both be sweet as well as good for us. This is the real life.

We may be good people but if our words, deeds and behavior do not make others happy, what is the use of it? We may speak sweet words and do some good things to make others happy. But, if we have no honesty, discipline and good habits, our relationship will not be of any use to others.

We must be good people and also capable of making others happy. Some people are good and their look brings to our mind the people like John, the Baptist, Elijah and Nathan. But, people can see neither the loving words nor the pleasant approaching manners of Jesus in them.

Our life should neither be like sugarless tea nor like sugar full ice-cream. Others should be able to see the sweetness of love in our words and deeds. We may be completely blameless.

Yet, we should see how much of love we are able to show through our life. Yes! Let us live as good people and also be sweet in our lives. This is the real spiritual living.

To Ponder

When we totally surrender our life to Jesus, sufferings do not sadden us.

OCTOBER 20

VITAL NEED FOR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Psalm 88:1-18

Day and night I cry out before you.
Psalm 88:1

A young wife was praying very fervently for her husband who was suffering from cancer. When the man died, people thought that she would be greatly discouraged and might lose her faith. On the contrary, she became stronger than before in her faith and grew deeper in her spiritual life.

When she spoke about her relationship with God she said, "It is true that I was shaken by my husband's death. I realize that now more than ever before, I am in need of greater comfort, peace, courage and fortitude to face hard situations. Hence, I need more of Gods help now and so my fellowship with Him also has become stronger."

When unexpected calamities occur, it is natural for anyone to think," What is the use of my faith? Why should I pray?" But prayers and faith are needed more in times of distress. We need special encouragement and comfort when we face losses and hurts. If we do not get them we will be totally maimed and ruined in life.

We need to ask God for such graces that will sustain us in hardships and therefore there is a dire necessity for more prayers, more faith and more fellowship with God. We may have prayed and asked God to prevent the pain but more prayers are needed to bear the pain.

We may wonder how our faith is going to help us since all the untoward happenings have already taken place. Life does not end with a few incidents. We need to go on even after the unpleasant occurrences.

In order to keep us going, we need more guidance and comfort. Therefore it is vital that one continues one's committment to God and remains connected to Him, even after suffering painful experiences in life.

To Ponder

A few may understand our problems,
but God alone can discern our inner feelings.

OCTOBER 21

CHANGING FEELINGS

Matthew 27:1-10

I have sinned...
Matthew 27:4

*R*ecently a man in Madras was filled with so much of hatred for his wife that he killed her. He informed the police that she burnt herself to death. But, within a few days his feelings and emotions were affected. He could not bear the pricks of his guilty conscience. So he surrendered himself to police and confessed the truth.

In general, people regret a lot about the decisions they take based on their emotions. Invariably such decisions go wrong. Very soon they realize that their decisions and the way they behaved were not correct. But, before they could realize that many sorrowful consequences take place.

We might talk without control. We might enjoy hurling harsh words at others and hurt them. We might tread on wrong paths. Our harsh feelings, bitterness and angry emotions may not last long. Hence the hasty decisions and thoughtless behaviour will be regretted soon.

As time passes, the mental attitude might change. Emotions also will undergo a change. We will start reconsidering what we did and said. So we might even say "I should not have spoken like that. I need not have decided like that. I should not have acted like that hastily." At that time our mind itself will make us feel as criminals. Then we will feel sorry for what has been done and spoken. But, invariably we may not be able to revoke what has been done.

It was easy for Judas to betray Jesus and get rewarded. The job was done. But, suddenly his mind changed. He realised his mistake and was haunted by conscience. What was done was done. There was no way of changing it. His mind was affected and he committed suicide. Let us be careful not to be misled by our emotions and feelings. Let us not base our decisions on our thoughtless feelings and be ruined.

To Ponder

It is easy to conceal our mistakes from others.
But, it is very hard for us to forget them.

OCTOBER 22

IF ONE KNOWS HIM

II Timothy 4: 14-22

I know whom I have believed.
II Timothy 1:12

Once I had to travel with a few friends in the night. I was seated next to the driver. As I feared that the driver might doze off any time, I could not sleep the whole night. Though he seemed to be an expert driver I was stressed out because I did not know him well.

If I had known him well, I would have relaxed and slept without any fear.Similarly, though we know well that Christ is in the driver seat of our life, we can not travel with ease unless we have a good knowledge about Him. In the past, He has taken us through rough and chaotic passages and we are aware of His power in steering us through dangerous paths.

But, when our faith in His guidance is weak, we are tossed by doubts. We need to have the faith that whatever be the path, God will take us through safely. This confidence must be the key factor in our life to empower us. In order to have this faith, we need to be close to God.

David believed that he could defeat Goliath because he knew God well and he had established a good relationship with Him. It was possible to believe that the God who delivered him from lion and bear would help him defeat the giant Goliath. Though Saul had known God, he did not have the courage which David had because he did not have personal relationship with God.God was with the Israelites when they left Egypt.

Yet they did not know God fully. That's why they could not relax while they traveled. Paul had the faith that God would somehow deliver him from all disasters though he was exposed to many hardships. He had such deep faith because he knew God personally. He possessed the peace of Christ and wanted others also to know and receive this peace.

To Ponder

Whenever the world offers bitter things in life,
God is waiting to give pleasant things.

OCTOBER 23

ONE SINGLE MISTAKE

Ecclesiastes 10:1-20

A little folly outweighs wisdom and honour…
Ecclesiastes 10:1

A pastor was caught in sexual immorality and his name was tarnished. Everyone wondered how he could behave in such a shameful way. But, a person who knew the pastor very well said, "It is true that he has committed a vile sin but he is not a bad person. He has been good in all his life"

We cannot condemn a person totally, on the basis of one mistake. Sometimes, one sin brings down the honor of a saintly person like one spot which can mar the look of a white cloth. But, one sin in a person's life, can project him as a totally wicked person.

Hence, we need to be careful always keeping in mind the bitter truth that one small weakness can spoil our reputation, however good we may be. We reject a cup of milk if a small dust particle falls into it.

So, we need to be very cautious about allowing a small sin destroy our whole life. David was a strong child of God but one foolish act, made him lose his reputation. A huge boat can sink because of a small hole.

Yes, we need not commit many sins to lose our good name. One sin is enough to destroy us. What prevented Moses from entering Canaan was not just a series of sinful deeds.

One single act of disobedience blocked his entry. A minor irritation proved to be a disaster.

Even a man acknowledged to be wise, would be despised as foolish if he committed a single unwise act. So, let us be careful and avoid even a single thoughtless act.

To Ponder

Numerous good acts make one a good person.
But, one single sin is enough to make him evil.

OCTOBER 24

TREATMENT IN ESSENTIAL

I Corinthians 1:1-10

God has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ
I Corinthians 1:9

A person took nutritious food, had sufficient amount of sleep and spent time systematically in regular exercise. He was not given to any bad habit. His life style was so flawless that it could be emulated by anyone who wished to maintain good health. Yet, he was not healthy. He did not have the strength to do any work. He could not understand why he lacked energy and vitality in spite of his healthy intake of food, rest and exercise.

Systematic food habits are essential to lead a healthy life.. At the same time, we need to be aware of the fact that consumption of good food, exercise and the required rest can benefit only a healthy body. Diet, sleep and exercise can not have the desired effect on a sick body. First and foremost the disease which affects the body must be identified and treated.

Some people are involved in pious acts with great fervour. They pray, fast, read the Bible regularly, give offerings and take part in worships. They might even be interested in ministry. But, they fall short of the holiness which God expects to see in them. Their life does not appear to be a victorious one. They do not experience joy in their spiritual life.

On the surface everything looks perfect and pious. yet, they have not sought treatment for their sinfulness which like a disease destroys the health of their spiritual life. Hence, it is important for us to repent and be born again. We need to commit ourselves to God and resolve to live in close relationship with Him. We need to live with the awareness that we have been transformed as children of God.

Only when we choose to live in close intimacy with God, we can find a solution for sin. Only then, the disease of sinfulness will be cured and all our pious acts will yield the desired results.

To Ponder

Sin does not block the flow of God's love,
it prevents us from enjoying His love.

OCTOBER 25

WE NEED TO WAIT PATIENTLY

James 5: 7-20

Be patient and stand firm...
James 5:8

A monkey, which used to steal mangoes to eat, had a different plan one day. Instead of throwing the nut away, it buried it under the ground. It thought that it would get many fruits if a tree grew there. Everyday, it came to the spot to see whether there was any growth.

It was disappointed that there was no sign of any growth. . So it dug the earth and found the nut there safe. So, it began to dig daily to check if the nut had sprouted. Finally, it got so fed up that it threw the nut away.

Of course, the monkey had a good objective. But, it lacked patience. The nut lost its chance of sprouting because of the monkey's impatient act of digging to verify the growth.

Sometimes, we also behave in this way. We decide to follow God's way but seek the results immediately. We fail to realize that suitable rewards for good acts and attitudes can be delayed sometimes.

We can not assume that what we pray for in the morning will be ours in the evening. Situations will not change even after two days of fast.

We can not expect a miracle to happen on the third day. God takes a longer time to answer certain prayers often.

Joseph and Job had to wait for long before their devotion was rewarded. Faith is manifested when we wait patiently. Our faith in God is confirmed when we are patient.

The Israelites missed the blessings, because when they were travelling through the desert, they did not wait for God's guidance patiently.

God is just. He will definitely reward good deeds. The only way to enjoy that is through patient waiting.

To Ponder

We need to wait patiently in prayer for God's answer. Then, we will enjoy His munificence in His time.

OCTOBER 26

NEED AND USEFULNESS

Colossians 3:1-17

covetousness, which is idolatry…
Colossians 3:5

Whenever he saw a new product, a person used to examine whether it would be useful for him and then buy it. Seeing the variety of things in his house, one would wonder whether it was a house or a supermarket. He would explain the usefulness of each and every item in his house, to those who visited him. He would justify that it was worthy to have all those things. All things are useful. But, the important question is, 'Are they necessary?' All necessary things are not useful to us. We can live well, without most of them. Sometimes, when new products are introduced, their benefits are explained to us.

At once, we are prompted to feel that it is essential for us. But, when we ask the question, "Is it really essential?" instead of the question, "Is it useful?', materialism cannot rule over us strongly. The Bible compares covetousness or materialism to idolatry. When we feel that every object is useful, there is a danger of that object or thing becoming our god. These days, going for 'shopping' is an entertainment to many.

Most of the people go to shop not to buy some specific item which they need but to buy something. King Solomon was not only a lover of women. He was also a materialistic man who amassed materials. Ultimately he could not be satisfied with anything and could not live with contentment.

We need to have the practice of deriving joy by uniting our heart with God and seeking the experience of having His fellowship. If we wish to travel with much comforts and luxury through materials, there will not be any limit to our journey. We should not only do many godly deeds but also reflect our godliness through our restrained life where our heart is not much pulled towards money and materials.

To Ponder

Not your wealth but the state of your heart, alone determines your life.

OCTOBER 27

LIVING FOR GOD

Colossians 1:1-20

You may live a life worthy of the Lord...
Colossians 1:10

Living for God is one thing. Working for God is something entirely different. We can't afford to ignore our second responsibility. But, one can work for God without even living for God. It is natural for anyone who has faith in God to desire to do something for Him. Therefore we can involve ourselves in church work, evangelical work and collection of funds. We might get a satisfaction that we are doing what we can for God. But, we need to know that God wants us to live for Him. He gives more importance to the way we live.

What is living for God? It is living in such a way that the basic objectives of creation of man are fulfilled. We need to know and experience God within us.

Like the moon that gets the light from the Sun, we need to know God in our life, receive His light and show Him in our life. The way we live must be in line with God's desires. The light we receive from God must shine through us.

We need to seek and enjoy fellowship with God. We need to glorify God in the way we live. These are Gods goals in creating humanity. We can distribute tracts or we may have opportunities to preach to many people in various countries.

One may be a pastor in a small area or he may be a pastor who can establish many churches. When people see such activities they may even marvel at their wonderful work.

However, our personal life must reflect good qualities, divine attitudes, patience, humility, simplicity compassion and self denial. If this is not so, it is obvious that God's purpose in creating us hasn't been accomplished. In that case, all our spiritual involvements have not been acknowledged by God.

To Ponder

Piety is not doing something for God.
It is allowing Him to work within you.

OCTOBER 28

IF THERE'S NO LOVE

John 8:42-59

Why is my language not clear to you?
John 8:43

A renowned writer was greatly commended by the society for his excellent ideas. One famous magazine interviewed his wife and asked about her views on her husband's writings. She replied that, "I have heard about his popularity. I know that many people applaud his views. I do not have any idea about his views because I have not read his books". They asked her why she didn't read his books though she lived with him. She replied, "He does not love me and I don't like him. Therefore, I am not interested in knowing what his opinions are".

If we cannot like a person we will not attempt to understand him. We will not benefit by any of his views. Today, the teachings of Jesus have become acceptable world wide. People are attracted by His precepts and preaching. Even great philosophers and political leaders are moved by His ideas. But the Jews, who live in the place where He was born, haven't yet realized the greatness and significance of his teachings. Neither do they follow them. It is because they have neither accepted Him nor loved Him.

Many people were drawn by the messages of Jesus when He was alive. But, the Pharisees and Sadducees just turned a deaf ear to all that Jesus said. It is because they did not like Him. Even now there are Christians who did not read the Bible as much as they should. They do not buy books that depict His glory and greatness. They show no interest in listening to good teachings about walking in His way.

It is because they do not have any liking for Him. They may claim to love Him but it is just an expression of their religiosity. If their claim of loving Jesus is true, their heart will pine for His words, and delight in the beauty of His words. Their heart will respond joyfully to them and be willing to be captured by them.

