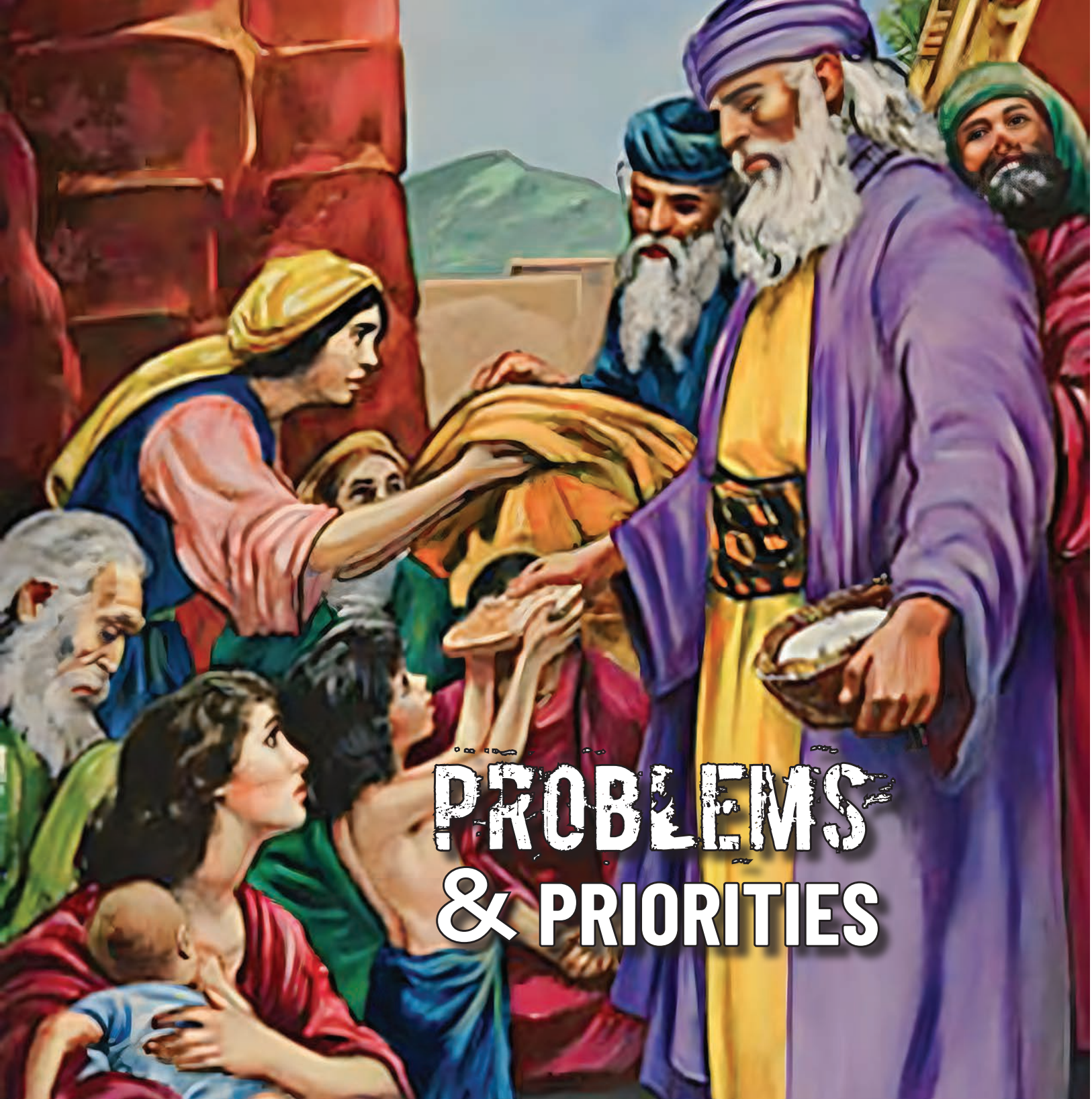


renewing and enriching life

revive

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PROBLEMS & PRIORITIES



Pastor Dr. T. Valson Abraham
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According to archeologists, the population of Jerusalem in Jesus' time was somewhere between 20,000 and 100,000, with smaller numbers probably more accurate. For a small city, Jerusalem has exerted an influence far out of proportion to its size.

I mention this because Acts 1-5 relates how 3,000 people came to Christ on one day, 5,000 on another day—in Jerusalem. Many others were being saved every day. That's a lot of people in a short time for a relatively small city. A revolution was taking place, with miracles on every hand. Even many priests were also following Christ.

The religious establishment of Jerusalem at the top was shaken to the core. But they had become fossilized in their beliefs. Their wineskins had become old, brittle and about to break. They were not prepared for the new things of God. They expected God to do things forever in the way they always had known. They did not expect change, and when He didn't meet their expectations, they became incensed they could not control it.

In spite of the overwhelming evidence of Jesus' power and authority, they refused to submit to Him.

With multitudes coming to Jesus on every hand, with God doing a "new thing," it became an unpredictable situation. A crisis developed.

In a short time, there came a clash between different groups. Hellenistic Jews, with strong influences from Greek culture, did not think or act like native Jews, and they felt overlooked. This could easily have become a source of deep division and disunity. Wisely, Peter, a native Jew, saw the problem and sought a wise solution to preserve unity, peace and love.

Some say that Peter's solution was to start the first board of deacons in the early church. Whether that is true or not, what he did and how he did it serves as a model of what to do when it comes to problem solving, in balancing teaching and prophetic ministry with administration of important and legitimate needs of people.

Peter selected seven men who possessed good reputations, filled with the Holy Spirit, and filled with wisdom.

All tasks involving the body of Christ require men and women known for their good works and godly character, who hear God's voice, and who understand the ways and needs of their brothers and sisters. They don't play favorites but seek the good of all.

The seven men chosen for the task fulfilled these criteria. We

A PATHWAY TO HEAVEN ON EARTH

read of Stephen and Philip later, but the five others, whose stories are not recorded by Luke, must also have served as good examples and won the confidence of people inside and outside the church.

The crisis recorded in Acts 6 could have brought about the first split in the church, along cultural lines. What happens in the Jerusalem church in regard to this issue shows that the church was living out the principle later stated by Paul in Galatians 3:28:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

They had learned to make their identity in Christ alone as children of God, made in His image, chosen in Him as kings and priests to renew their minds so they could, in the power and authority of Christ, transform their families, communities, workplaces, and ultimately, the whole world for Christ and destroy the works of the devil, bringing heaven on earth.

The failure of many churches throughout history to put cultural and ethnic differences aside for this greater identity in Christ reflects a failure in their vertical relationship with God Himself. Not only does this weaken the church, it also prevents us from becoming a powerful witness to those around us—in our families, communities, workplaces and around the world.

Clearly, the seven men chosen by Peter understood this. Because they did, the problem that could have split the church was quickly solved to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

This has special relevance for us who make up the body of Christ in India, filled with so many cultural and ethnic groups. We must be renewed daily with the Spirit of God, with a firm foundation in our relationship with Christ. It is the only solution to unity. It is the only solution to keeping from splitting off into warring factions.

This has special relevance for churches that have experienced generations-long turmoil over cultural and ethnic differences. The only solution is to recognize our common identity in Christ and to become daily filled with the Holy Spirit.

How ready are we for the sudden and new things of God? Do we expect God to do new things in the old way? Are we ready for the unexpected? Are we ready to receive people who are not like us, who have different histories and needs?

Do we have new wineskins able to handle new wine? Are we prepared to move beyond the Christian social club model that has become so common and seek fellowship among Spirit-filled believers from completely different backgrounds in the way Jesus did? Our willingness to do so reflects the strength of our own relationship with the God who opens His doors to any and all who believe, including those who come from totally different backgrounds.

Are we ready for miracles and changed lives among people we regard as unlikely candidates for God's saving work? Are we ready in our own churches to see beyond cultural and ethnic differences to our common identity in Christ?

Do we seek out leaders of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom? Or do we only select those who have the most political or economic clout in our church, or those with certain family or business connections?

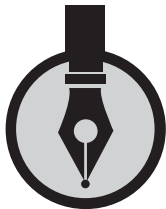
These are questions we must all answer with honesty as we pray for God to do a new thing in our midst. How well we do these things in real life will determine whether we help or hinder others in finding true relationship with God in Christ.

* * * * *

Father God, fill us with your Holy Spirit that we might think and act in your wisdom. Make us like new wineskins, able to receive the new thing you are doing. May we all unite under you, regardless of our backgrounds, in your great mission to bring all peoples to you, to destroy the works of the devil, and to bring your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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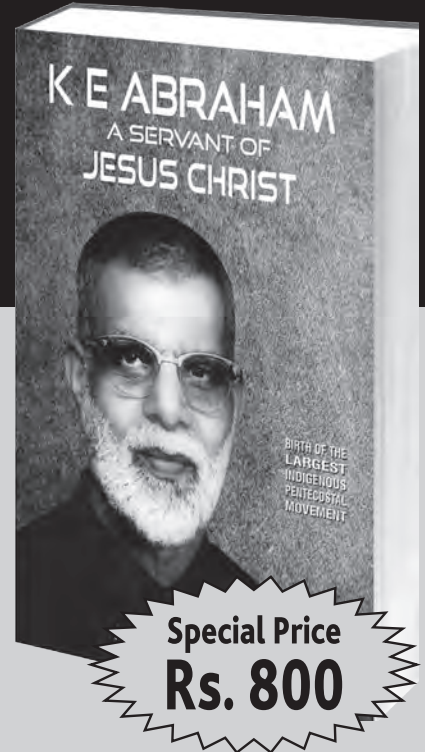
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Pastor Dr. John K. Mathew

SPIRITUAL SURGERY

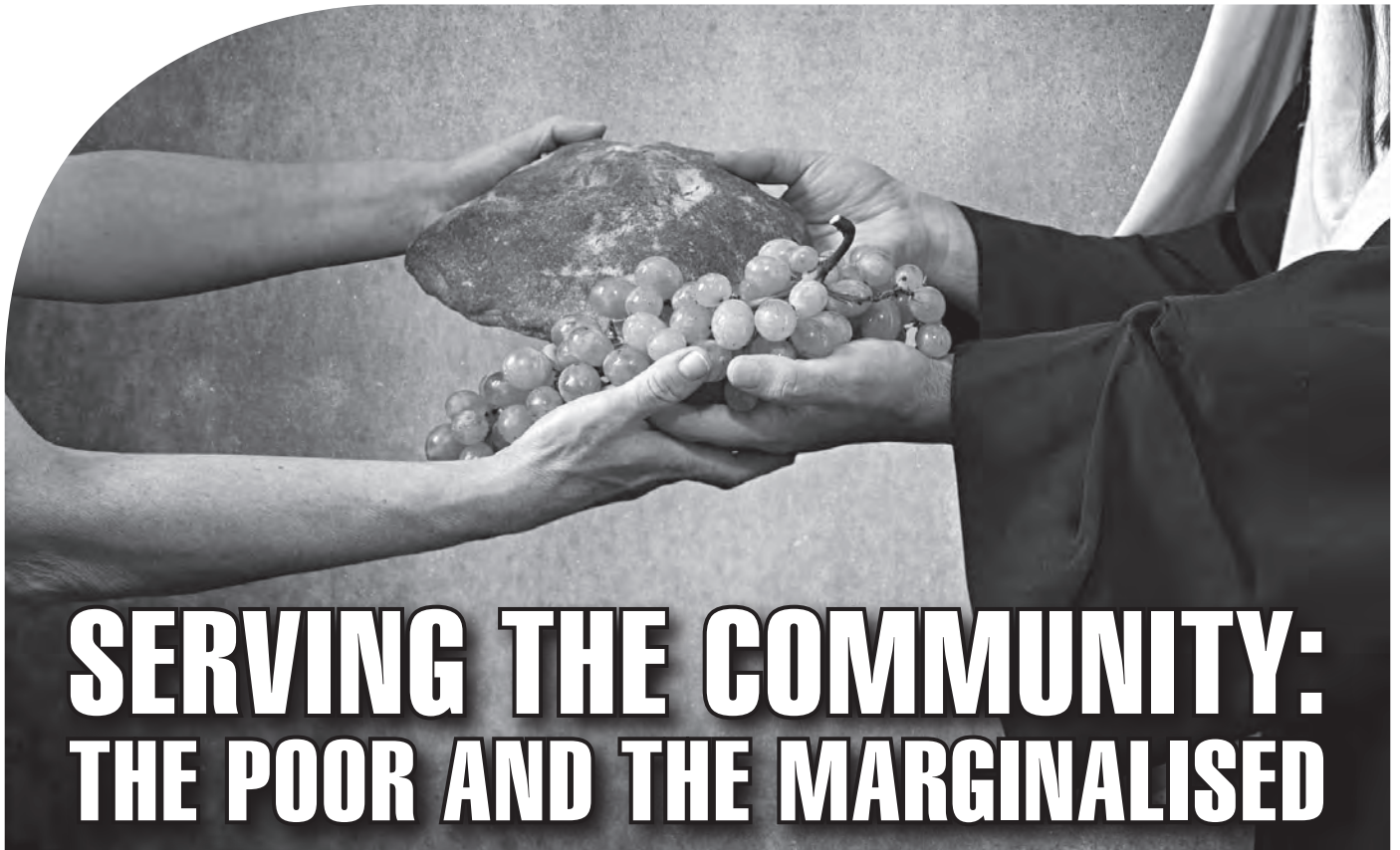
In the New Testament, one of the most common ways of referring to a church community is as a body - where all the parts need one another and no one part can carry out all the tasks on its own.

We have different gifts with which to serve each other. God has designed it so that we are interdependent. One of the strongest emphases of the body metaphor is that of the unity of the many members of the Church.

The Church, the body of Christ is not merely a collection of individuals who subscribe to its philosophy; the Church is an organism, of which the members are interrelated parts. Apostle Paul describes the unity of the church in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. "But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is there are many parts, but one body" (1 Cor.12:18-20). The body is subject to oxidation and it needs periodic care and treatment.