To Ponder

Our life style alone will prove,
who reigns in our heart.

OCTOBER 29

WHATEVER HAPPENS, LET IT HAPPEN

Acts 20:13-28

I fear none of these things....
Acts 20:24

A mouse is searching for its food here and there. Suddenly a cat comes from nowhere to catch the mouse. The mouse runs for its life, escapes from the deadly clutches of the cat and finds a hiding place. But, it does not hide there for long. It does not stay long in its hiding place, to avoid danger. Soon it comes out, searching for its food again. Yes, even in the middle of dangerous situations, with an I-will-face-it-when-it-happens attitude, it is busy with its day-to-day activities.

Many times, just the feeling that something is going to go wrong and the fear that a calamity is going to happen prevent us from doing what we would do normally. Fear about what would go wrong and when it would go wrong will make us weak and will stop us from doing anything. Many times, just thinking about certain difficulties that are never going to happen will stun us.

We can never be sure what is going to happen tomorrow. Anything can happen anytime. So, we should not just stand there, without doing what we are supposed to do today. We should always go forward with thoughts like, "Whatever happens, let it happen; if trouble comes, its solution will be following it."

Hence, with peace and hope, we should do our duties. Nehemiah faced insurmountable odds while building the walls of Jerusalem. His enemies did so many things to make him discontinue his construction works. Yet, Nehemiah never stopped his work. With faith in God and courage, he was ready to face any eventuality. With weapons ready on one side, he made arrangements for the works to continue without any hindrance. In all circumstances, cast all your burdens and sorrows in the presence of the LORD; keep sharing with Him all that is in your heart. Then the divine peace that this world can not provide will reign your heart; your heart will then be free of all fears and concerns.

To Ponder

A Christian with no heart for sacrifice and a soldier with no courage in his heart will accomplish nothing.

OCTOBER 30

MONEY? OR FAMILY?

Genesis 2:15-25

It is not good that man should be alone
Genesis 2:18

One of my spiritual friends got married to a well educated girl. After marriage she got a good job offer with handsome salary, in a company abroad. Her parents encouraged her to join it since they felt that she could earn more money with her qualifications.

But, my friend refused to send her, for that job saying that he married her so that he can have a companion and not to gain money through her. In today's society more than the spouses' companionship or family life or children's upbringing, money is considered to be the most vital factor.

Many who seek a life partner are more intent on getting much from the girl's side and her future earnings than how good she is. Life partners are sought only on the basis of money, education, materials and jewels. As a result mostly they get just a woman to live with, not a wife.

God, who desired to give a companion to Adam, wanted her to be suitable to him. Yes, wife should be sought with the basic intention of getting a suitable companion for life. What's the use if husband and wife live in different countries? What can be gained by more and more money? What's the meaning in such a life?

Entering into marriage and then getting separated out of desire for money, can never fulfil the purpose of a family life. The Bible warns us that the love of money is the root cause of all evil and this 'love' alone makes many people to disregard God's purposes and treat money as their god.

Marriage has to be instituted only for the purpose of sharing the life with each another and be of support and comfort to each other.

To Ponder

Money gives you confidence;
that confidence gives you failures.

OCTOBER 31

WHY THE HURT?

Luke 9:23-26

Let him deny himself.
Luke 9:23

*D*on't we often feel hurt? Time and again, we feel as if we have been hurt by the words spoken by certain people, by their actions or by the way they behave. But, when we think about this deeply, it can be known that many times, others have not truly hurt us. Yet, we feel hurt. This is because our attitude or mentality is like a wound. When a small stick touches it, we feel terrible pain.

Others may not put us down many a time; but we feel so. Others do not do things with the intention of humiliating us; but we misunderstand their unintentional words and actions. Perhaps we might have paid too much attention to their words and assumed them to be hurting words. This is not so.

We should not observe others' outward talk and behaviour only. Rather, we should see whether there is really any wrong intention behind it. If my friend calls me, "Idiot', that does not mean that he truly believes me to be an idiot. If he says, 'You don't know anything…' it does not mean that he thinks of me as an ignorant person.

At one point of time, I began to examine the small and trivial matters which troubled me. I thought about the hurts that I experienced even over ordinary words. On deeply analyzing, I found that the fault was mine.

My 'self' or ego is predominant. It is so selfish that it ensures that nobody even slightly affect it. I realized that getting hurt often is the result of self love. I understood that I was always hurt since I, who was called to hate the 'self', loved it dearly.

Yes, if we are very much hurt by others' talk, conduct and action, we need to examine whether we are dead to our 'self' or are living for our 'self'. We need to seek after the grace of God to get a heart that is tended by God's love and a mentality of not getting agitated over everything.

To Ponder

He, who acts against conscience,
is building a tomb for his mental peace.

NOVEMBER 1

MACHINES

I Thessalonians 1:1-10

You became a model to all the believers
I Thessalonians 1:7

Some Christians who spend a considerable time in prayer are like praying machines. They are known as prayer warriors. But, their life style is far from pleasing to God. Some Christians can be considered as worship machines.

The way they worship might appear to bring heavens down. They shout, sing vociferously, raise their hands and get into ecstasy but God is not glorified in any area of their life.

Some Christians are offertory machines for whom giving is mechanical but not meaningful. They uphold ministries and missionaries by giving generous offertory. Though they give offertory they do not yield fruit of the spirit. Some Christians are ministry machines. They go about doing God's work night and day. But they never walk in the ways of God and do not lead a life of testimony.

Machines do their work in a very systematic way but since they do not have a heart they cannot think and act. Many people can pray well even without enjoying a good relationship with God.

That's why, in their life there can be no love, humility, integrity and patience, though there is a lot of prayer. Prayer is a mechanical task for them. Some people worship very effectively but do not have the heart to discern whether their life style and attitudes bring glory to God.

Some get involved in ministry but in their personal life, do not follow what they preach. There is nothing in their life which others can emulate.

Our religious rituals and practices are not as important as our own personal convictions regarding our intimacy with God.

To Ponder

Let us verbally proclaim that God is alive, but let our life declare that He is with us.

NOVEMBER 2

COMMENDABLE CHARACTERISTICS

Matthew 5:39-48

Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect…
Matthew 5:48

One person who was looking for a bride gave the following advertisement in the papers. "She who wants to marry me need not have a lot of money because I have a lot of it. She need not be beautiful since I am very handsome. I do not want her to be highly educated; I am highly qualified. I do not expect her to be very wise; I am wise and knowledgeable. The Climax of my claim is that, I do not want her to lack any good virtues because I do not possess even a single desirable trait".Yes, only a girl who is filled with divine virtues and good character was needed for him.

Some people who do not possess good characteristics grieve a lot about the absence of them in others and even pray that God in His mercy should bless them with such virtues. But, at the same time they do not bother about cultivating them in their life. In this world there are not many good people and we have to relate to many evil people. How to acquire good qualities? It is only through associating with good people that we inherit those characteristics.

We are called to overcome evil not by evil but, by good. We go on seeking wealth, position, status and knowledge. But, we need good qualities to lead a victorious life. Life will be joyful only when it is lived in a disciplined way. Hence, one should imbibe the suitable characteristics in order to lead a happy life. We tend to ignore this important fact.

Why does a marriage break? Why does business association get shattered? Why is church unity broken? It is because good traits are missing. We get annoyed at other's bad character and conduct. We even plan revenge instead of being patient. .All problems in life get aggravated and continue to trouble us because we don't possess required good qualities. Happiness of life depends on who we actually are.

To Ponder

Until we show forth the attributes of God,
the joy we claim to possess can not be real.

NOVEMBER 3

KNOWING THE FAULT

Proverbs 16:1-20

The highway of the upright is to depart from evil
Proverbs 16:17

A friend as well as his wife never bother much about keeping their house clean. His house always presented a dirty look with scattered things, dusty belongings, unclean clothes, accumulated, smelly garbage etc., But here was no need for someone to tell them about it since whenever anyone went, they would voluntarily say, like making confessions of sins in the church "Our house is not clean. Nothing is tidy here…" But they did not change their state and instead have learnt to live amidst that.

Some people can identify what is wrong in their lives; they realize that they are not good, they understand that those things should be removed from them. Yet, they do not want to hate those things. As a result, they do not have the urge or a strong desire to discard them. Hence, they have learnt to live with those things without removing them.

An important identity that proves our communion with God is not realizing the sin but hating it. If we have close fellowship with the holy God we would not stop with merely identifying our wrongs. We would show much interest in hating and discarding those things. It is because a man, who has close relationship with God cannot learn to live with wrong character, deeds and habits without any pricking in the conscience.

Some people would say that they were convicted of their faults when they read some books or heard certain messages. But, they would not take any effort to come out of those things. Faults can be made to realize, with man's common sense too. But there would not be an attitude of hatred towards those faults. 'God spoke; God convicted; God warned' – We may say like this; but unless we have the urge to hate those things and remove them, it means that we are not with God.

To Ponder

When you are praised, see who praises you,
When you are criticized see who you are.

NOVEMBER 4

FAILURES

Proverbs 24:1-17

For a righteous man may fall seven times
Proverbs 24:16

Thomas Alva Edison was the King of Scientific inventions; he invented many scientific things; he found new instruments like Tele-printer, Gramophone, Electric bulb, loud speaker and so on.

He, who invented thousands of instruments, also was a man who faced thousand failures in his life. Each of his inventions became a success only after several failures.

He firmly believed that failures are there to clearly show us what should not be done.

who desire to see success, become depressed when we face failure. Each failure reminds us that we need to change more, that we need to think more differently and that we need to persevere in our efforts.

However, when we face failures we assume that we should stop making further attempts.

A rock does not break the moment it is struck by a spade. That doesn't mean that it is a failure. Rather it implies that it will break soon and that it needs to be struck more and more.

God's appointed victory arrived only after Elijah prayed repeatedly. Moses failed many times in Egypt. Yet, God led him to pray until the victory. Finally, victory came.

Sometimes, we may fail in doing God's will; sometimes we may fail in seeking God's benefits; sometimes we may fail even in our integrity and faithfulness; sometimes we may fail to receive goodness that we expect from others.

Yet, these failures do not imply that we can never be victorious. In fact, they tell us that we should take still more efforts and persevere.

To Ponder

More than the despair that comes out of continuous failures, the pride born of achievements, destroys man.

NOVEMBER 5

REAL FRUITS

Galatians 5: 13-26

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy...
Galatians 5: 22

Some people were very affectionate and were very good to me but later they turned out to be quite indifferent in their attitude. Some appeared to be very humble but in due course, I found that they were totally different.

Those, whom, I thought were very patient, were found to erupt like an angry volcano. Some, who appeared to be much disciplined, were found to live without any sense of discipline. Appearances were highly deceptive.

Possessing such virtues, they gave the appearance as if they were very good. They put on such qualities, so that they could enjoy spiritual acceptance.

But, since their inner nature was totally different, they could not go on pretending for long.

Only when the heart is governed by God, good qualities grow in the heart. When the heart is good, virtues are generated spontaneously. Such a heart will exhibit only good attitudes under any stressful situation.

Many people just exhibit desirable attitudes and disciplined behaviour forcefully. Instead of being spontaneous expression, such qualities are donned, as and when required, just to impress the people in church. But, such forced goodness will not last longer.

Christian life is not the one in which fruit of the spirit is glued on to one's life. All the good characteristics sprout from one's inner most being, as a result of one's relationship with God.

This fellowship with God is the soil from which good attitudes and behaviour sprout and develop.

To Ponder

He, who does not know the Bible, is better than him, who knows the Bible and follows not what it says.

NOVEMBER 6

USELESS JUSTIFICATIONS

1 Corinthians 6:1–12

"Why do you not rather accept wrong?
1 Corinthians 6:7

A man told a servant of God about his problems in living with his wife. After hearing about his wife's attitudes, actions and characterstics, the servant of God saw that there was more justice on the side of the husband. So he told him, "You have more than enough reasons to be separated from your wife.But if you do according to these reasons, your wife will have to face a lot of troubles and problems in her life. And this will never ever give you any profit at all.

Sometimes we tend to see only how much of justice is on our side. But, we do not see how much of benefit or harm we will undergo if we act on those arguments. Sometimes our justifications may look good but we do not get any profit out of them. They may pacify our feelings for some time but we do not get any good things out of them.

The important thing is what good will come out of our justifications. If our justifications do not do any good to us, it is better we give up those things and undergo some sufferings. The godly David had enough justifications against the evil king Saul.

If David had killed Saul when he had some good opportunities, justice would have favoured him only. But, he felt that fighting for his rights would not be pleasing in the sight of God. So, he patiently tolerated the injustices done by Saul. And God comforted him and exalted him according to His justice at the appropriate time.

We have seen many divorces, many families breaking up and many children becoming orphans. It is true that they had their own justifications for breaking up.

Instead of undergoing some sufferings, many people vehemently fought for justice. The pity is that those victories made their lives to be failures.

To Ponder

It takes a long time for man to accept new principles but by that time he becomes old.

NOVEMBER 7

HOW CAN THERE BE FRUITS

John 15:1-11

Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me…
John 15:4

One of the two boys, who shared a room in a hostel, was saved and led a life pleasing to God. The other one did not have any faith in God and he believed in his own power to achieve things. He asked the other one why he believed in Jesus.

The Godly boy replied "I am able to lead a holy life because of Jesus" The other boy challenged him saying "Don't you think that it is possible to lead a holy life without Jesus? Watch me for a week .I can show you that I can live a pure life without Jesus."

He did lead a pure life for a week. So, at the end of the week he proudly said, "See, I was able to lead a good life without Jesus". But his face was drawn and tired. There was an indication of carrying a heavy burden all along. He looked so stressed and tensed up. But, his room- mate, looked so happy and free.

A person can control his mind artificially and lead a sinless life. It is not a holy life but a self-righteous life. Those who live a saintly life with the help of Jesus will be joyful and peaceful.

Their job is made easy by Jesus. Their intimacy with Jesus lightens the task of leading a holy life. They will be joyful and humble. It is because; they on their own do not try to be holy.

Their intimacy with God and the joy they experience as a result of that intimacy, make it easier for them to lead a holy life. They take delight in that and do not feel any strain.

Conscious and painstaking efforts to keep ourselves holy drain our energy. But, the indwelling spirit of God makes it easy for us to walk in His way.

To Ponder

Inner changes in our life are important, not the external appearance of piety.

NOVEMBER 8

CHARMING FACE BUT HORRIBLE LIFE

Proverbs 31:10-31

Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting...
Proverbs 31:30

A beautiful girl committed many horrible mistakes and was brought to a court. The judge asked her, "you look so pretty. Why is your life so ugly?" she replied," It is because of my beauty". Yes, her bewitching beauty captured the attention of many and made her fall into sins. She used her bewitching charm to attract others and was tempted to use her beauty in a wrong way. Her beauty made her conceited and she destroyed her life.

Many cinema actresses and model girls use their beauty as business investment and make their life miserable and wreck the lives of many. Physical charm is an asset .Riches, authority, status, beauty and intelligence are all assets which are good.

Such assets can make anyone who possesses them, proud very easily. They become haughty and indifferent and thereby lose the beauty of their life. Hence, those who possess such beautiful assets need to handle them with caution and control.

Riches, authority, status, beauty and intelligence can very easily draw the attention of others. People endowed with such assets can with great ease win the heart of others and become the cynosure of any gathering. But, at the same time the very same assets can make those who possess them proud and haughty and lead them to disasters. King Solomon had every covetable gift.

All that he had was beautiful. He was able to attract every one with his wisdom, wealth and sharpness but his life became a disaster far from beautiful. All the beautiful assets were just a snare that hurled him to a tragic end. If we are not keen about obtaining the most beautiful asset of holiness as a result of maintaining a good relationship with God, all the other assets we possess will just trap us in desperate ends.

To Ponder

Let us be wary of those who are blind to our faults, but be grateful to those who point out our mistakes.

NOVEMBER 9

DIFFERENT TYPES OF MIRRORS

2 Corinthians 10:7–18

God knows your hearts
Luke 16:15

In an exhibition, various types of mirrors had been displayed. When you stand before one, it will show you as a stout person; another showed you as a lean one; yet another showed you very tall; yet another showed you as a dwarf. Different mirrors show different images of the same person.

How do we look like? What is the real picture of our body? We should know about these. People are like those different types of mirrors. When we are ordinary, they will look at us as excellent people. When we are good, they will call us bad. In the sight of some people, we will look like worthless people. Their impressions and statements, do not give our real picture.

When people praise us, we feel very happy and if they under rate us, we feel sad. This is because, we do not have a right picture of ourselves. This world has exalted many bad people and put them in high and prestigious positions.

At the same time, many great people, who deserve recognition, have been sidelined and kept inseclusion. Some people presume that they are superior because others praise and acclaim them. Still, some others accept the poor assessments about them by others and start under estimating themselves.

It is true that we should never ignore what others say about us. At the same time, we should never trust everything others say and start over-estimating or under-estimating us. We should always be cautious to examine ourselves and have the real picture of ourselves. The only one who can give our true picture is none but our God alone.

When we go to His presence daily and stand before Him, we receive the blessing of finding out our real picture. Once we find out our real picture in His light, we will not be moved either by the flattery or by the accusations of other people.

To Ponder

Those who praise us cause more harm than those who condemn us.

NOVEMBER 10

THE ABODE OF GOD

1 Corinthians 6:1–20

Your body is... from God
1 Corinthians 6:19

Criminals and anti-social elements do not hesitate to occupy deserted and dilapidated buildings. In these abandoned buildings only snakes, lizards, centipedes, spiders and bats come and live comfortably. But an ordinary, good man would never love to live in these buildings even for one day.

Similarly, the natural heart of a man is not a suitable place for the holy God to come and abide.A man's heart which has no divine beauty and holiness is not the right abode for the holy God. This heart is fit only for the devil. It is well known that the devil not only loves but also has the ability to reside in midst of sins and unholy things. He will come and abide here without any invitation.

But, this is impossible for God. At the same time, man has been created in the image of God for Him to come and abide in him. But, sin has made man to go far away from God. He has lost the image of God and become a shelter for sin. Yet, God loves to abide in man. That is why He came into the world in the form of man. He gave up His life as atonement for sin for He wanted to remove the barrier that was between Him and man.

Through His death, man has got the awesome opportunity to become the temple for God to come and abide in him.When a man whole-heartedly welcomes the Lord Jesus as his Saviour, He lovingly comes into him. He comes into his heart and makes it a suitable place for Him to abide. This is the first thing Jesus wants to do in a man.

We may be good worshippers, prayer warriors and volunteers in His ministry. We may also give generously for His service. But, the most important thing is whether we are really fit enough for Him to abide in us. Yes! The most important thing is whether we have been transformed by Christ to be His temple for Him to come and abide.

To Ponder

If you build temple, it is devotion; if you become His temple, it is wisdom.

NOVEMBER 11

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM

Isaiah 57:11-21

There is no peace for the wicked.
Isaiah. 57:21

A prson who had no peace of mind would often go to Christian churches and listen to comforting sermons. One day, when he was distressed, he saw a Christian program in one of the TV channels. But, the Christian preacher who was talking that day did not say a single comforting word – not even by accident. His sermon on the topic "No peace for the wicked" was full of strong and harsh words. As he was seeking comfort, he felt like beating that preacher. In anger, he changed the channel.

Yet, those harsh words, "there is no peace for the wicked," kept echoing in his mind. Though he was angry initially, slowly he realized that he was feeling something deep inside. He realized that he was receiving a deliverance that did not come through so many comforting sermons. Once he realized that the reason for his restless life was his Godless and wicked life, he felt like he had just received the antidote for an incurable disease. And it paved the way to his repentance.

There are two kinds of medications. The first type alleviates the pain caused by various diseases. The second type cures the disease that causes the pain. If you continue to use the first kind of medicine, your sickness will become severe and result in serious consequences. Though the second kind of medications does not remove the pain right away, they give a permanent solution.

Comforting words are necessary when troubles buffet a man and he loses his peace of mind. Yet, if you keep on seeking comforting words, there will be no solution to your problems. Jesus Christ gives true peace of mind and comfort to us by healing the sickness of sins and the wicked and Godless life styles by repentance. Yes, that is what we need. Let us not seek a vain and ephemeral peace that comes from comforting words.

To Ponder

One who ignores the disciplining of the LORD can never find His comfort.

NOVEMBER 12

KNOWLEDGE IS IGNORED

Ephesians 5:1–17

Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord
Ephesians 5:10

God is holy. He is full of righteousness. He is faithful and earnest. He is full of justice and uprightness. Does not man know these things? No one can say that he does not know these things. If it is so, why does man, who performs all devotional rituals, is unable to live with good virtues which are pleasing in the sight of God

Man ignores knowledge. Though he has the knowledge about God, yet he does not care to act according to the knowledge he has about God. In this, he ignores the knowledge he has. Man thinks he honors God through his devotional acts. He actually insults God because he does not act on the basis of his knowledge about God but on the basis of his own mental desires.

Don't we know that good virtues like love, patience, kindness, justice, honesty, uprightness, humility and goodness are pleasing in the sight of God? We may know them and yet ignore them. Do you think God will be pleased if we try to honour Him through our various devotional ways?

The Israelites faced more of God's wrath than His reward for their religious rituals. They made God angry not only through their immoral ways but also through their foolish religious acts which were not connected to the proper understanding of God. That is why God said that the multitude of their sacrifices had no purpose for Him and He did not desire their burnt offerings.

But, you need the power of God, not just the desire in your mind, to act on the basis of the knowledge concerning Him. Efforts are enough for good deeds but for a virtuous life, you need a strong heart. The right devotion is to first receive that good heart from God.Yes! We should grow in the devotion that satisfies God and not our own mind.

To Ponder

The doctrines of those who do not live according to their own. teaching, help form a crowd that does not follow what they hear.

NOVEMBER 13

THE RESULT OF GREED

Luke 12:13-34

Be on guard against all kinds of greed...
Luke 12:15

A greedy poet composed a song. The king and the poets of his court were very much impressed and commended him. The king said that the poet must be given blocks of silver. The quantity of the gift was to be determined by the poet's capacity to carry it. The greedy poet wanted to carry a huge amount. So he asked for huge blocks of silver and left. He found it very hard to carry them but he was not inclined to reduce the burden. But, on the way he fell because the load was huge and heavy and consequently his spinal cord was broken.

This is the end of greed. Excessive greed causes our fall. The more riches multiply the more desires escalate. Some people's greed increases along with their financial prosperity and as a result they lose their contentment .Without a sense of satisfaction, no one can be happy in spite of large accumulation of wealth. The wealth becomes a source of pain in the absence of contentment.

A very committed person who had abundant faith rose to eminence by the dint of his hard work. As his financial status began to improve, he sought greater opulence and affluence. Hence his mind was solely set on buying lands, constructing houses and starting new ventures.

As days passed, his frantic search for wealth, constant work and problems related to possessions consumed his piety and destroyed all his good traits. Finally he was left disconsolate with his greed and inordinate desire for possessions. Sea water will never quench thirst. It will make us more thirsty. Greed also can never be satisfied. If not checked it can have perilous effects.

Solomon was granted great riches though he didn't ask for it. But, his greed exceed the limit and consequently he levied exorbitant taxes on his people which made them all fed up with him (I Kings 12:4) finally, his kingdom was split into two.

To Ponder

If one believes that riches alone are God's blessings, he is miserably cheated in his concept of God.

NOVEMBER 14

AGAIN THE SMELL OF SIN

Romans 8:1-15

Do not walk according to the flesh...
Romans 8:4

A man has not bathed for many days. He looks dirty with foul smell emanating from his body. If this dirty man comes near respectable people, none of them would like him. Even, if he wears a good suit with a tie, only his appearance will change but still he will be stinking. Again he may use perfumes to hide that stinking smell. But, the mixture of the perfume and stinking smell will produce another kind of dirty smell only. Even now, no one will love to come near him.

Man can also try to put up a big show by wearing the cloak of various pious ways. Yet, they cannot wipe away the smell of sin from him. That is why many people who are very good in devotion have no good characterstics, good deeds and good behaviour. Various religious deeds like worship, prayer, scripture reading, offering and ministry work may create an image of a pious person but they will not change the sinful nature of that man.

Some people do not do what the Bible says for wiping away the sinful nature in them. At the same time, they try to acquire through their own efforts some of the good qualities taught by the Christian theology. Now we can see some good attributes in them. Yet, their former nature and sinful nature will continue to exist in them. When their old sinful nature mixes with their newly acquired good qualities, it produces another kind of sin which is known as hypocrisy or self-righteousness.

First, there should be a clear change of heart. There should be a real repentance of mind. We should receive the experience of being born-again spiritually by accepting the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer, based on the words of the Bible. Then, his sins will be wiped away through His fellowship and holiness will come. Old man will be renewed as a new man through the Spirit. New spiritual attributes will help us to reach a new spiritual stage in our life.

To Ponder

He who recognizes his foolishness alone will be seen as a wise man by others.

NOVEMBER 15

TRIUMPHS AND DEFEATS

Psalm 20:1-9

But we rise up and stand firm
Psalm 20:8

Serena Williams, an eminent Tennis player, who had won laurels in many grand tournaments, was ranked very high and was in a lead position. But recently, she lost to an average player. Though she found it difficult to digest that, she picked up courage and again established her position because she was not totally put off by her defeat.

In life also, we face many ups and down. When we face triumphs, we can't say that life will be full of victories. When we land in failures, we can never think that we can't rise again. While we need to maintain our victories we need hope to rise from our fall.

Even those who were used effectively by God and those who had received special grace from Him, met both triumphs and defeats on their way to progress. Their focus was on God during times of triumph and failures .

Victories and defeats alternated in the lives of Joseph and David. When they rose they glorified God. When they fell they clung to God tenaciously.

The real conqueror is not the one who keeps on winning. It is he who runs towards victory though he falls occasionally. Defeats do not deter such a person from his determination to win. David, who was minding the sheep, rose to become a valiant king.

Though he met discouraging situations on his way to kingship, he didn't slide back to his former occupation.

With faith in God, he was keen on emerging from the pits of failures. He was allocated an important position in the list of achievers who shook the world with their faith. God will grant the grace to stand firm in the midst of failures.

To Ponder

Even evil turns to good in the lives of the righteous, But even the good turns to evil in the life of the wicked.

NOVEMBER 16

SHOULD ACT

Genesis 1:25-31

Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth…
Genesis 1:28

A man, who was rich by doing business, developed much interest in spiritual life. So, he donated all his properties to an Ashram and stayed there. He spent all his time in reading the Upanishads, chanting mantras, reading spiritual books and in prayer. However, this is not a spiritual life. It is not sitting somewhere and praying, singing with piety, listening to preaching and praising God. There is nothing in the Bible to say that God has called us for such a spiritual life.

'Build a church for me; worship me; praise and sing songs to me; keep on praying, without doing any other work' – God does not call us like this for a ritualistic spiritual life. Rather, spirituality involves fruitful actions that cause constructive results.

God asked Adam to be fruitful and multiply. He asked Noah to build an ark. He called Abraham to create a great generation. He called Moses to lead the Israelites to Canaan. He made Joseph a ruler in a foreign land. He made Daniel to hold a high position in an alien land. He urged Nehemiah to rebuild the ruined walls of Jerusalem. Jesus asked His disciples to go all over the world and preach the Gospel.