If someone has cancer, an operation is usually performed to cut out the malignancy. The reason is simple: if left alone, it will metastasize; that is, it will spread. No one wants cancer to spread, so it is cut out or otherwise removed from the body so that the patient can be healthy again. And of course when the doctors tell the patient, 'We got it all', everyone is encouraged and rejoices. The same thing should be true in the church. The reason to excommunicate the one refusing to be disciplined is to protect the rest of the body from being infected with that disease. Sin, like cancer, needs to be cut out so it will not spread.

Discipline in the church is kind of vaccination. You get a little dose of the disease and then you fight against it. And that builds immunity, whether it be against germs or sin. The Holy Spirit does periodic spiritual surgery in the Church. It's all about God. ●



SERVING THE COMMUNITY: THE POOR AND THE MARGINALISED



DR. ELIZABETH LEELAVATHI MANASSEH

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The Book of Acts covers the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Disciples of Lord Jesus Christ. The first several chapters reveal the growth of the early Church, as believers were added to the Church. Thus, the early Church community was increasing. In the 6th chapter, we see that there was a conflict between the Hebrews and the Hellenists over language and culture. The Hellenists were Greek speaking Jews and the Hebrews were Aramaic speaking Jews. The Hellenists were complaining that the Hebrews were neglecting the Hellenistic widows, in the distribution of food.

According to some scholars, 'Widows' in this context were the disadvantaged in some way in the Community— Distribution of food in this context meant divisions over social and cultural customs and practices. The community of disciples resolve the conflict by creating the division of labour. The community selected seven men to serve at the table and thus, freeing the others to continue to preach the Word of God. Thus, equal status was given to both aspects of service.

In Acts 6: 5-7, we see the list of names of men appointed for the distribution of food and their names are not repeated in the succeeding chapters. Stephen's name appears again as the martyr and Philip as he shared the Word with the Ethiopian eunuch. Thus, the seven men may have continued serving the community of believers, an essential part of the Kingdom of God alongside preaching the Word of God.

We shall look at the contemporary application and implication of serving the community, with special reference to the Poor and the Marginalised. In other words, the disadvantaged in some way, in the local Church Community, Denominational Community, Neighbourhood Community as well as in the Interfaith Community



in the Indian context, which is pluralistic in nature – language, caste, colour, creed, cultures, etc.

General Understanding of Serving the Community: Many Scholars have done research and published articles on serving the Community, in order to enhance our understanding, for plan of action. However, we shall look at the practical aspects that we have been witnessing in our Ministry daily over the years. Ministry, as we see daily, 'is any act of kindness, with the redeeming love of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that contributes to the benefit and welfare of people in the community'. 'Care or Caring' is an act of kindness in serving the Community. This became vital and visible during the COVID 2019 period which continues.

Besides, the recent Manipur case is another aspect that has drawn the attention of the Seminaries, to respond to the needs of Christian Community as well as the Meitei Community, both

Besides, the recent Manipur case is another aspect that has drawn the attention of the Seminaries, to respond to the needs of Christian Community as well as the Meitei Community, both within and beyond Manipur. Serving Community through Care Ministry seems to be the need of the hour.

within and beyond Manipur. Serving Community through Care Ministry seems to be the need of the hour.

Understanding the Care Concept: In order to understand the concept of Care, we need to look at CARE from various perspectives. Let us look at the following perspectives:

1. **DICTIONARIES :** It is helpful in understanding the meaning of CARE – both in Noun, Verb and Adjective Forms.
 - a. **NOUN:** CARE is the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance and protection of PEOPLE or/ and THINGS. For example, THE CARE OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, ADULTS, etc. Another example, THE CARE OF THE DISADVANTAGED – THE POOR AND THE MARGINALISED. Another

example, THE CARE OF THE FAMILY. One more example, THE CARE OF THE CONGREGATIONS, etc.,

CARE involves –safe keeping, supervision, custody, charge, protection, control, guidance, management, responsibility, guardianship, wardenship, provision of care, looking after, parenting, mothering, fathering, concern. Consideration, attention, attentiveness, thoughtfulness, respect, etc.

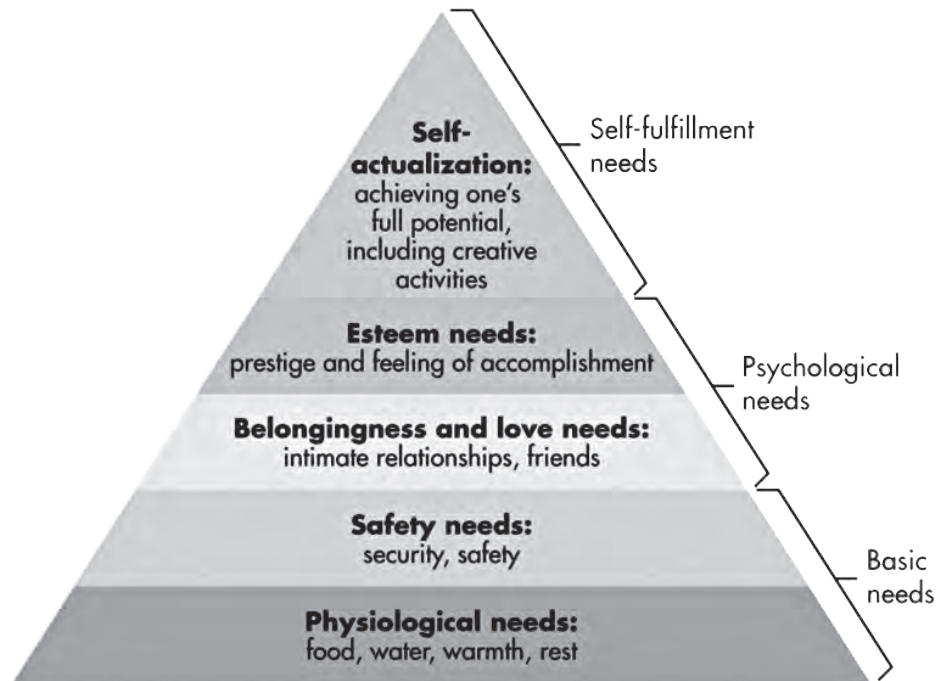
- b. VERB: CARE is feeling concerned about God’s creation – human life, people, plants, animals, something. It is feeling concerned about ourselves. It is showing interest in people whom we are looking after, It is providing for the needs of the people or plants or animals, etc. It is fulfilling the responsibilities of giving care to people or something or some tasks.
- c. ADJECTIVE: CARING is displaying kindness and concern for others. For example, this person – he/she, is such a caring person and he/she has a kind word to everyone. Another example, this person is loving, understanding, considerate, empathetic, sympathetic, gentle, treating people with respect, generosity and kindness.