Likewise, all the important men of God in the Bible were called by God to do some constructive works. God calls us to do a job. He chooses us for a constructive action. But that job or action should be successfully done, so as to show our love for god. Divine fragrance should emanate from the work or job that we do. Our divine nature and qualities should be reflected.

This is what living a spiritual life is. The most important work that we ought to do is to reveal the Lord in our society and to thus live a testimonial spiritual life. To get the strength and ability to live such a life, we need prayer, meditation on the scriptures, fasting, praise, and worship.

To Ponder

See, not how many books you have read,
but see how many can read you as a book

NOVEMBER 17

THIS IS NOT OURS

Hebrews 11:8-16

They desire a heavenly country...
Hebrews 11:16

There was lot of tamarind trees in the school in which I studied. We would strongly compete with each other to pick up the fallen tamarind fruit. Sometimes, we used to allot each tree for each one of us and pick them up. Sometimes, hearing our boisterous sound, the owner of that land used to come running towards us. But, we used to run faster and escape from him.

Look at this land! 'This is my property; this is my great-grandfather's property; this is my land; this is my house; this is my grove' – So many quarrels, court cases, murders, enmities and so on. He, who keeps on arguing that it is his land, dies one day. Now the land is not his. Rather, he gets buried in the sand as if to say that it was the land which had possessed him. Today, there are fights for power, property etc., in the spiritual circle. 'Who's greater? - Is a big problem. Spiritual qualities and principles are sacrificed for the sake of property, power and the pride of being great, in this world which is transitory.

When the situation arose when Abraham and Lot had to go their own separate ways, owing to the difference of opinion, Abraham did not want to make his claim over anything but was willing to yield to Lot's wishes. It was because he did not consider the property of this transitory world as something big but had his eyes always upon the permanent city which God will give.

Dearly beloved, we are pilgrims in this world. We are aliens. This world does not belong to us. We are not going to make any claim and enjoy things here. We came empty and we are going to return to the earth empty. Our fights and competing for things which do not belong to us are in vain. Let us think of the eternal portion. Let us strive for the next world which the Lord has promised to give us. Let us remove all vain desires and seek after heavenly things.

To Ponder

Don't regret over your loss; you did not bring it.
Don't be proud over what you have; you are not going to take it.

NOVEMBER 18

DELIGHTFUL DESIRES (LUSTS)

2 Timothy 2: 1 – 22

Flee also youthful lusts…
2 Timothy 2: 22

Ice cream is very tasty. Is it possible to dislike or avoid it? But, once we are made aware about its ill effect on our health, we slowly start avoiding it in spite of it being very tasty. Similarly it is also difficult to hate or avoid certain sinful deeds. A young man heard a sermon about hating sinful life. He felt that it was absolutely correct. But, when he was called to surrender himself to God, he hesitated. He said that though it was possible for him to understand about the sinfulness of certain deeds, yet he could not hate them.

Some of the experiences like taking pleasure in sensual feelings, gossiping with friends and jolly pastimes and playful events are like eating ice cream. It is not so easy either to dislike or to despise them. But, once you get a feeling to live a holy life, you will slowly start disliking them. Certain things will be despised not because they deserve to be hated but because of the spiritual knowledge that they are not healthy and beneficial.

A person who is much interested in his physical wellbeing will slowly get the mind to avoid certain fat-rich and sugar-rich food items like ice cream, pizza and burger. Similarly though certain deeds are very tempting and seductive, yet a desire and a longing to give them up will come, once we set the goal of living a holy, godly and righteous life.

I keep aside some tasty and delicious food items but I do not think that they are repulsive or tasteless. I want to preserve my body from certain physical disorders. So I am able to keep aside these tasty food items. Likewise, when we set right our goals of life, it is quite possible to make our life happy, upright and acceptable to our Lord God and there will be no difficulty in keeping aside or to go away from the lusts of life.

To Ponder

He who is ready to give up everything is the person whose desire is not to go away from God.

NOVEMBER 19

DO WE FOLLOW

Luke 10:25-37

Go and do likewise...
Luke 10:37

One individual used to correctly discern which doctrine was the right one and which was an adulterated one. He used to find out who were real preachers and who were false ones. He used to openly condemn wrong preaching and false preachers. If people were to talk to him for a while, they would be impressed by the way he talked about righteous living and conclude that he led a very righteous life. But in reality, he did not lead the kind of truthful life he talked about.

Some read good spiritual books, listen to good messages and love the preachers who give the right kind of message. Yet, they do not lead a righteous life. All that one needs to appreciate the right things is a good mind set. But, one needs a good heart to follow them in life.

One sad and disappointing thing I find in some is that they read my writings line by line and appreciate them, but do not lead a life according to what they read and appreciate.

They can only enjoy the good things they read and appreciate them openly. They are powerless to change their life in the light of what they read. Yes, liking truth and accepting it is one thing but adapting it in life is another thing.

Many people consider that they will be considered good by God if they just like and commend truth. But, this is a wrong understanding. Only if we acknowledge our sinful state and opt for a life of repentance, we can receive a heart that's made holy. Only then we will thirst for a righteous life and follow principles of righteousness in our life.

Only this experience can make us good in the eyes of God. We have to consider how righteous we are in our life. It is not enough if we listen to good messages and praise good things openly.

To Ponder

It is no use if you go on reading good books. You change into a book. Let others read you.

NOVEMBER 20

ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES

Hebrews 6:1-12

Let us go on to maturity...
Hebrews 6:1

If any one were to ask me if I had gone to London I might say "yes". On my way to the USA, I had to spend a few hours in London Heathrow airport. Apart from this, I did not visit any place in London. The few hours spent at the airport can not make me knowledgeable about the complete terrain of London. Similarly when people are asked if they are saved, without any hesitation they will give a positive 'yes'. But the experience of salvation is very restricted in their view. For some salvation means baptism. Some think that participation in church service and worship programmes indicates repentance.

They do not have any explanation other than these peripheral involvements. In the modern days many Christians are caught in a state of illusion and are not able to understand themselves. They believe that worshipping God with great ardor and enthusiasm is spirituality. Our depth of spiritual enthusiasm and piety need not be expressed before people in church gatherings. Our piety must be seen in the way we act and react in places where we live and work. It must be expressed in our attitudes and approaches. These are signs of salvation.

Salvation can not be brought within a narrow boundary. Participation in a few spiritual activities is not a guarantee or an evidence of a deep spiritual life.There are certain essential experiences that can validate our claim that we are saved and anointed by the Holy Spirit.

The sure signs of being saved are victory over sin, fast progress in a holy life, enjoying fellowship with God daily, successful nurturing of virtues, desire to help others, honesty and integrity. Without these important traits, no one can say that he or she is saved and anointed. We are exhorted to produce fruit in keeping with repentance. The repentance that is not proved by suitable fruit is meaningless.

To Ponder

Lofty ideas are the manure that produces the fruit of excellent deeds.

NOVEMBER 21

SMALL FAILURES

Exodus 6:1-12

How then shall Pharaoh heed me...?
Exodus 6:12

The crown Prince of a country was preparing to lead his huge army to wage a war against the enemy country. Unexpectedly a mouse ran across and he chased it with his sword so as to kill it. Despite his hard efforts, the mouse managed to escape. Utterly dejected over this, the Prince refused to go for the war saying "How can I, who could not kill a little mouse, fight against the enemy and have victory?

Sometimes, like this foolish Prince, seeing the small failures around us, we conclude that we are not fit for anything. Initially, when Moses went to Egypt in order to deliver the people of Israel, they did not heed him. So, dejected over this, he hesitated and said, "When these people have not heeded me, how then shall the king of Egypt heed me?" Yet, the Lord made the King of that nation to submit before Moses.

Though we may be strong people, sometimes, we may face failures in small matters. Though we may be highly talented, our talents may not help us in certain matters. There are times when many, who have a strong spiritual standard, fail, unable to attain even the smallest success which an ordinary man of the world could have. Yet, because of the failures in small matters, it cannot be decided that we are not worthy for bigger successes.

Peter, who wanted to follow Jesus in the path of the cross, could not do it. Yet, when the Lord's time arrived, in more terrible situations than that, Peter achieved great many things with the strength of the Lord. The statement that first failure is a complete failure did not come true in his life. Many, who were shy of proclaiming the gospel in the place where they were born and brought up, have made many hard hearts melt by the declaration of the gospel, in other States. Many, who had no ability to share a few words of message in front of small gatherings, have later preached boldly like Paul before lakhs of people.

To Ponder

Though your efforts may not bring drastic changes, they would cause at least a few changes.

NOVEMBER 22

JEWELS

I Timothy 2:1-15

Not with gold or pearls
I Timothy 2:9

*R*ecently in a jewellery advertisement the picture of a girl was found in the paper. She was a very pretty girl. But, as she was decked in various pieces of jewellery, she did not look very attractive. In fact, the jewels had eclipsed her beauty, making her look like a lifeless doll. The line, "you can look charming" was in the advertisement. But looking closely at the picture of the bejewelled girl, gave the impression that the jewels worn destroyed her beauty.

There is no evidence in the Bible to prove that we must not wear jewels. The desire to look pretty is not sinful either. It is true that ornaments enhance the beauty of a girl. But, too many jewels destroy the natural beauty and the person who wears them seems to fall into pride, extravagance, conceit, self-glorification, and the desire to attract others' attention. Hence, the person who falls a prey to the golden spell, loses her desirable appearance and becomes a hateful object.

Christian ladies must win the respect and regard of others by their modesty, discipline, humility and moderation. The bedecked women who come to church to honour God, in fact bring dishonour to Him. The variety of ornaments that adorns them, display their pride and the tendency to gloat over and parade their riches. They fail to exhibit any spiritual traits.

While we wear the ornaments to present an elevated image of ourselves from the worldly perspective, we need to pause to consider whether we have adorned ourselves with the traits which God values, high. We need to check if we possess humility, modesty, compassion, holiness and desire for discipline. The Bible exhorts that a lady must clothe herself modestly with decency and propriety and good deeds appropriate for women who profess to worship God. The desire for ornaments must not undermine this injunction.

To Ponder

The mirror reflects the beauty of the face,
the Bible projects our mistakes.

NOVEMBER 23

EVEN THESE ARE WRONG

Jonah 4: 1 – 11

And should I not pity Nineveh…
Jonah 4: 11

When confronted with unexpected oppositions, hurdles and failures, many believers often wonder what mistakes they committed to earn the wrath of God. As they introspect about this, if they fail to see any major lapses on their part, many of them conclude that they have not done anything wrong. But, they do not think that it was wrong when they failed to love certain people or when they were unable to get rid of their bitterness about some individuals or when they were not willing to lovingly forgive others or when they were not prepared to climb down to accommodate the views of some people or when they ignored the directions of God on many occasions, by giving importance to their own personal feelings.

When Jonah travelled towards Tarshish in a ship, God sent a great tempest to cause troubles in his journey. What was the reason behind this great tempest ordeal? What mistake did he commit? God wanted to reveal His love to the wicked people of Nineveh and forgive their sins. He wanted to warn them so that they would have an opportunity to escape from His judgment.

But, Jonah remembered only their past wicked deeds and sins. So, he did not want those people to receive the grace, compassion and forgiveness of God. His only desire was that they should be punished for their sins and iniquities. That is why, he ignored the direction of God to go to Nineveh and decided to travel towards Tarshish, according to his own thought.

God wanted to change his loveless heart and make him a servant of love. So, God sent a tempest to change his travel plan. When our heart becomes loveless, unforgiving, firm in justifying our iniquities and indifferent to Godly inspirations, we are likely to face tempests on our way like Jonah.

To Ponder

He who ignores the discipline of God will not receive His comfort at all.

NOVEMBER 24

WHAT IS THE PROOF?

Johh 8:42-59

He who has seen Me has seen the Father.
John 14:9

Once a believer asked an atheist what proofs he has to deny the existence of God. The atheist replied, "When you who believe there is God does not have any proof in you, why should I need any proof to prove that He does not exist?" When believers see those atheists who believe that God does not exist, they are filled with anger. They are motivated to prove the existence of God by showing the creation and by explaining various Scriptural verses. But, the important question is what proofs and signs do we have in us that God exists. What are the signs that God dwells in us?

When a man possesses divine virtues like peace, integrity, humility, mercy, a change in his life style and love, these are the signs of God's presence in him. When we explain using the Bible, of course, it is easy to dismiss us saying that the Bible itself is a myth. But, when a man has divine qualities and characters that alter his life, then it is not easy to reject them as myth.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said that he who has seen Him has seen the Father. (John 14:9) Was the image of the Father stamped on His face? Of course, not. The perfection and the great qualities of God the Father are revealed and manifested in Jesus Christ. Hence, others were not able to reject Him easily. We should not just believe in God. We should reveal Him through the day-to-day activities of our life. We should prove Him by the virtues we possess. We may believe in God, but when we do not let Him live in us, we will not be able to reflect any divine qualities in us.

When we are not able to reflect the existence of God in us through our characters, then we will be more prone to the wrath of God than those atheists who do not believe in His existence. Those who do not believe in God are meant to be pathetic. But, those who believe in God, but do not show Him in their life are meant to receive His wrath.

To Ponder

Instead of having someone else as an example, try to be an example for someone else.

NOVEMBER 25

TONGUE THAT KNOWS GOOD TASTE

Psalm119: 89-112

Oh, how I love your law...
Psalm 119:97

Once when I tasted some of the food items that were greatly commended and relished by the Americans, I found that they were not very delicious to my palate. They tasted insipid and dull. I wondered how my American friends could enjoy such tasteless grub.

Then I realized that only my tongue which was used to the hot and spicy Indian dishes, could not relish those food which were delicious to the Americans. Tastes differ and what is palatable to one may not be appetizing to another.