2. PSYCHOLOGICAL CARE OR WHOLESOME CARE OR WHOLISTIC CARE: is the culturally sensitive, provision of care for meeting physical, psychological-mental and emotional, social and spiritual needs through nurturing and healing communication, by Individuals, Parents, Family, Care Team, Community,

etc.,Psychological Care is like a CIRCLE and it is also known as ‘Holistic Care or Wholesome Care’ ..wherein the needs are met with an integrated approach.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of five needs show us the needs of people from childhood, adolescence through adulthood stages The basic survival needs are the first of the five – physiological needs that include Food, Clothing and Shelter. However, this does not include meaning or purpose of life, without which, a person cannot have joy or peace.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory



is a comprehensive , humanistic and developmental theory of motivation. Although it has implications for counselling and education, as well as in the field of organisation and management, its limitations seem to be in the lack of clarity about how other basic needs were selected and ranked and why some needs, for example, spiritual needs, were not included. Also, it rejects divine revelation and any notion of dependence on a divine being.

This pyramid theory has been modified in the Indian context, particularly in relation

to Care Ministries while keeping in view the basic understanding of people’s needs. These needs are met using integrated approaches in real life situations, as they are interconnected, in various contexts, namely – Family, Faith Communities, Educational Institutions, Hostels, Care Providing Homes, Hospitals, Orphanages, Care Centres, Rehabilitation Centres, Half Way

We need to plan for meeting the physical, mental, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual needs of the Poor and the Marginalised people in each community in order to serve them effectively.

- a. PHYSICAL NEEDS: Physical Needs (Physiological Needs) are central to human functioning. In order to sustain ourselves physically, we need food, clean water, clean air, shelter, sleep, exercise, health, hygiene, temperature, etc.,
- b. MENTAL NEEDS: all forms of Cognitive Needs - knowledge, meaning, understanding, reasoning, etc., Mental health is emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

• It affects how we think, feel and act



- *It also helps in handling stress, relating to others, and making choices and decisions.*
- *Mental health is important at every stage of life,*
- *from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.*

c. **PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS:** Life is never 100 per cent perfect, but as long as our main essential needs are being met, and our resources are being used well, we do not suffer mental/psychological health Psychological Needs include:

- *The need for attachment.*
- *The need for orientation and control.*
- *The need for self-esteem enhancement.*
- *The need for increasing pleasure and avoiding pain.*

d. **EMOTIONAL NEEDS:** We are all born with essential physical and

“
Every human being needs spiritual resources to help heal the painful wounds of grief, guilt, resentment, self-rejection, shame, arrogance and unforgiving spirit. We also need spiritual resources to deepen our experiences of trust, self-esteem, hope, joy and love of life.
 ”

emotional needs and the innate resources to help us to fulfil them – known as human ‘givens’ – which need to be met in order to facilitate good mental health. Following are the ten main innate emotional needs:

- *Security–safe territory and an environment which allows us to develop fully*
- *Attention (to give and receive it) – a form of nutrition*
- *Sense of autonomy and control– having volition to make responsible choices*
- *Being emotionally connected to others*
- *Feeling part of a wider community*
- *Friendship, intimacy– to know that at least one other person accepts us totally for who we are*

- *Privacy– opportunity to reflect and consolidate experience*
- *Sense of status within social groupings*
- *Sense of competence and achievement*
- *Having meaning and purpose – which comes from being stretched in what we do and think.*

e. **SOCIAL NEEDS:** Belongingness, love, affection, intimacy, family, friends, relationships, self-esteem, self-confidence, achievement, recognition, status, respect, etc. We all have these needs which should be met at different stages in life from Childhood, Adolescence through Adulthood.

- *Social development is the development of social skills that are needed to relate to people and strengthen relationships.*
- *Social development also involves developing empathy and understanding the needs of others.*

f. **SPIRITUAL NEEDS:** Every human being needs spiritual resources to help heal the painful wounds of grief, guilt, resentment, self-rejection, shame, arrogance and unforgiving spirit, We also need spiritual resources to deepen our experiences of trust, self-esteem, hope, joy and love of life.

Spirituality means different things to different people. Religion and faith might be part of someone's spirituality, but spirituality isn't always religious. Everyone has spiritual needs throughout their lives whether they follow a religion or not. Spiritual needs can include (www.mariecurie.org.uk):

- *the need for meaning and purpose in our lives*
- *the need to love and feel loved*
- *the need to feel a sense of belonging*
- *the need to feel hope, peace and gratitude.*

In view of the above discussions, CARE is providing care to the people in order to meet their physical, mental, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual needs, simultaneously, in the Community. Care providing approach varies at different stages in life, namely – childhood years, adolescent years and adult years.

Care is provided for the development and empowerment of people-belonging to all age groups, by the entire family and community, wherein, mixed age groups care for one another and themselves, too. Providing care is a continuous process that takes place daily round the clock, in various ways in every context. Care becomes meaningful with love, concern, understanding, firmness and creative discipline.

Implications of Care Ministries in Specific Contexts: The entire Community, in any context, plays a powerful role in the process of caring and it is in the community context that the people receive insight, support and opportunity to express their uniqueness as people growing towards Christian maturity. However, implications of Care Ministries in the Communities are dependent upon their particular needs – both general and age groupwise. Nevertheless, trusting the Holy Spirit is the need of the hour, to meet all the needs of people, definitely based on the Spiritual needs. Sharing the following for further understanding.

Serving the Christian Community: In the present context, serving the Christian Community continues to be our primary focus. We do this through Preaching-Kerygma, Teaching-Didache, Worship-Liturgia, Service-Diakonia and Fellowship-Koinonia, they go together with equal

status. During COVID19 period from 2020 to 2022 Church Denominational Teams, Inter-Church denominational teams and Individual Christians Teams Served Families who lost their loved ones and who were unable to take care of their medical expenses, with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. During 2023 May till today, Churches, Christian Families and individual Christians served the Christians and the Meiteis in Manipur as well as the Displaced Manipur Families in various parts of North East India and the rest of India. The concept of Kingdom of God has been more visible, vital and vigorous from 2020-till date in the Body of Christ – both locally and globally.

Serving the Manipur Christian Community now: is a big challenge. Zoom Sessions and Physical Sessions are needed to empower, equip and engage them continuously. Volunteers are needed. More prayer support is needed, too, along with financial support, due to uncertainties and the future seems to be bleak and blank.

Serving the Community of Faiths: *Diakonia* is the need of the hour due to Government laws and policies today in the Indian context. Trusting the Holy Spirit, we need to obey the Law of the Land implicitly. God is no one's debtor. Believers are added to the Body of Christ. I have many Case Studies from our Networks Members but I am unable to share due to security reasons. Truly, the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who builds the Body of Christ. Halleluiah.

CONCLUSION: Who are the poor? Who are the marginalised? We need to define and identify in our own local Church contexts, in the neighbourhood, in our locality/province/in our country and worldwide. Any community that is disadvantaged in some ways is the WIDOW, to be cared for or to be served. May God help us accept the Disadvantaged people as they are, understand them and their needs in order to empower, equip and engage them, in the Kingdom of God. Amen.



**CONFLICT
RESOLUTION:
UNITY WITHIN THE
CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY**



KRIS A. JACKSON, THD

Bible Teacher and Preacher

“Can’t we all just get along?” You’ve voiced those words in frustration, hoping that the children in the home, the workers at the office, the citizens in the city, or the members in the church would take a deep breath and act civil toward one another. We put the fire out in one place, and it flames up in another. Jesus said offenses must come in this world. Every individual has an opinion, has an ego, and has a will. How do we arbitrate? How do we ease the tension? How do we coexist? One day the lion will lay down with the Lamb, but Jesus hasn’t come back yet, the Golden Millennium has not yet arrived, and my next-door neighbor hasn’t yet loaded up his moving van. We share a property line, but he keeps crossing it.

Every conflict has its own causes and cures, so each must be approached with wisdom particular to the situation, but there are some rules that apply in all relational issues. I like the quote by German Lutheran theologian Rupertus Meldenius – “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.” You say that was St. Augustine’s quote? Perhaps. Someone else attributed it to John Wesley. Should we argue about where it originated? No? Okay. Point made.

We are discussing conflict resolution in the Christian Community, which we take to mean those who profess the name of Jesus Christ in a local or broad social context. I don’t expect communists and Capitalists to see eye-to-eye, nor left-wing liberals and right-wing conservatives. There is no way Church or State can superimpose a false utopia on a society. There will be no peace until the Prince

of Peace returns and establishes His kingdom of peace. Until then peace must be made by treaties, conventions, talks, compromises, and sometimes all-out war. But if within the Christian Community conflicts cannot be resolved then there is no hope for the greater conflicts among the nations of the world. As believers in Christ, we are called in "all lowliness and meekness" to make every effort to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2,3). Are you striving to maintain unity, or are you fighting to get your own way?

1. Begin with an assumption of Christian unity

Christ prayed that we may be one. David envisioned unity – "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1) There is one body, one Lord, one baptism, one faith, etc. It is not the name on the door that makes us one, but the blood on the door. The common denominator of all denominations is Christ, crucified, buried, risen. Again, in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty. There is no unity outside the Gospel, hence it is not right for believers to compromise core beliefs, or "go along to get along". We are not of the world and will never get along with the world.

But though I have one nose and belly button, unity, I have two knees, two ears, two hemispheres of my brain, two shoulders, and two nostrils, diversity. The body of Christ is unity in diversity. Theology is

one thing, style is another. The key to the integrity of any body, especially the Body of Christ, is its balance. Two legs are better than one.

2. Seek to live at peace with all men

"If it is possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). Notice, if it is possible. The world is full of cantankerous, self-opinionated, unmovable people. But even the tough cases can be softened with the tenderness of Christ. You can subdue a mean dog with a baseball bat, but you can also draw him in with a handful of hamburger meat.

John rejoiced that the children of the elect lady were walking in love. Love is a choice, not merely a feeling. Love covers a multitude of sins. It doesn't gossip or broadcast them to the community. Take the high road. Euodias and Syntyche had both served on Paul's ministry team, so though they had differences, they were still believers in Christ. The two were responsible to iron out their differences and "be of the same mind in the Lord", but when they failed to do so, intervention became necessary – "And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel..." (Philippians 4:2,3) Are you helping the situation, or harming?

3. Respect the opinions of others

As everyone has a big nose in the middle of their face so they have an opinion. Have you ever considered that the other guy's opinion might be right? The ways of a man are always right in his own eyes, said Solomon. And the most "right" or opinionated people on the planet are fundamental Pentecostals, and I am one of them. We seldom confess to being wrong on an issue, but could we perhaps be one-tenth wrong?

Keep Jesus as the centerpiece. There are a thousand interpretations regarding dress, the Rapture, tongues, church order, the proper roles of men and women, and what not. Know what you believe and stick to your guns in personal convictions but rally around Jesus in the Christian Community. You will notice that Paul places "unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:2) before "unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13). We are coming closer to the perfect man, the full stature of Christ and the unity of faith envisioned by Paul with each passing year. The church may not ultimately see things my way, but she will at last see things Christ's way! This Age culminates with the presentation of a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle.

4. We are under-shepherds, the flock belongs to Jesus

We are the sheep of His pasture. And He has other sheep that we don't know of. You may think certain people are your sheep, but sheep that don't stay with you are not your sheep. Your sheep know the shepherd's voice and they come home to you for leading and feeding. If others don't follow your voice, let them go. The Great Shepherd will lead them to the right pasture.

5. If you don't communicate things will terminate

In conflict resolution and counseling, Robert Schuller advised that we speak frankly, firmly, fairly, and with faith. But speak we must. You may need to swallow pride and be the first to make a call, or text, or visit. If your brother has anything against you go to him and seek reconciliation. That is contrary to the flesh. The natural man thinks, if a person has ought against me, that is his or her problem, they should be the first to make the apology. But Christ is so concerned about oneness in His body that He expects the stronger



soul to take the first step. Silence leads to suspicion. Communication unmask true feelings, helps the other understand dissenting viewpoints and builds bridges.

6. Think reconciliation, not retaliation

Vengeance belongs to the Lord. Be sure there will be a reckoning for egregious sins and offenses, but some battles are not your fight. When you enter the boxing ring you may well win the fight but will also lose the friendship. God has given mature believers the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). Blessed are the peacemakers, not peace takers. We are to join opposing hands together. We are to be the salt that makes lost souls thirsty for God. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than

Vengeance belongs to the Lord. Be sure there will be a reckoning for egregious sins and offenses, but some battles are not your fight. When you enter the boxing ring you may well win the fight but will also lose the friendship. God has given mature believers the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

themselves” (Philippians 2:3).

7. Some attempts at conflict resolution will only lead to further conflict

Bullheaded people normally get turned over to their own ways. There is no reasoning with a dictator or tyrant. And don’t think there are no dictatorships or tyranny in the Christian Community. My brethren, these things ought not so to be, said Pastor James. Sometimes lawyers walk away from the negotiation table and head into the battle of the courtroom. Don’t let the conflict spiral out of control. I beg the married couple to communicate before they terminate. Let go of the grudge. Pour out your heart to God in prayer and if need be deep repentance. Very few human relationships are beyond the power of God’s love. Paul declared, “Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:8). With enough love things will start to give. But when love is spurned, what more can be done, the matter then moves over to the hands of justice. ●

No one else is supposed to understand your calling. It wasn’t a conference call.