David declared that the word of God was like honey but many people do not consider Bible as an enjoyable book. It is actually read as a daily ritual and therefore people do not derive any joy or satisfaction. Bible will be enjoyed only by the spiritually alert people.

Those who have been born again and had tasted the joy of salvation delight in the Bible. They find immense joy in reading the Bible for a longer time. A worldly inclined heart can not appreciate and enjoy a spiritual book. Only those who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour can take pleasure in reading the word of God.

When I address meetings, I find that some people travel a long distance to attend the meetings but some who live very close do not attend them.

They too are spiritual minded but they do not have the thirst for the word of God. They lack the desire to understand truth and experience the joy involved in the whole process.

They do not possess the heart that could rejoice in truth. Only those who have experienced spiritual rebirth can have the thirst and passion for the word of God. Only those born of God, delight in the word of God.

To Ponder

Be keen to seek that, which pertains to God, and hope to receive what you seek from God.

NOVEMBER 26

IF ONE DIES AS A SINNER

Hebrews 2:1-18

If we ignore so great a salvation
Hebrews 2:3

Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft said "Being born in a poor family is not your mistake, but it is your mistake if you choose to die as a poor man" .This is a valuable opinion which can be viewed from a spiritual angle. Being born as a sinner is not our fault but it is our mistake if we choose to die as a sinner. We may have committed many sins, we may have been hooked to numerous bad habits and may have marred our life by our wrong choices.

All this is not strange because we are born with our sinful nature which impels and compels us to live in sin. The inclination to sin is our nature. But, this cannot be our excuse for us to choose to die in sin. We need not continue in sin because God's grace has been made available for us to give up the sinful life and lead a life of purity and holiness.

Since, Jesus Christ has bought for us our redemption by shedding His precious blood, no one can give any excuse for leading a sinful life. No one can say that he has to die as a sinner because he has been a sinner by birth. That's why in the Bible we read how we will escape the condemnation if we are careless about such a great salvation (Heb 2:3)

Today many people die without hearing about Jesus, the Saviour. Same way, though many people have known Jesus as savior they die in sin without receiving Him as their savior. On the Day of Judgment the question "why did you sin?" will not be asked. Instead it will be "Why didn't you use the grace of God to avoid sinning?" Those who have known about Jesus but refused to surrender themselves to Him will experience more wrath of God than those who died in ignorance of the grace of God.

There are many people who experience genuine repentance while they say the prayer of confession of sins.

To Ponder

He who acknowledges his weaknesses,
can maintain his strength in the right way.

NOVEMBER 27

DISCOMFORTS

II Corinthians 12:1-10

My grace is enough for you…
II Corinthians 12:9

William Carrey, the founder of Missionary movements, did not live in comfort. The circumstances in which he lived did not offer him great satisfaction. His family life did not offer him any fulfillment. The climate was not favourable to his health. The society in which God placed him, did not suit him. Ten of his Bible translations were burnt. The schools and the house he built were destroyed by floods. Many people were criticizing his missionary work.

Though he lived in such discouraging discomforts, he was doing extraordinary work. How was it possible? It was all because of his lofty objective, unselfish involvement, passion to please God, his genuine spiritual joy and his deep fellowship with God.

It is generally believed that favourable and congenial circumstances facilitate great accomplishment. Yet, very often, it is very hard to find such ideal situations. But we need not be deterred by poor and unfavourable conditions that prevail around us.

Great achievement is possible in the midst of bad situations, only if a person possesses a lofty goal, certainty of fellowship with God and an attitude pleasing to God. The peace and hope which a person receives from God, is more than enough to help him progress without despair and discouragement. Jesus was living in the midst of desperate discomforts. Something or the other was acting in opposition to Him.

But, He went about doing His work with great determination and least discouragement because of His fellowship with the father. He accomplished the work that He wanted to fulfill in this world. He came into this world to fulfill a mission and He succeeded in that. Of course, His mission was completed in the midst of harsh oppositions.

To Ponder

Victories do not come seeking us;
We alone have to go in search of them.

NOVEMBER 28

SENSITIVENESS

Hebrews 3:1-19

So that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness...
Hebrews 3:13

As long as we walk in the light, we will be worried about the filth and dirt we happen to see on us. Even after finding the dark spots, if we are not bothered about them, it means that we have entered darkness leaving the light. This is so because though mistakes are there, we will not see them in darkness. So, in darkness there is no botheration. But, this sense of false security is not good for us. Darkness may hide the dirty spots. But, it will not cancel its consequences.

We need to be alert not to lose our "Spiritual sensitiveness" in our spiritual life. If we allow this sensitiveness to become numb, spiritual life will become useless.

One important act of the Holy Spirit in a man who has entered the experience of salvation, is giving him an adequate awareness about what is good and what is wrong. When we go against the word of God in our attitude, habit, word, thought or any other act, we will be hurt and get a sense of guilt through our conscience that has been renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Possession of this sensitiveness can be considered as a sign of walking in the Holy Light of God. Only because we walk in the light, our small defects and faults are disclosed. But, if even after such repeated conscious indications , we continue to ignore such warnings, the sensitiveness will become blunt. After that, sins will cease to bother us and they will stop troubling the conscience. It is the sign of the end of spiritual life.

The sensitive touch will be lost. As many believers and preachers lose this spiritual sensitiveness gradually, their mind is not perturbed and disturbed even when they continue in their sins. When their fine spiritual senses are destroyed, their feelings also become numb.

To Ponder

Hiding the sin that is committed is more horrible than the sin that is committed.

NOVEMBER 29

MODEL LIFE

I Timothy 4:1-16

Set an example for the believers…
I Timothy 4:12

There was a man who led an ascetic life, discarding luxury and extravagance. He gave up the sophisticated residential area and built an ashram in the mountainside where he chose to live. He was a guileless man free from deception, cunning and fraud. He wanted every one to be happy and blessed. People recognized him as a well wisher and venerated him.

Of course, there was no blemish in his life. But, can his life be considered as a model to follow? Can we also start living like him? Will it be possible for us to quit our way of life and live in an isolated area? It may not be easy for all of us to renounce the world and live an isolated life.

Even if, there are people who may choose that way, it is not good and desirable in the interest of the society. If we possess the excellent characteristics and commendable attitude of the man and still continue to live amidst people, we can serve as exemplary models for others to follow. A life lived excellently in absolute isolation, far away from the people does not glorify God much.

But, when a person lives in the midst of diverse groups of people and leads a praise-worthy and virtuous life, his life serves as a model. Forsaking life's comforts and relationships and opting for a secluded and insulated life can not be a testimony. A good life will inspire others to live that way.

Abraham did not renounce the world. Joseph did not live in an ashram like a hermit. Moses was not an ascetic. Daniel did not do penance. Yet, they were all known as mighty men of God. They all lived an ordinary life and glorified God in the situations where God had placed them. God is looking for people who will lead such a model life. A doctor is in much need where there are patients.

To Ponder

How much we labour for God is immaterial;
It's vital that we do what He expects us to do.

NOVEMBER 30

WHY COMMANDMENTS?

Malachi 3:1-18

What did we gainby carrying out His requirements..
Malachi 3:14

We go to a doctor when we are sick. He asks us to not to eat certain items and prescribes medicine to take. He offers a lot of medical advice. We also try to follow all his advice and orders. Does the doctor give us money or reward for following his advice? Never. We only have to pay fees for his medical advice.

Similarly God also has given certain commandments as advice to be followed in our life. If we obey them it will benefit us but very often we think that God should bless us because we follow them. We get angry and irritated saying that God has failed to give us the expected blessings though we followed all his commandments.

A drunkard who used to quarrel often spent all his time in hospital and police station. One day he repented at one critical moment. He put an end to his filthy habit and stopped drinking. As a result he was not hurt in quarrels. All the bad things in his life stopped.

But, he was upset that God did not give him what he wanted though he had given up drinking. He was angry and started drinking again. His life which took a turn for the better, again began to be harassed by quarrels hurts and court cases.

If we follow God's advice, we will benefit. There will be peace and discipline in our life. So, though in certain occasions, we may not get what we wish for, we must be grateful to God and abide by his commands.

It is true that God blesses those who follow his commands. But, we must not do that only to receive his blessings. Though we receive blessings or not ,we need to follow his advice, so that we can be happy and peaceful. This experience alone will bring us greater blessings.

To Ponder

If we hesitate to follow God's commandments, we will be easily caught in the snare of Satan.

DECEMBER 1

WHICH IS REAL WEALTH?

Isaiah. 55:1-13

Why spend your labour on what does not satisfy?
Isaiah 55:2

Two men who had studied in the same college met after several years. One was a great business man. The other was involved in ministry. The business man asked the other how he was doing. He replied that he was doing great. The business man asked a series of questions like, "Do you have a car? Do you own a house? Do you have a good amount in the bank? Do you own any property?"

The man in the ministry answered all these in negative. The business man asked, "If you don't own anything, how then can you say that you are doing great?" The man of God said, "I do not have all these which you consider important but I possess peace, contentment, hope, fulfillment and courage. I do not have dissatisfaction, jealousy, fear and restlessness." The other man said, "I have what you don't have. But I don't have what you have."

King Solomon had great riches. Not many possessed wealth as he did. He had everything but lacked peace, hope, joy and contentment. What then is the use of his riches? Many possess material wealth but lack inner peace.

Real wealth is that which can make man really happy. Relationship and fellowship with God alone can give this happiness to man. And that is real wealth. Others may not be able to understand this but of those who possess this, precious treasure of God can enjoy the real satisfaction and happiness.

Even some devout people, who are involved in Gods'ministry, lead a disturbed life running after wealth, posts and position. Though they are pious they lack real relationship with God. Life will be satisfying to those who have a real fellowship with God.

To Ponder

Seeds that fall on untilled soil will be wasted.
Blessings in the life of immature people are also wasted.

DECEMBER 2

THEY ARE NEEDED

2 Kings 2:1-14

My Father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen
2 Kings 2:12

A man miraculously escaped from death in a major accident. Another man, who thought that this was great thing, hurriedly went to that man's house and gave this news to his wife for which she said, "Yes, it is good news. It is good that the population figure has not come down by one number"Yes! That woman did not feel that her husband's escape from death was something great.

I have seen many wives living happily without any dismay and sadness after the death of their husbands. I have also seen many husbands leading a jolly life after the death of their wives. The departure of their partners does not affect them.

Lack of compassion and love may be the reason for this state. Some people give more importance to their own self-feelings and fail to retain a place in the heart of others. The lifestyle and attitude of some people have become a thorn in the lives of others. They are not gentle.

Some people by their deeds and behaviour have become unwanted ones in the lives of others. Any article in a house will be got rid of, if it becomes useless and unwanted. No one will repent when it is thrown away. Likewise some people live such useless life that their departure will not make any impact on others.

When some people die, not even ten mourners go to the cemetery for their burial service. This happens not only because of their ungrateful lives but also of unproductive lives.

Our life should be considered as a blessed one, when we are alive and felt as a big loss when we die. So, wherever we live, our life should be full of good deeds and good character, so that others feel the need of our presence at all times.

To Ponder

It is true that others have not incurred any loss because of you, but, the question is whether they have gained anything from you.

DECEMBER 3

WHY TRIALS?

Job 23:1-17

When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.
Job 23:10

The terrible tempest of afflictions stunned the life of Job. His grief was so intense no one could console him. He wept, broke down and lamented in anguish. He was unable to find out the reason or the purpose of God for all his adversities. It was beyond his comprehension why as to God allowed all these tests. But of one thing, he was certain. He proclaimed: "After all these tests, I shall come forth as gold." Though he could not comprehend the reasons behind the tests, he believed that those tests would transform him into gold. He believed that all the tribulations he was undergoing would polish him to make him shine in various ways.

Yes, it is impossible for us to find out the reasons for all the troubles that we undergo in our life. But, when we have faith firmly on the LORD and walk in His ways, all the troubles and pains we endure, all the failures and disappointments we face and all the bitterness we bear will only make our inner self more beautiful.

At times we may suffer without any reason. Without a just cause, we may go through humiliation. For the pains we endure, we may not be the reason in any way. So, the heart will wonder why this unreasonable pain and distress. But, those trials will become good for us. There, we gain more humility, patience and meekness. These all are gains for us.

No matter in what shape and size troubles come to the faithful believers, the worth of the believers will only increase, but never will diminish. Whether, it is Moses or Joseph, David or Paul, tests and trials only made them shine brighter, but never duller. Probably, you are facing some problems without any reasons. Don't worry. Don't keep hurting yourself by asking why. Hold on to the LORD so that these troubles refine and mould your characters and nature into pure gold.

To Ponder

Only the man who walks in the narrow path of God, enjoys the broader liberty of heart in his life.

DECEMBER 4

GETTING USED TO

Philippians 4:10-12

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances - Philippians 4:11

Some unpleasant aspects do not continue to trouble us. They cease to make our life difficult at some point. God changes some of our adverse situations in miraculous ways. Some of our prayers for deliverance are heard. But sometimes, situations do not change at all even after our persistent prayers and frequent fasting. The adverse situations continue in our life. It does not mean that our prayers are wasted and unheard.

They may not have accomplished what we wished for. They work within us in a different way, though the result is not according to our expectations. They protect us from getting desperate and disappointed. The efficiency of our prayer is not perceived in the desired changes externally. It is felt within us and in our responses to external situations. Because of the prayers we learn to live happily in the midst of the same situation without demanding for changes.

God does not remove from our life all that is not agreeable to us. The solution lies in being able to live in the same atmosphere without any grudge or complaint. God grants to us the grace to do so. We need to face different climatic conditions as there are summer, winter and rainy days. We cannot change them to suit our personal wishes and comfort. But we do not grudge experiencing these different seasonal changes since we consider them as normal phenomena. Seasons do not change to suit our desire and convenience. We get used to the changing seasons.