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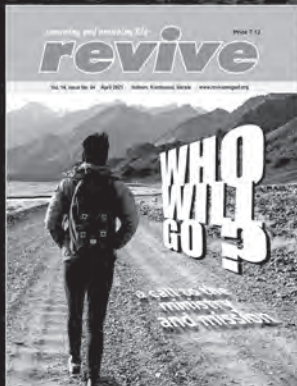
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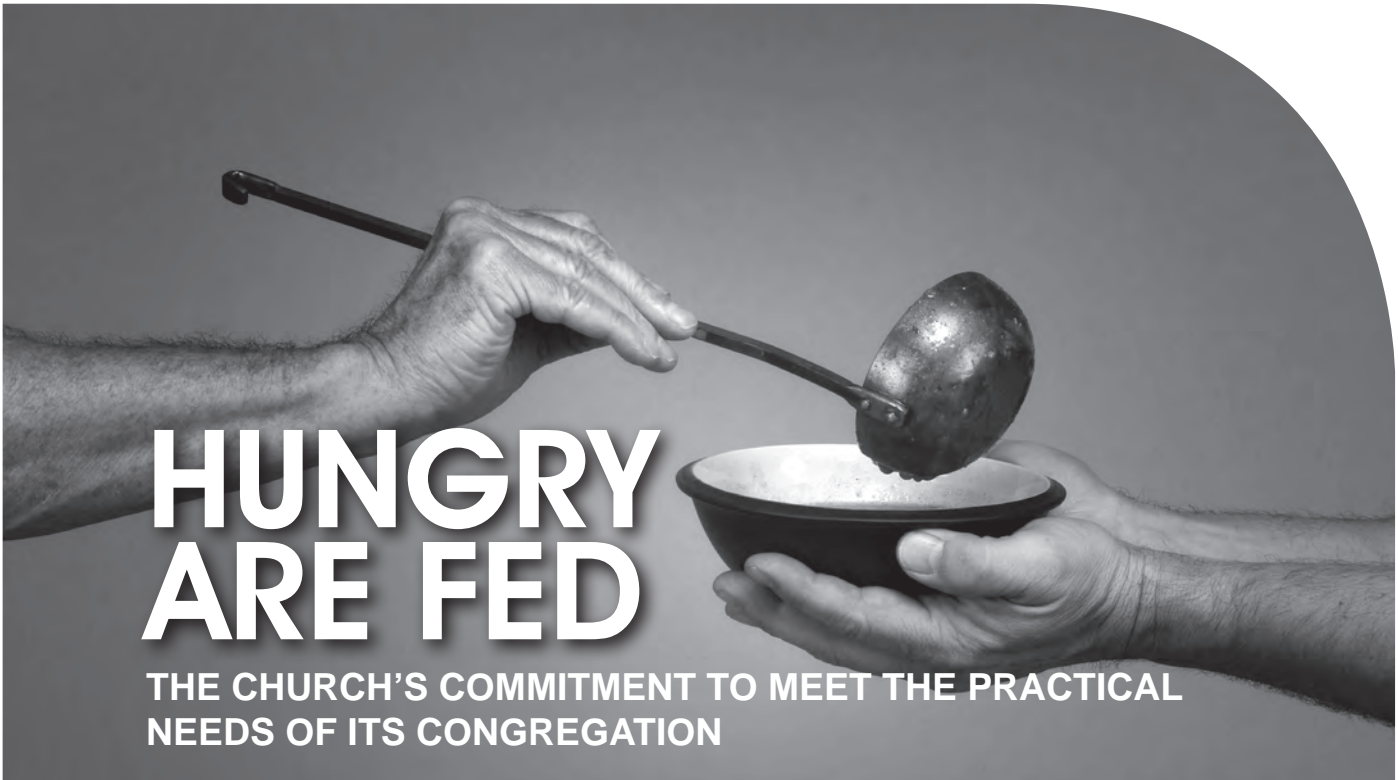
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HUNGRY ARE FED

THE CHURCH'S COMMITMENT TO MEET THE PRACTICAL NEEDS OF ITS CONGREGATION



DR. M. ANTHONY DAVID MD

Creative Communicator for Christ. Teaches in a private Medical College, for his bread and butter. He writes, preaches, facilitates, and counsels, all for the extension of God's kingdom. His book, CHOICES FOR LIFE is for young people facing life's crucial choices and is available from PTP Ministries, Hyderabad. His second book SOUL CHARGERS FOR YOU, is a daily devotional available online on Amazon. He hosts a podcast called CHOICE WORDS FOR YOU, available on Spotify and other podcatchers

Tears streaming from her eyes, Apphia, a Greek widow limped to Philip, clutching her empty plate in her trembling hand. "Am hungry, brother Philip!" she cried, "This is the third day that I didn't get food in our kitchen."

Moved visibly, Philip broke bread from his plate and liberally gave it to her. "I have to approach Peter and ask about this," he told her as she hastily stuffed her mouth with his bread.

The Apostles had just finished their breakfast as he approached Peter. They were gathering the leftovers from their meal in a basket. Philip spoke up for the forgotten Greek widows. "These women aren't getting their food during the distribution in our kitchen, Peter," he remarked, "We need to do something about this injustice."

Perhaps Peter remembered those pivotal words the Lord spoke to them, "You give them something to eat"?

Looking worried, he called for an assembly to discuss this issue. When the community assembled, Peter spoke, "It is not right for us to leave the exposition of the Word of God to investigate these practical issues. Let's select some wise and godly elders to look after these matters..."

The Christian Church, the Ecclesia was birthed on that event-filled Pentecost day in the first century when the Holy Spirit God descended visibly on the believers assembled in one accord (Acts 2: 1-6). Quite early in the history of the church, this hassle in the distribution of food surfaced. (Acts 6:1) Concerned, the church appointed seven wise and godly men to oversee that justice is done. By God's grace, different sections of the church members were represented by these seven. The names of the seven reflect this. Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Parmenas, Nicanor, Nicolas and Timon took up this challenge. (Acts 6 :1 -6)

Yes, the Church of Christ catered to the physical needs of the congregation right from the early days of its inception. Praise God for this!

How did this happen to be, you ask? Let's look at what the Lord Jesus Christ did when faced with a hungry crowd. Did he send them off so they could find food? No. He categorically felt that it was up to them, his disciples, to feed these hungry people.

When they advised him to send the people away, He commanded them, "You give them something to eat" (Luke 9:13). He graciously took the little, schoolboy's lunch which was with them, gave thanks for it and multiplied it so five thousand men could be fed. Not only that, He made sure that they all ate up to their full and twelve baskets full of broken pieces were collected by those unbelieving apostles. What a zeal He had, to feed the hungry! The Christian Church has been instrumental in meeting the people's educational, medical, and other social needs. It has also reached out in this way to the society at large. Using social action as an evangelistic method.

The church's missionary work through the ages began with vocations such as education and health. The Church established many schools, colleges, universities, clinics, hospitals and hospices, orphanages and old-age homes in different parts of the globe. This social action formed the basis for missionary work, especially in the developing world. Even social change and animation of the oppressed and depressed people to seek and find their rights were spearheaded by the church. Extensive service in the community by the Church brought health and development to many marginalized people.

Let me quote a great example, the phenomenal work of the Christian Medical College Vellore. Just one woman, Ida Scudder, touched by the need for women doctors in rural India, had a vision and set out to do God's work. Training herself in Medicine, she returned to India and started a small school for women health workers. Many shared her work, and the church took this up. Today, a hundred years later, CMC Vellore is a shining example of the Church's work for her people, all people in fact, the society at large. Apart from training many mission-minded medical doctors

nurses and para-medical personnel, this institution has birthed community health initiatives like the Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA) in Kavanur block in Tamil Nadu, and the SLRTC Schieffelin Leprosy Research and Training Center in Karigiri. CMC graduates like Drs Rajnikanth and Mabel Arole pioneered and built up Community Health initiatives which got world acclaim. What more shall I say?

In general, in third-world countries, the Christian church was noted for its social actions such as educational and health initiatives. In some parts of the world, the church was active also in the social sector. The activism of the church brought about violent reprisals too.

Let me give an example. The assassination of the Archbishop of San Salvador Oscar Romero in 1980 is such a one. His sacrifice as it were, was one due to his suffering with the people and raising his voice for them. As the prelate of the church in his part of the world, he spoke out against social injustice and violence during the escalating conflict between the military government and the left-wing insurgents, which led to a civil war. He voiced the unsung story of the depressed and repressed people of his country. On 24 March 1980, as he was peacefully celebrating mass, Archbishop Oscar Romero was brutally shot and killed. Due to his martyrdom on that day, the United Nations General Assembly, in 2010, declared that the 24th of March is to be celebrated as the Day for the Right to Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims.

Another facet of the contribution of the Church to alleviate human suffering is the story of Father Damien.

Joseph de Veuster, a Belgian who after his ordination became Father Damien, was assigned to the island of Hawaii in 1865. At that time the Hawaiian government deported all the Leprosy patients to exile on the uninhabitable island of Molokai. You must remember that leprosy at that time was considered by many to be the curse of the gods. These poor affected people were shunned by their own families and by the society at large and lived in communities outside.

All these leprosy patients in Molokai lived

in squalor and dirt compounded by a lack of basic hygiene, food, and shelter. It was like hell on earth.

In 1873, the Bishop in Hawaii asked for volunteers to go and serve those leprosy patients. Damien decided to go and live with these poor sufferers. He remained there for the next 16 years of his life.

He brought hope to these souls who were in despair. He gave a voice to the voiceless and law to the lawless. He built a community that discovered reasons for living.

When he contracted leprosy in 1885, Fr Damien simply addressed them, "We, lepers" he wrote, "find strength at the foot of the cross in our isolation." He refused to be shipped out to Belgium to get better treatment. He continued to serve his beloved community till he died.

His suffering brought hope and life to this community of neglected leprosy patients. Out of his suffering came something good! The community of leprosy patients in Molokai began to live with dignity.

Father Damien represented the Church in its relentless service to humanity by offering to live and work with these dregs of humanity, as it were.

As their model and mentor Lord Jesus Christ did, the Church through the ages has been pioneering the uplift of the helpless and the depressed, repressed segments of human society.

If you look at a cross-section of the society in the developing world today, many of the intelligentsia owe their education and learning, their stature and position in society, to the fact that some missionaries in the yesteryear struggled to provide education to the people who were denied basic human rights.

Let's get back to Philip and Apphia now...

The steward Philip smiled. He saw Apphia smiling at him a fortnight later. He asked her, "Hope you all are getting your supplies regularly?" She smiled and nodded.

"Thank you, Brother Philip," she said, "Am very grateful to God and to your team which works harmoniously to help us. The hungry are fed. Bread and the Word sustain our bodies and souls indeed. Thanks be to God. May the Lord our God bless you all!"



HUMAN LABOUR – A NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE



DR. J.N. MANOKARAN

A Civil Engineer by profession. God called him and his family to be a missionary leader in Haryana as cross-cultural missionaries for eleven years.

Since 1997 they returned back to Tamil Nadu to help missionaries and pastors to build their capacities by teaching, training and writing.

The Church has a dynamic impact on its members and great influence also on its non-members. All people have personal lives, professional lives and social lives. The Church teaches the congregation on all aspects of life. The purpose of life, how to live and how to celebrate life are some of the aspects the Church teaches the people of God. Here are four generic principles that should help a Christian to order and govern his/her life.

SOVEREIGN GOD

God is the Sovereign Lord of the universe. There is no power or authority apart from Him. God has ultimate victory and only His Plan and Purpose endures. Every person born in this world has a purpose in life. Births are not accidental, life is not blind fate and history is not just happenings or a chain of isolated incidents. A person is born in a particular country, among certain people, in a cultural context, into a family and in a certain place. These things are not human choices but divine appointment. In any context, God can lead a person to lead a triumphant, fulfilling and meaningful life. Lord Jesus Christ said that even the hair of a person is numbered. (Luke 12:7) With this understanding of God's Sovereign authority, lordship and power, a Christian could seek to glorify God at all times and by all means.

We can term God's specific plan for each one as 'calling.' When Christians are sure that God has called them to do a particular work, they are empowered by the call and anointing to fulfill the call. Every person needs appropriate anointing to fulfill God's call. Any job, including a security guard or bus driver or servant maid needs the conviction of call and empowerment.

The greatest inspiration for work is: God works. Timothy Keller writes: "He forms a man (Genesis 2:7), plants a garden for him and waters it (Genesis 2:6-8), and fash-

ions a wife for him (Genesis 2:21-22).¹ God was seen as Gardener in Genesis and Carpenter in New Testament. Both jobs are considered inferior in many cultures. Hence, Christian worldview provides different attitude for work. According to Tim Keller, work itself is spiritual. "Your daily work is ultimately an act of worship to the God who called and equipped you to do it – no matter what kind of work it is."²

"Work is a major instrument of God's providence; it is how he sustains the human world." God in His wisdom has given the gift of work to humanity so that the world could function.

SACRED WORLD

The world in which we live is not perfect. Satan has defiled, and created chaos in the world. However, God works in the world through His children aided by the Holy Spirit and in fact, would ultimately create a New Earth. The whole world belongs to the Lord (Psalm 24:1,2). He decides who would be born or living in each part. In this world, even the birds are known and listed in His book. None of them can fall without His will. (Matt 10:29)

God designated, delegated and commissioned Adam and Eve to dominate, nurture and enjoy the whole earth. So, work is not a post-fall phenomenon. Work was indeed the blessed aspect of life in the Garden of Eden. Many people try to associate work with Sin and the Fall and non-work to Paradise. Humans are expected to use their creativity to work and enjoy the fruit of their labor. In fact, humans need work to thrive physically, emotionally, mentally, psychologically and spiritually.

The Fall created 'thorns and

thistles' that makes work painful, exhausting and frustrating. But, that does not mean that there is no value in work or joy in labor. In fact, we have to expect disappointments, defeats, disorientation and fruitlessness in our work. The labor we put in may not bring the perfect result in an imperfect world.

God has revealed himself in nature. "So every advancement in learning, every work of art, every innovation in health care, technology, management or governance, is simply God 'opening his book of creation and revealing this truth' to us." Work in the world helps us to discover God, His power, wisdom and love.

SENT AS SERVANT

As in Creation, where Adam and Eve were commissioned to work, God commissions each and every individual to work in the world in different capacities. The work is for the dignity, fulfillment and life purpose. The dignity is there because God Himself worked. Because of that all work has dignity. Each and every individual is sent into the world with a specific purpose of God. They fit in to the roles allotted by God and have to fulfill their responsibility in the world.