It is of course difficult to live in perfect harmony with some people and is very hard indeed to be put up with some discomforts. But, our relationship with God gives us the necessary strength to face all the disadvantages in any situation. It empowers us and sustains us. So, let us not quit when we face some discomfort and let us not get disillusioned when we come across opposition.

To Ponder

He who learns to live in the warmth of God's love, will not be scorched by the fire of earthly trials.

DECEMBER 5

A LOFTY LIFE

Matthew 23:1 - 13

For they say, and do not do...
Matthew 23:3

A man who wanted to go up in his life through short cuts was arrested in a cheating case. The judge found him guilty as charged and ordered a prison term for him. And the judge gave him a book to read during his prison days, saying, "This is a very good book. If you read this, you will get good advices to go forward in your life through honest means." The prisoner said, "But, sir, I have already read this book many times." The judge was taken aback in surprise that this scammer had read this book. The scammer put the icing on the cake by saying, "Sir, it was I who wrote that book."

Some are able to create lofty ideas and principles, but they do not live such a noble life. Some can bring forth exemplary thoughts, but just can not lead an exemplary life. Some show the best of the ways to people to follow. But, their feet have traversed the worst of the routes. These are days where even lofty ideals and principles have become commercialized products.

But, it is not prudent to expect others to follow certain lofty principles when we ourselves are not ready to follow them. Trying to lead others in ways in which we are not ready to walk is unethical. It is highly hypocritical to preach others to do certain good deeds that we have no desire to do. Through their lofty principles, exemplary ideals and excellent preaching some make others to believe that they live a very virtuous life. But, when others see their way of living and their characters, they are often stunned to see the reality.

Solomon wrote very, very wise words. He revealed great principles and ideals and made us understand life better. But, when we take one good look at his own life, we will understand how foolishly he wasted away his own life. What the world needs today are not lofty principles, but men who live by those principles.

To Ponder

A man's principles touch the sky,
but, his deeds nosedives into dust.

DECEMBER 6

MAN – WOMAN RELATIONSHIP

I Corinthians 10:1-23

Him who thinks he stands...
I Corinthians 10:12

In the matter concerning friendship, there should not be any differentiation between male – female. One can interact closely with women too, without any discrimination of sex. One can give company to women just as he gives company to men. However, it is wrong to intermingle with a bad intention' – This is the view of a modern thinker. He says that though he had been close to many women, he had not done anything wrong and he considers this to be an achievement.

Perhaps, as far as he is concerned, his broad minded outlook and ideas may be correct. But, this approach cannot be correct for everyone. Perhaps, he may be exceptional in the matter of controlling the mind. But, there is no chance that everyone would be like him. Hence, it is not right to share his view as a good one, with others. It is not good to accept his idea.

The circus man is able to walk on the metal string. But, it is dangerous if, for this reason, he invites everyone to walk over it. It is wrong to present a counsel that would be possible only for a few, as the common counsel for all. It is a common law for man and woman that there should be adequate gap in the matter concerning man-woman relationship. Close friendship between a man and woman is similar to the act of placing cotton and fire in the same place, in close proximity. Man should be close only to man. The same is the case with woman too. This is not a commandment. But, it is a fact that is based on the inherent nature of man and woman.

Apart from the relationships such as children, husband and wife, a person should have sufficient gap in the contact with any other man or woman and should have the habit of not moving close to him or her. Age difference should not be taken as the reason for close mingling. A piece of iron and a magnet in the same place are not the same as two different pieces of iron in the same place.

To Ponder

If you understand yourself properly, you would not be troubled that others don't understand you.

DECEMBER 7

DELIGHTFUL MESSAGES

II Timothy 4:1-11

To suit their own desires,
II Timothy 4: 3

A person I knew had definite tastes and preferences regarding what he ate. He expected people to cater to his taste and prepare only those items which he liked to eat. Many people were dissatisfied with his expectation. It was so because they did not know how to prepare the dishes the way he liked. If the dishes fell short of his expectation, he expressed his dissatisfaction without any hesitation. This condition prevails in spiritual field also. Some people prefer only the messages that cater to their likes and tastes. They opt for messages that please them. They avoid anything which runs contrary to their expectations.

A person who attended meetings very regularly used to depart from the place as soon as the meetings were over, without even trying to meet anyone. One day he listened with unusual interest and enthusiasm. After the meeting was over, he stayed back, met the preacher and said, "this is what I have been waiting for a long time and only today, your message touched me". He was waiting for a particular type of message.

So obviously, in his mind he had a definite idea of what he wanted to hear. So his evaluation was based on his taste. But a message should be assessed based on other considerations. We need to check if the message is based on Biblical truth. Its validity and soundness must be gauged by its conformation to the Bible. Another important question should be whether it is useful for our spiritual life. It is not proper to expect a message to conform to our taste.

God gives us the right message at the right time. What we need in our spiritual walk is provided for us through messages. Hence, we cannot look forward to hearing what satisfies our taste. We need to accept the messages like a patient who receives the medicine from the doctor irrespective of the fact whether it suits his palate or not.

To Ponder

He who exalts his sense of justice,
despises divine justice.

DECEMBER 8

WHAT HINDERS?

I Samuel 14:1-16

nothing restrains the Lord from saving…
I Samuel 14:6

When there was a sudden downpour of rain, only a few turned up for the Good News meeting that had been arranged in the evening. The organizer of the meeting lamented that the rain had hindered people from attending it. As he was returning home, he saw a Marriage Hall on the way, where a wedding function was going on. He stopped and watched it. The Hall was jam packed with people. On seeing this he lamented, "Pastor, the rain which hindered the people from attending the convention meeting has not hindered the people who wanted to attend the wedding

Now pause and think. What hindered them from attending the convention? Was it rain? No. It was the people's wavering desire or liking that hindered them. The rain could not stop the people who were determined to go to the wedding at any cost. Many times, what are the reasons that we give for not doing certain things? We say, 'I'd have done that if it had been like this; I'd have done this if it had not been like that' and so on. What is the important reason? There is no genuine desire to do something, at any cost. The degree of importance that we give to certain things determines our doing it or not doing it.

Legally it is right on our part to cite situations, certain happenings, and certain people as the reasons for our inability to do the good which we wanted to do. Yet, if we are firm to do something, the above factors would not be a hindrance. King Saul had many reasons for his inability to defeat the Philistines. But what Saul could not do, was possible for his son Jonathan. Why? It was because, he had the strong desire to somehow defeat the Philistines. Hence, he achieved doing a great feat with the help of a single man.

If situations that hinder our desires are given much importance, something or other would be cropping up to prevent the accomplishment of our any good deed.

To Ponder

If your attention is focused on things of God,
His attention would be more on your needs.

DECEMBER 9

LET US CHANGE OURSELVES

Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

Whoever watches the wind, will not plant…
Ecclesiastes 11:4

One evening, I sat in a play ground and started reading the evening paper. But, as a heavy wind was blowing I could not hold the paper properly and concentrate on reading. I became irritated by the wind because of which the paper was fluttering. But, it did not take much time for me to realize that my irritation was unreasonable. I had to change myself according to the wind, since I realized that I could not expect the wind to blow according to my wish. Nature will not change to suit our needs.

Sometimes, we do not like people to cross our path. We expect that others views and actions must be in line with those of us. On the contrary, if they differ from ours we feel very hurt and offended. Sometimes, the behavior of some will be grating to us. Their approaches and nature may not be pleasing to us. Some people's opinion and thinking can be contrary to our views. We can't expect them to see eye to eye with us. We need to change ourselves.

If we expect others to think just as we think, we cannot be friendly with anyone. Instead of focusing on our disposition, we need to change our way of life to suit the expectations of God also.

In life too, what we expect to happen may not take place. That may be totally different from our expectations. Adverse winds might blow. By showing our resentment, we can't change them. We need to learn to live in their midst.

Even for Joseph, David and Daniel situations in life were not favorable. But, they were not caught in currents of bitterness and resentment which could have immobilized them. They sought the grace of God and crossed those barriers. Let the winds blow. Let us not be vexed. Let us cling to God and face the adverse winds with the right attitude.

To Ponder

Before we complain that others do not respect us, let us check whether we respect others.

DECEMBER 10

TEMPLE OF GOD

Ezekiel 8:1-18

They are doing things that will drive me far from my sanctuary
Ezekiel 8: 6

I read a few impressive lines in which a devotee asks God a question. He says, "God, I will not ask you where you are present but I want to know where you are not present." God's reply is, "I am not present where I am worshipped." This is the imagination of a poet.

In practical life also this seems to be true. We find in churches numerous people who have no fear of God. God is dishonored in churches which were actually built to honour Him. In churches where we should find love, peace, humility and unity we find hatred, resentment, jealousy and enmity.

In the name of honouring God people build great churches and belfries. But, how can God be found there, if people are filled with ego, conceit and craze for power? So, though many churches are built, God does not dwell there. Instead, people are motivated by the spirit of evil. People who do not show in their life love, humility and patience attend church and seek God's presence there yelling at the top of their voice and shouting 'halleluiahs".

They get excited and dance to music while their heart is filled with hypocrisy and greed. They, who do not honour God in their private life, think that they can charm God by their show of spiritual exuberance. While leading a life of contradiction, many foolish people think that it is possible to pressurize God to listen to their shrieks and screams. How can God dwell in the midst of meaningless cacophony?

The place where God dwells must be holy as God does not bother about impressive exterior. God sees the heart. Uttering glorious praises to God with a stained and soiled heart will court God's punishments on us instead of bringing blessings into our life.

To Ponder

If our life does not reflect God,
he will not accept our worship.

DECEMBER 11

IT MAY BE RIGHT BUT...

Ephesians 4:17-32

In your anger do not sin...
Ephesians 4:26

A drunkard was totally drunk one day and was abusing everyone on the road. Some ignored him. One young man got so wild by the drunkard's words and began to beat and kick him. The drunkard was wounded and people intervened to stop the young man. He said "Do you know how he abused me? Do you want me to let him go? He deserves this." Yes, may be he is right. Justice is on his side. But, very soon he was arrested. As a result, he had to visit the police station and court very frequently.

Sometimes we may think that justice is on our side. But we may find to our dismay, that such sense of justice brings only problems. Sometimes, we may get very angry thinking that we are just in expressing our anger. It may be for a just cause but it may not do any good for us. Some people's words and deeds make us feel that it is right to harbour bitter feelings about them.

At the same time, we need to realize that bitter feelings, hatred and a sense of revenge will never yield good results. What we consider to be just kindles within our mind wrong attitudes. Hence, if what we consider to be right, generates wrong feelings and attitudes, we must be careful. Anger, bitterness and revenge can destroy peace, direct us to wrong decisions and deeds and destroy our life.

Joseph had every right to harbour resentment towards the brothers who harmed him. That could have directed him to revenge and as a result could have made him lose his peace. It could have destroyed his relationship with God. If David had sought to take revenge on Saul who wanted to kill him, it could have been justified. But, David would have lost the chance of being lifted by God. More than mere justice, we must find out whether it does any good for us. Though we may be right and just, we must give up our claim so that God's justice is carried out.

To Ponder

He who is keen on revenge, adds one more pain to what he has already received.

DECEMBER 12

WAIT FOR THE NEXT PHASE

Psalm 37:1-27

I have never seen the righteous forsaken
Psalm 37:25

George, who feared God worked in an office with real commitment and sincerity. Suresh who was irritated by his straight- forward and honest dealings, tried very hard to have George removed from the office. His devious plans succeeded and George was dismissed based on false charge. As George left the place in deep distress, Suresh looked at him with triumph. George was grieved that God did not favour him though he was a sincere worker.

Very soon, there was an announcement about a job opportunity in an office that was opposite to the one where George worked. George appeared for the interview and was selected for the job which was more honourable, remunerative and prestigious than the previous one. So in the changed scenario Suresh could not bear seeing George travelling in a car. He was ashamed to face George whenever he got off his car.

There are times when we have to face unexpected fall in our career or life because of the crooked designs of those who work against our interest. We might feel sad that we are exposed to such hardship despite our honest work and devotion to God. We might also feel that God did not protect us against the envious wickedness. We might be desperate because God did not defend His righteous children and allowed the wicked to triumph. Our expectation that God should bless our honest work and crush the evil designs of wicked people might make us all the more, sad.

But, such a turn of events does not mean that God's work ended there. When faced with failure, we need to look forward to events that would happen at the next stage. It looked as if evil triumphed when the righteous Joseph suffered. But, that phase of life was not permanent. He moved to the next stage. There God was acting and God raised him to a higher level. Therefore, we need to be patient. The interval would come to an abrupt end and the next scene would begin.

To Ponder

Losses in the path of the righteous are just temporary, blessings which we might inherit will be forever.

DECEMBER 13

GOLD PLATED

II Corinthians 11:1-15

transforms himself into an angel of light
II Corinthians 11:14

Initially, gold plated ornaments would glitter more than the original gold ones. Sometimes, this excess shining would make others know that it is not a genuine gold jewel. Though it may glitter brilliantly, in due course, it would lose its brightness and become dull and lusterless. Similar is the case with some churches as well as the church leaders. At one period of time, they shine brightly as the most holy, mighty ones. As far as I have seen, those who show themselves to be great and mighty men of holiness, by talking much about fire, miracle, wonders, anointing etc., are mostly gold plated ministers of God.

Any pastor or evangelist, who talks more about fire, anointing and miracles, than what was taught by Jesus and His testimonial life are to be suspected. Chances are that they would be false ministers. Any servant of God who gives much importance to worship and talks more about it than about matters related to a holy life, could be a gold plated servant of God.