Work is creative entity. "Through our work we bring order out of chaos, create new entities, exploit the patterns of creation, and interweave the human community. So whether splicing a gene or doing brain surgery or collecting the rubbish or painting a picture, our work further develops, maintains, or repairs the fabric of the world. In this way, we connect our work to God's work."⁵ That means we are servants commissioned by the Lord into the world.

There is a distinction between work and toil. Vishal Mangalwadi writes: "The Bible distinguished 'work' from 'toil.' To work was to be like God, but toil was curse on human sin. Toil was mindless, repetitive, dehumanizing labor. This enabled Christian monks to realize that human beings should not have to do what wind, water, or horses

can do. People should do what other species and natural forces cannot do – use creative reason to liberate human beings from the curse of toil."⁶

Work is not just for income and power, but for service to humanity. The class divisions according to income and caste division according to labor are not the Original plan for humanity. It evolved from various human experiences in different cultures and vested interests of the ruling or dominating people. Paul writes to Ephesians that even a thief should do honest work, not for his sake alone but to help others. (Eph 4:28)

Christian professionals (this term embraces all professions vertically - top to bottom) have to understand that God has placed them in that position and they are ultimately accountable to God. Here professional does not mean just people doing white-collar job (like IT professionals) or blue-collared job (like welders). It includes all jobs or work or profession (menial or elite). That means it includes: nanny, hair cutter, gardener, welder, shop keeper, doctor, mechanic, carpenter, painter, brick layer, pharmacist, lab technician, builder, sports person, vegetable vendor, farmer, cook, chef, lawyer, judge, clerk, accountant, manager, politician, manufacturer, publisher, writer, journalist, musician, .etc.

Christian workers ought to exemplify and personify excellence. Christians have a model in God Himself; He is our example and inspiration. God created the whole earth with so much beauty, color, design and thoughtfulness. Christians should reflect those characteristics in the work they do. God is glorified through their excellent work. (Col 3:17 and I Cor 10:31)

God worked for six days and rested on the seventh day. Lord Jesus Christ also worked hard, sometimes missing food (John 4), exhausted and was tired. Christians should work hard using all their abilities, talents, skills and gifts. God called his disciples like Peter, Andrew and Matthew when they were



busy in their profession. Being lazy is anti-type of a Christian.

Paul writes that we are instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13); servants of righteousness. God intends Christians to serve in the world facilitating justice and demonstrating righteousness.

Christians should understand that they are servants sent by Lord Himself into the world. So, they should work as unto the Lord. (Col 3:23) The whole idea of work is turned upside down. Christians do not work just for money or as compelled by the employer or to please some human; but for God. Their work should be a pleasing offering of fragrance. Martin Luther states that to do our work well and for the glory of God, we fulfill the commandment of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Paul brings out the principles of work (Ephesians 6:5-9): First, Christians should work with fear of God that leads to being courteous and humble. Second, the heart should be sincere and

Christians are also expected to be stewards of God's resources. They should use all opportunities, resources and time: optimally, creatively and strategically. It would be wise to use resources to optimum level instead of minimum level.

the focus should be concentrated. Third, should work as diligently, even when not seen or supervised or monitored. Four, work diligently, cheerfully, joyfully and wholeheartedly.

At the same time, Paul writes to employers: First, they should not threaten or motivate people to work inducing guilt or coercion or emotional sentiments. Second, treat the slaves with dignity and respect as created in the image of God and for whom Christ died. Third, do not be haughty having class or caste pride.

SERVE AS STEWARD

Christians are also expected to be stewards of God's resources. They should use all opportunities, resources and time: optimally, creatively and strategically. It would be wise to use resources to optimum level instead of minimum level. For

example, some churches have huge area but occupy part of the land and leave the rest to be grown with thorns, weeds and thistles. David used the sling and pebbles creatively to gain victory over Goliath. Gideon used the sword, lamp and pot strategically to gain victory.

Wasting is not tenable to Christian precepts. The Lord fed the Five Thousand and commanded the disciples to collect the leftovers and they were twelve baskets full. God does not do junk work and so Christians are also not expected to do junk work. All the work Christians do should be profitable, constructive, beneficial and a blessing to humanity.

As stewards, Christians are expected to use their body, emotions, mind, will, and spirit when engaged in any work. Civilizations are product of work, or else the world would still be a

primitive wilderness.

Esther was called to be steward of her position and power. Esther had to understand that her palace would become a prison, if she did not align herself with God's will. "Unless you use your clout, your credentials, and your money in service to the people outside the palace, the palace is a prison; it has already your name." ⁷

The world philosophy says: "Choose your dream vacation. Choose a self-serving moral system. According to our culture, freedom is important because with it we can have more fun, and more fun is, well more fun than we are currently having. And if fun is the purpose of life, we should have extreme fun."⁸ Biblical basis for choosing work is different. Choosing to work according to our calling, talents and gifting. The priority of our work is to help others and make the lives of others better.

SABBATH

Underwork and overwork would create imbalance. By underwork a person

would lose dignity and significance. Overwork could be out of greed for money or name that may lead to stress, and serious health issues. Violating the principle of Sabbath would lead to nervous breakdown. "Resting or practicing Sabbath, is also a way to help us get perspective on our work and put it in the proper place."⁹

Today restlessness dominates young people lives. "Sometimes I think our whole culture has Restless Fly Disorder. We buzz around constantly, and we can't seem to land anywhere. With all the available diversions, we flit."¹⁰

As Christians we have to excel in working hard and also have a balanced life that we could rest and relax without guilt pricking our conscience.

CHALLENGE

The biblical worldview helps Christians to celebrate life, contribute to society, fulfill their calling and glorify God. The Local church motivates, inspires, trains and equips all members to understand this and transform the world around.

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PUNJAB BIBLE COLLEGE GRADUATION CEREMONY 26 March 2023



Procession march



Rev. Dr. K. Koshy, Director – Welcomes guests



Opening prayer by Pr. Niamat Masih



Chief Guest and Graduation Speaker- Rev. Dr. Sam Abraham
Director-Himachal Bible College & Seminary



Evang. Thomson Koshy leads the worship session



Master of ceremony: Evang. Akhil George
Faculty



Scripture reading by
Pr. Prasad Abraham, Faculty



Pr. Satpal Soni

STUDENT SPEAKERS



Dean of Admission:
Pr. Joshua M. Daniel,
reads names of students



Prayer : Anuj Thomas



Bro. Buntly Dumra (Hindi)



Sis. Joyas Soni (Punjabi)

THEME VERSE RECITATION



Bro. Daniel (Hindi)



Sis. Palwinder Kaur (Punjabi)



Sis. Pallavi (Marwari)



Bro. Amar (Haryanavi)



Sis. Sandeep Kaur (Konkan)



Sis. N. Gladly (Odia)



Bro. Eric Sahu (Chhattisgarhi)



Bro. Ceu Bik Lian (Chin)



Responsive Reading: Bishop. Darbara Singh



Senior Faculty, Pr. Edwin Robert



PBC choir led by Evang. Thomson Koshy and Evang. Akhil George

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