True servants of God are those who give much importance to teachings on living a life pleasing to Christ, divine nature, testimonial life without the stains of the world, spiritual experience of living in fellowship with God and on the vision about eternal life. Anyone, who puts these into the second or last place and prioritizes on miracle, power and anointing would be gold plated ministers of God.

Those who show miracle, signs, anointing, fire and power as the identities of their ministry, shine exceptionally like the gold plated ornaments. This extra luster is the first warning sign for low quality. This false glittering attracts many to its side. Though it is found to be fake during testing, many are deceived by it. Once deceived, the chances of knowing the truth would become dim.

To Ponder

A fool jumps by seeing the one side,
a wise man waits until he sees the other side.

DECEMBER 14

EXAMINATION IS ESSENTIAL

I Timothy 1:1-11

Command certain men not to teach false doctrines…
I Timothy 1:3

For a long time it was believed that the earth was flat. But, people like Galileo discovered that the earth was round. Similarly, people believed that the sun went round the earth but one day people found out that the earth went round the sun. Some doctrines upheld by the Christians today are faulty. Though the supporting explanations are not Biblically correct, people have been following them for ages, Majority of the people believe them to be healthy doctrines and many of the pastors have endorsed that.

An idea can't be true just because it is upheld by many. Some thing that is followed for years, cannot be sound because it has been in existence for years. Among the twelve men who went to have an idea of the Promised Land, the majority of them, declared that they cannot inherit the land. They gave a very negative picture and the people believed that. But, Joshua and Caleb, who constituted the minority, expressed that it was possible for them to occupy the land. They said that it could be an easy task. The people did not believe that, yet, it was the truth. So, even the opinions of the majority can be wrong.

When Ahab decided to go to war, 400 prophets predicted wrongly and only one prophet, Micah spoke the truth. We must not accept something as truth just because many people say that. We need to examine things. We must not ignore something just because it is the view of a few people. We must analyze everything.

When the Roman Catholic Church introduced many false doctrines and forced the people to follow them blindly, many did not question but one person, Martin Luther realized that they were not sound and resisted. There would not have been a religious revolution if he had also believed that, the facts which had been accepted by many, should be right.

To Ponder

Being a friend to a few sincere ones is better than, alliance with numerous insincere friends.

DECEMBER 15

YET ANOTHER BLESSING

Genesis32:7-32

Unless you bless me
Genesis 32:26

Jacob told God one day ," unless you bless me, I will not let you go." According to the worldly standard he was already blessed abundantly and adequately. He did not lack anything in riches, wives and children. Then why did he struggle with God all night asking to be blessed? Though he had everything, he felt that he needed yet another blessing that he did not have. He knew well, that until he received that one blessings all the other blessings he had already got would not make him lead a full life. Though he possessed abundant material prosp-erity, he was not delivered from fear and anxiety. That's why he humbled himself and struggled with God asking for a blessing.

Some people possess all the riches but they do not enjoy perfect peace as they are troubled constantly by an inexplicable fear. They become obsessed by a sense of insecurity. They lose the joy of living, though they seem to possess everything that can make their life joyful.

Once a brother told me, "God has blessed us abundantly. We do not lack anything in finance and physical health. But, we feel as if we have missed something in life. We are not able to understand this" This is not a mystery or an enigma. Though he believed that God had given then all blessings he did not check if they were leading a life with God and if they were living in such a way that God could live with them.

Yes, we need a greater blessing besides and beyond riches, education, status and social honours. That is fellowship with God. Until we regard this as the greatest blessing and try to reach this experience, we cannot enjoy a peaceful life though we have all the other blessings. Are you bothered by an inexplicable feeling of discouragement ,fatigue and anxiety? It means that you need to plead to God like Jacob.

To Ponder

How far we ran is not important. Why we ran and what we accomplished are important.

DECEMBER 16

NEEDLESS LUXURY

Philip 3: 1 – 16

Enter through the narrow gate….
Mathew 7:13

One particular preacher rose from a humble state to an affluent position. He built a luxurious house. He wore splendid dresses and bought expensive things without any hesitation. He loved to eat expensive and delicious food items in five star hotels. He used to give the testimony that God had placed him in such an exalted position so that he could enjoy great comforts and luxuries in life. He was unable to think of the simplicity of Abraham's life-style. Though Abraham was very affluent, he led a very simple life (Heb 11: 9). This thought never occurred to him.

There are two ways before us. One is narrow and the other is wide. The end of the narrow path is eternal life. The wide path leads to eternal damnation. We have to choose one of these two. We may be surrounded by all the luxuries and comforts, like Solomon. Yet, we must not be totally immersed in that. Such a life will become the broad path, if we try to indulge in that, unmindful of other aspects in life. That will lead us to damnation. Though, we are surrounded by all the comforts one can wish for, we need to lead a life of humility and self-denial. God also wants His children to be like that.

In the Babylonian palace, Daniel was given a very exalted and glorious position. He was placed in a very comfortable situation but even there he chose a humble way of life. He abstained from all luxury and extravagance. His life of self-denial earned for him a good name. Sometimes we can't say that all the comforts come from God.

Satan may have allowed them in our life, just to distract us and lead us astray. Hence, we need to be aware of such possible deviations. If we are blessed with abundance, let us help others because selfish indulgence in luxury and extravagance may cost us eternal bliss. Let us choose the narrow way in the midst of our affluence and prosperity.

To Ponder

Lights that are not lit are useless;
wealth that does not help others is a curse.

DECEMBER 17

IF YOU DON'T KNOW GOD'S PLAN

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

If you obey the Lord your God...
Deuteronomy 28:2

If the plan of God was just to bless the Israelites who were struggling in Egypt, he could have easily done that. He could have allowed them to stay there and could have allowed them to prosper. It would have been easier for Him. On the other hand God directed them to Canaan. It was so because God had a plan. If the people had followed his path and thereby accomplished His will, they would have been blessed. But, as they disobeyed and wanted only to enjoy the benefit and blessings, they failed to inherit true blessings.

Even today many of us seek God's blessings through ceaseless prayers, fasting and generous offertory. Yet, they do not receive the blessings they expect to have. Why? They have not been walking in the spiritual way which will allow them to understand the plans of God. Many people continue in their old sinful state yet go on praying and pleading to God.

Some others are not bothered about leading a holy life but want to get blessing through offertory. Still others show little interest in knowing the Bible and leading a life according to its precepts but wish to be delivered from the problems through the prayers of famous preachers. God's plan for us is totally different. He wants us to repent, experience salvation, be guided by the Holy Spirit and consequently succeed in leading a holy life, and finally be equipped for the eternal life and thus fulfill the plan of God. If we do not try to fulfill all these plans, though we struggle very hard to get blessings we can never receive real blessings.

The blessings we receive from God are the by product of our efforts to live according to the plan of God. When we move on having God's plans as our goal, God will accomplish everything in our life according to His will.

To Ponder

He, who acts without thinking, is a fool.
He, who does not act even after deep thinking, is lazy.

DECEMBER 18

LEARN TO DO GOOD

Acts 9:17-30

Not believing that he really was a disciple...
Acts 9:26

Two people were riding on a camel across a desert. As they had been traveling for many days, the water they had was all exhausted. They suffered as there was no water to drink. At that time one man saw at a distance what appeared like a stream. The other man said that it was not a stream but a mirage and added that many travelers get cheated by the appearance. So they ignored what they saw and continued their travel. As they could not satisfy their thirst, both fainted and fell down.

Right at that time another traveler who came by saved them by offering water. He also said "There is a spring on the way you came. You could have fetched water there". The man who ignored it saying that it was just a mirage, regretted his mistake.

Of course, we need not hastily accept anything. We must not get involved in deep relationships with anyone, without first finding out all about them. But, at the same time we need not be skeptical about anyone. When hypocrisy abounds, there are some who stand for truth. While many speak dissembling and deceptive words, some are guileless and innocent. While many strive for gains, there are some whose ulterior motive is not gain and reward.

There is a proverb which says that he who fell into hot water would run away from cold water also. We may be cheated by some people at certain times. We may be hurt by a few others. But, we need not conclude that everyone is like that just because of the painful experiences we endured in the past. If we use that as a yardstick and view everything in the light of the experiences of the past , we may lose the friendship and relationship of a few good people. We may miss the benefits we may receive from our association with good people. Judas betrayed Jesus. So, we can't say that all the disciples betrayed him. Yes, in any matter, we have to exercise caution thoughtfully.

To Ponder

Do not accept any counsel hastily.
Do not oppose it also. Do it thoughtfully.

DECEMBER 19

IS LIFE FUTILE?

Ruth 1:1-22

Call me Mara
Ruth 1:20

*R*ecently when I had been to a shop that sells artifacts, I saw an attractive doll made up of coconut shell. It was thought provoking and made me wonder how an artist could beautifully change an ordinary thing which was fit to be thrown off into something excellent. In life, sometimes, the unexpected sorrowful incidents, disappointments and failures that occur make many raise the questions, "What is the use of my living? Is there any meaning for my life anymore?' Irreparable losses, sickness, and irrevocable failures force us to conclude that all the usefulness of life is over.

Having lost her husband and the children, whom she bore, one by one, Naomi was forced to the state of being considered as a useless woman in that foreign land. Yet, this did not continue. After a few more agonies, she found her life to be of much use and a meaningful one. God changed the latter part of her life into something more excellent than the first part.

There was a sudden and unexpected depressive turning point in the life of Moses, who lived in the palace. He, who had the quality to rule over people, became a poor person, who tended the sheep. Since it continued for forty years, Moses must have wondered, "I butted into an unwanted matter because of which I am now tending the flocks. What is there in my life anymore?'.

In that state where he thought that everything was over, God touched his life. He used him. He became a great leader and a prophet who received God's statutes and attained eternal fame.

Yes, God alone is a wonderful artist. He can change a life that has gone useless into a meaningful one. Though, there may be certain permanent lacks, the perfectness of God will rectify those lacks and would lead to a life of great satisfaction.

To Ponder

Don't worry about the closed paths,
wait for the opening of the eyes that see God's new ways.

DECEMBER 20

WHY PRAY?

Exodus 33:1-14

As a man speaks with his friend...
Exodus 33:11

*P*rayer is a place where we meet God. Prayer proves that relationship with God is a fact. It affirms that we live in close relationship and fellowship with God. When we go to pray we must feel that we are going to speak with God, enjoy His love and His presence. God wants to reveal His presence to those who love Him and accept His rule in their life. He wants to reveal His presence.God wants to reveal His presence to those who love Him and accept His rule in their life. He wants to reveal His presence so that they could be assured of His love and fellowship and enjoy that

How can God reveal Himself to them? Just for this, God wants us to give priority to prayer. A person who prays prepares the way for God to reveal Himself to him. Unless the presence of God is revealed to us, there is no opportunity for us to feel God's love , enjoy His fellowship and grow in divine experiences. There is no way other than prayer through which God can show Himself within us.

The glorious significance of prayer is not disclosed because many people interpret it as a religious ritual that enables us to pray for all our needs. Since, many people easily attain the worldly blessings, they do not feel the necessity of seeking something greater only through prayer. Hence, they don't value prayer.

But if we realize the truth that prayer is the place where we can experience the presence of God, where God reveals Himself to us then only we can understand that our involvement in prayer is badly needed. Only then, we will feel the necessity of prayer. Hence, we need to have a revelation about the necessity of prayer. Next time, when we think of prayer let us not consider that only as an experience to ask God what we need but let it be thought of as a time to meet God whom we love and an experience to feel the presence of God.

To Ponder

He who relies on some body else's prayer is a non - believer.
He who depends on his own prayer is a believer.

DECEMBER 21

WITHIN CONTROL

I Peter 5:1-14

Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand…
I Peter 5:6

A soaring kite that flies higher and higher in the sky is controlled by a small string. The string does not actually help the kite to go higher but, if the kite ceases to be controlled by the string and if the string snaps, the kite descends low and gets lost in some remote place.

Similarly, many forces act on us and lift us to great heights. But if we are not guided and directed by God's word and His spirit, we might fall from the height any time. Academic excellence and skilled efforts can help us accomplish great tasks in life. But, they can not take us in the right direction.

We need God to control us, check our desires and channelize them in the right direction.

King Saul was an extraordinary man. He was quite tall and had a striking personality. But, he did not like to be controlled by the word of God. He failed to obey His word and wished to have his way like an unbridled horse.

Consequently, he fell from his height and all his greatness crumbled. Solomon who was known for his wisdom towered above all but he too did not submit to God's control. Therefore, his kingdom was shattered.

Realizing the futility of our accomplishments and the necessity of God's control, shall we say the following prayer?

"God, give me the grace to stay connected with you and humble myself under your mighty hand. Let all my talents, wisdom, sharpness of mind and desires be under your control.

Do not let me go beyond the limit of your control. Let me be imprisoned by your words. May my life be under your total control."

To Ponder

If we hesitate to follow God's commands,
we will fall a prey to Satan's wily designs.

DECEMBER 22

COMPLAINING SPIRIT

Romans 14: 8-23

Let us stop passing judgment on one another…
Romans 14:13

A person who happened to read my books contacted me, as he found my ideas to be good. He commended me and my books. Once I happened to talk to him for a longer time, at which time he started to list all the defects and short comings found in eminent preachers and pastors. He also shared with me some of the bitter experiences he had with them.

Most of the things he expressed were true, no doubt; but the way he spoke, disclosed that he would go to any extent to bring down the name of anyone whom he did not like. Even at the very moment I visualized a day, when I also would meet the same fate. That day approached sooner than I expected.

Some people's condemnation of others' mistakes, does not spring out of real hatred for vices. Their appreciation of people is not the result of their commitment to something good. They extol those people who walk within their line of thought.

If the very same people express some feeble dissent and disagree, they reject and condemn them. It is because they do not have the mentality to be consistent in their relationship. They look for occasions to criticize and condemn because of their narrow minded approach and complaining nature. Even if they appreciate something, inevitably it is because of their hatred for something else. They cannot transcend emotions and honour truth and righteousness. They are the victims of their emotions.

Let us carefully analyze to find out why we criticize. Is it because we love righteousness and cannot bear if anything goes wrong? Or is it the product of our vile thinking? When we are not straight forward and honest and lack a righteous attitude, it is indeed a sin if we criticize other's defects.

To Ponder

A meager foolishness is enough to point out others fault. It doesn't require a great wisdom.

DECEMBER 23

SUN AND LAMP

II Peter 1:13-21

As to a light shining in a dark place..
II Peter 1:19

The sunlight is enough for us during the day and therefore we do not need any other light. The sunlight which is so bright in the daytime can not be conserved and used in the night. We can not face the night with the sunlight which we enjoyed in the daytime.

Knowledge, reflective power and philosophical outlook are great and luminous like the sunlight. Though they are useful for the humanity they can not help people in their dark periods.

Sin plunges the human race into darkness. Losses of different kinds, trials, disillusionments and discouragement hurl people into absolute darkness. It is hard for man to find his way in such a darkness using his knowledge and philosophy.

In such a dark situation, we need the Word of God, which like a lamp will show the way for us. It is not just the printed matter in the Bible. The words must go into our heart and reverberate there.

The Word of God becomes alive and vibrant in our heart, when we are intimate with Him. In the encircling darkness, we can easily find our way guided by the light of His Word.

Even those who possess excellent wisdom, struggle hard to find their way in this sinful world, which is shrouded in darkness. Their life is deprived of hope and peace. The Word of God may not sound appealing and attractive like the erudite words of the learned.

Scholars with their infinite wisdom may not regard and venerate the Word of God. But, it is true that philosophy can not offer the hope and encouragement, which one will surely find in the Bible.

To Ponder

The world applauds our knowledge of the Bible, but God commends our obedience to His Word.

DECEMBER 24

CLEANSING

Acts 3:19-26

To bless you, in turning away every one of you from your Iniquities Acts 3:26

Once, in a hurry I packed my clothes in a suitcase. After a few days, when I opened the suitcase, the clothes smelled badly and moths had eaten some parts. Since I failed to check the inner side of suitcase and clean it thoroughly, many good clothes were spoiled.

Yes, when we keep a good item or article in a particular place, we need to clean that area first. Likewise, God too wants to clean our life before keeping His blessings and benefits in our life. His blessings cannot stay in the life which is not cleansed. His peace, joy and hope in Him cannot be maintained in a heart which is not cleansed.

Mending ourselves, setting ourselves right and cleansing open ways for God to stay and work in us. Unless God gets directly involved with us, He cannot give us the benefit that we seek. When a sacred situation is created for Him to stay in us, He can be with us and give us good things.

God did not do a miracle first for the Israelites who did not know the way to cross the Jordan. But, He asked them to sanctify themselves. Yes, God first wanted to create a suitable situation to work among them. Miracle followed that. Unless the vessel is cleaned well before pouring the milk, the milk would get spoilt. The great enthusiasm many believers show to receive benefits from

God, is not shown in getting cleansed in their life. But, before blessing us in an abundant way, God wants us to cleanse us thoroughly. Yet, He cannot do it without our co-operation. Though the people of Israel had received so many excellent promises of blessing, they could not attain everything. It was because they did not accept the cleansing job of God before those blessings. Let us co-operate with God who cleanses us and receive His blessings!

To Ponder

Be careful to live pure when enemies increase, be careful to retain your purity when friends increase.

DECEMBER 25

BRINGING HAPPINESS

Luke 2:1-20

Great joy which shall be to all the people.
Luke 2:10

A certain businessman would go with his friends to modern restaurants and clubs during weekends and would spend thousands of rupees. One day he gave ten rupees to a hungry boy who was standing near a restaurant. When he received the money, the joy that the boy had was immeasurable. This made the businessman to think: "A mere ten rupees brought so much happiness to this boy. I spend thousands of rupees every weekend, but it never brought me any happiness." From then on, he stopped spending thousands of rupees in restaurants, but made the poor people happy by giving them that money. That brought great joy to him.

Many of us are careful in making ourselves happy in a very selfish manner. Seeking happiness to themselves seems to be the primary purpose for many. But, bringing happiness to others is a great virtue. Those who desire to bring happiness to others are able to bring joy to their own life.

The angel said that the birth of Jesus is good news that would bring great joy to all the people. Jesus did not care about making Himself happy; instead He became the Good News that would bring joy to others. He let Himself be distressed so that mankind receives joy through salvation. Only through forgiveness of sins, a man can receive true joy and happiness that God provides. So to provide that forgiveness of sins, He came forward to become the atonement for those sins.

The joy of Christmas is not in wearing new dresses, joyous appearances, and various amusements or in delicious food. The joy of Christmas stems from the good thought that our life should become instruments of joy unto others. Have you got the joy of Christ that comes through the forgiveness of sins? If yes, then you will be doing something always to make others happy in some way.

To Ponder

Do not see only how much benefits you got from the LORD. See also how much benefits others received from you.

DECEMBER 26

RELATIONSHIPS

Matthew 15:1-9

Honour your father and mother..
Matthew 15:4

Once, a friend of mine was praising a minister of God. In the course of his commendation he said that, he was so involved in his ministry that he could not find time to go and see his mother, who was ill for some time. I felt that it was not a matter to be proud of.

Many people think that once a person accepts Christ, all the bonds and relationship must be forgotten which they consider to be the greatest evidence of loyalty to God. The New Testament does not disregard the Old Testament commandments which say that one must honour the parents.

As long as relationships do not hinder our fellowship with God, they must be nurtured. Maintaining good relationship with people and with God is not exclusive.

The kith and kin of a person who is born again are those who have a similar experience. When the disciples told Jesus that His mother had come there seeking Him, Jesus pointed out those who were listening to His words and said that they were His brothers and sisters. Thus Jesus made it clear that spiritual bonding is more special and more real than mere blood relationship.

At the same time, New Testament attaches more significance to compassion and Love. Moreover, the impact and expression of our spirituality must not be nullified by our indifference and surely, others must not look down upon our spirituality. Jesus condemned the wrong attitude of the Pharisees who gave offertory to God while ignoring their duties to their parents.

Our love for anyone must not eclipse our love for God. This is the only caution we need to exercise while loving others. Devotion to God does not demand any sacrifice of any of our relationships.

To Ponder

Let us not reject God and delight in human Love; but those who reject others cannot love God.

DECEMBER 27

ARE WE ACTIVE?

I Peter 1:13-25

Be holy in all you do...
I Peter 1:15

We want God to give us health and protection. We also wish that He must deliver us from our problems and we want Him to be our counselor. We seek His blessing on our children and want Him to expand our territory. We want God to act in several areas of our life.

We invite God to touch various aspects of our life .In fact we request God to do so many things in our life. God also is ready to satisfy our request but while we place before Him so many demands and claim His promises, are we willing to do anything for Him? Have we committed ourselves to do something for Him?

While we express all our desires in our prayers, do we come forward to execute God's desires which are expressed in the Bible? If we desire God to satisfy our desires, we need to first fulfill His Desires.

Many people just list in prayers the things that they wish to get done and they just relax. We need to seek intimacy with God and the image of God must be expressed through us.

We need to lead a life of witness before we wish God to act for us. God expects all these things from us. Without leading a life that pleases God, if we just seek God's favour through prayer, how can God help us?

Many people wish to get blessed through prayer which happens to be the only thing that they do. Other than praying, they do not do anything which pleases God.

They do not think whether they please God in their family relationship, interaction, attitude and behavior. If we want God to act in all the areas of our life, we need to do that which pleases Him in all the areas of our life.

To Ponder

We can see God act for us,
when we act for God.

DECEMBER 28

WHO IS CALLED FIRST?

Psalm 91:1-16

He will call upon me and I will answer Him…
Psalm 91:15

Many Christians believe in the prayers of the preachers and place their trust on the preachers and they believe that if the preachers raise prayers on their behalf, heaven will respond immediately and grant their desires. Today, the preachers train and encourage the believers to depend on them instead of encouraging them to pray on their own. Hence, when they encounter a problem, they call the preachers even before they call God. It is so because they feel that God is far away and preachers are very close for them. In fact, God is very close to those who believe in Him, while the preachers remain at a distance. God's ministers are not specially designed people

They are ordinary people like us. They too are susceptible to the weaknesses that affect us. We cannot say that they plead for us all the twenty four hours with tears, compassion and great burden. They, who are involved in multifarious activities, cannot be praying for us as Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane.

Many workers of God project this wrong image about themselves before the people and have succeeded in deceiving them. When we call such ministers and request them to pray for us, they may not be free; they may be tired and exhausted at that time and immersed in and crushed by their own responsibilities. So, we cannot assuredly say that they will pray for our petitions with passion at a time when they themselves feel burdened and fatigued.

But, Jesus is there for us to plead on our behalf always. He neither sleeps nor slumbers and never gets tired. Isn't it an effective practice to take our petitions directly to Him instead of sending the prayers to Him through the ministers of God? God has never said that the prayers of the preachers are more special to Him than those of the believers.

To Ponder

Let us take our petitions directly to God,
let us not knock on the doors of the preachers.

DECEMBER 29

DO NOT DESCEND

1 Peter 2:15-25

If a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering…
I Peter 2:19

People may say bad things about us. They may behave very rudely and harshly. Our reaction may be cool and we may decide to be patient and tolerate all that they do and say. We make a decision to remain calm, but others may consider us as cowards and weak. When we come to know about the way others evaluate us, there begins a conflict within us. So, we may fear that on their assumption that we are cowards, they might become bolder to taunt us further. So, we may be tempted to give up our patience.

This is the trick of the devil. How cleverly he makes us descend from our high stand. We must not give importance to how others view us. Let them have any opinion of us, but we need to protect our real good nature. It has to be so because we exhibit good nature and noble characteristics neither to please others nor to get their approval and applause. We do so, in order to be commended by God. So, let us not be worried about how others evaluate us.

When Jesus hung on the cross, many teased him saying that He should come down from the cross if He was the Son of God. They may have perceived Him as a coward. They blindfolded Him, hit Him and asked who hit Him. He never bothered how they saw Him. He did not like to take them by surprise by displaying His real power. He remained cool and calm just as He wished to be seen before the Father God.

We must not be deceived by the devil who wants us to stoop down from our noble nature. We must be resolute in maintaining our good nature. We need to show enthusiasm and firmness in retaining our good stand for the glory of God. Let us worry about how we appear in the presence of God and ignore the necessity of appearing strong and powerful before people.

To Ponder

Let us accept the good things expressed by others, and be a friend to him who does good things.

DECEMBER 30

OPPONENTS

Judges 6:1-10

Because the power of Midian was so oppressive...
Judges 6:2

When our relationship with God becomes weaker, our enemies become strong against us. When we fail to honour God in the right way, He permits certain situations which humiliate and dishonor us before those who oppose us. God's objective in this is neither to strengthen the hand of our adversaries nor to make us feel humiliated before others. Through this, He makes us aware of the need to mend our relationship with Him.

In the book of Judges this truth is made clear several times. When they deviated from the path of God, their enemies intersected their way and very easily put them, to shame. It is God's purpose to allow some chastisement at the hand of our adversaries, so that we will be induced to amend our connection with Him.

We have heard people say that Satan is fighting against them. Some say that others are harassing them with sorcery and witchcraft. Some express that the hand of their adversary is strong against them.

There is only one way to overcome all these menace. Devil cannot be bound by prayer. Prayers by eminent preachers will not nullify the effects of sorcery. Just by struggling against the adversaries, we will not win. The strength of our intimacy with God only can vanquish and weaken the adversaries.

When the wicked nobles plotted against Daniel, he did not fight back. He was keen on maintaining His intimacy with God. He kept the contact line with God active and vibrant, everyday. Hence, even the ferocious lions became dumb before Him.

When adversaries advance, we need to check whether our relationship with God is intact and strong. That alone will protect us like a fortress.

To Ponder

Let us not be discouraged by failures but let us discover the cause of the failures.

DECEMBER 31

LET US GET READY

Joshua 3:1-17

Sanctify yourselves…
Joshua 3:5

Once a super-fast train or a bus covers a specific long distance, it is examined in many ways. It is checked whether all the mechanical parts are in good condition to function smoothly or not and the parts that need repairs are mended. Owing to its long distance travel, the dust and dirt settled on it, are removed and washed cleanly. Now the train or bus is ready to continue with its next course of running.

By the immense grace of God, we have completed a whole year. God willing, we have drawn closer to the time of entering into a New Year. To many of us, this year, which is about to end, might have been depressing, or trying because of so many issues or disappointing as certain expected things might not have happened. Yet, the grace of God has been with us and has helped us to reach this level, tiding over so many situations.

Though the past year might have been bitter, the Lord is able to change the coming year into a sweet year. The righteous lives by faith. In order to prepare ourselves for the next phase of our life's journey, shall we now examine as to how we acted, how we act now and how we are? If the Lord had been with us, we would have felt Him to be a good God in many ways. If the Lord had been with us, His peace would have been with us. If the Lord had been with us, we would have felt the voice of the Lord reverberating in our soul.

If we find ourselves to be lacking or wanting in these things, it means that we have not been diligent enough to be with the Lord, as we ought to have been. This might have been the reason for our dejection, lack of peace and hopelessness. Even now, let us not brood over our problems that are in a queue before us, but with a new decision, prepare ourselves to have a strong personal relationship with the Lord. Tomorrow the Lord will do wonders for us.

To Ponder

If it is certain that you are for God,
it is certain that He is for you.

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