

JAN - FEB 2020
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UNITY, LOVE & PRAYER



“WATCH AND PRAY”

(A triolet based on Matthew 26:41)

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into
temptation”

Told Jesus His disciples, when He prayed while
they were sleeping,

Though Jesus expected them to pray with Him in
the garden.

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into
temptation”

Prayer is talking to God and if we do not
maintain this communication,

Satan will surely target us and we will be in grave
danger of failing.

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into
temptation”

Prayer is our very breath and we will spiritually
die if we stop breathing.



J. Fredric Dawson, a Civil Engineer by profession, retired from the Railways, lives in Chennai. He writes for CL regularly and has authored three books published by IVP India.

CAUGHT NOT TAUGHT!

‘Shana Tova’ to the Campus Link family! Shana Tova, which means ‘For a Good year’ - is one of the Hebrew ways of greeting one another during their new year celebrations. Shana in its verbal form ‘Shena’ means ‘to change’. We look for change to the better every year! Don’t we? It is good at this moment to remind ourselves of something which we cherish and are proud of!

Do you remember having read the following statements somewhere?

*“Fellowship represents spiritual **unity** among members of UESI family. We are not basically task-oriented people. While task is important, fellowship is more important. Ministry is ushered in and sustained through fellowship. This includes caring, sharing, and bearing one another in **love** for Christ’s sake and as enabled by the Holy Spirit.*

*“UESI is known as a movement of **prayer**. It is called to a life of faith which depends on God for all its needs and not just for finance. This value has to be part of the lives of graduates, students, and staff. Hence, the mutual help and support among members of UESI family.”*

Yes, you are right! These are the extracts from the Core Values of UESI. Core values give qualitative identity and inner focus points for an organization in its outward working for its mission and goals. I wish and pray that all CL readers had memorized the Core Values of UESI and lived up to them. As someone said, Core Values have to be caught and not taught. UESI has decided ‘Unity, Love and Prayer’ as the Thrust for the next two years 2019-2021. These Unity, Love and Prayer were imbibed in the lives of our pioneers and forefathers and are intrinsic in the ethos of the movement.

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- LAMMINLUN HAOKIP



An Odyssey for Unity

It is an important mission. The project is to take off now. The organisation has to embark on this significant task without any further deferment. Some people already went to setting up the infrastructure. The next team should proceed immediately to carry out tests before the trial run begins. This stage is crucial.

Milan is asked to proceed with the team. He is not prepared to move to the field station. He is bothered by a lot of apprehensions. His responsibilities at home and ministry will remain unattended to in his absence. What is the family going to do without him? Will they be able to take care of themselves? The fellowship just started here! Who will guide it? Many questions bothered him. This sudden displacement will destabilise his personal and spiritual life. He is not able to reconcile with the possible change. During the break he reclined in his chair and closed his eyes for a moment. A still small voice whispered. . . "I chose you and appointed you that

you should go and bear fruit . . .” “Am I hearing the right voice,” he quipped himself. He silently committed the matter in prayers and gently got over his hang-ups. The family at home was shocked to hear about his transfer. They could not comprehend the sudden shift and were hesitant about the resultant consequences they may have to face in the days to come. In the evening, the fellowship friends got together with family and prayed over Milan to send him off on his journey to the new place.

His journey to the unknown place commenced. It is quite far from his home. His mind was full of anxieties. Will his life at the new place be comfortable and good for him? Will there be any fellowship and church? Or shall he consider it as his new mission field? He has no knowledge about the place and the people. He only knows that God has His own plan and purpose behind every move. He fully surrendered himself to God. After a long journey by air and train he reached the field station. He stayed at an arranged accommodation in the town.

Next day he headed to his work place a few kilometres away, near the sea shore. Long hours of work from morning to late evening kept him busy every day. A few months passed, but he did not come across even a single believer. On Sundays he has seen church buildings. But language was a great barrier. With hesitations and fear in his mind, he did not understand how to start to share God's love to the native people. Struggling in mind but with confidence in his heart, he decided to distribute tracts on one Sunday evening in a busy street corner. Many passers-by accepted; a few rejected, and a few others asked his identity. That evening he realised the great need of reaching out to the people.

There is unusual power in united **prayer**. God has planned for His people to join together in prayer, not only for Christian fellowship, spiritual nurture, and growth, but also for accomplishing His divine purposes and reaching His chosen goals. - Wesley L. Duetel

Lavey and Prakash were returning from college that evening by the same road. They stopped seeing a stranger distributing gospel tracts. They looked at each other. They have never seen this gentleman before. Probably he is new to the town. They waited till the tracts distribution was over for the day. They introduced themselves to Milan and informed him of their small fellowship and invited him to the fellowship meeting. Milan's joy knew no bounds. It was a great surprise for him. He did not know that believing students were also here in this part of the world. That night Milan thanked the Lord and found a ray of hope in God's plan for his transfer to this distant town.

Soon, Milan became a regular part of the fellowship of students. Milan encouraged students in reaching out to other students in their colleges. Outreach programs were held in the nearby colleges by the students. Gradually they decided to introduce the ministry to the churches in the town. It was not an easy task. The churches expressed that the separate students' ministry was not complimentary to their ministry. Moreover some of them had youth fellowships. It was tough to penetrate their bastion. Lavey and Prakash approached Milan to accompany them to the church leaders. With prayers and persuasion, permission for first Sunday service meeting came through. For Milan it was the first Sunday preaching at a church in the new town. Subsequently, he received several invitations to preach in other churches in the town.

In church life, there was great distance between people of one church and congregation of another church. They all believed in the same Lord and their doctrines were almost close. But they were apart. Churches did not have any outreach programs. Reaching out to others outside was thought to be improper and inviting only problems. Spiritual dryness gripped the people all around. Milan started sharing the spiritual needs with a few believers. Milan concentrated on the High priestly prayer of Lord Jesus: ". . . they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." He emphasized that believers, *being* many,

are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Initially there were differences among them and they were not in line. It was like ducks living in different ponds that did not like each other and as such confined separately to their territories.

One day a heavy downpour of rain levelled all their habitations into one. He explained to everyone that they have to be of one accord and one spirit for God to do His supernatural work in the town. The monthly prayer meeting turned into a weekly event as believers from all congregations gathered to pray for unity among them. Prayers in one voice placed in them burdens of reaching out to people of other faith. Leaders of all the denominations and organizations decided to continue to pray for revival of the town as they were convinced from the early Church history that as disciples gathered and prayed in one accord and mind, many souls were saved and added to the Church. The churches were ready to grow. No spiritual stagnation. No stealing of folks from the other congregations.

Fervent united prayers gave birth to the conducting of a weeklong evangelistic campaign called "Festival of Peace" for the first time in the town. Milan was asked to be the convenor of the festival. He was not prepared for such a crucial responsibility. He first hesitated as to whether he would be able rise to the occasion along with his responsibilities in office project. The spirit in him reminded God's promise and call before he stepped into this town. He humbly accepted the role. Core and sub-committees were formed. Leaders of all the congregations, organisations and believing students extended their support and helping hand to the arrangements of the festival. Special prayer meetings for the festival ensued. Prayer walks were done in every area and around educational institutions. Committee meets were held time to time. After one year of prayerful preparation, 'festival of peace' time approached. There was phenomenal excitement. Unity in spirit and mind among believers was exhibited before and during the festival. It was wonderful to see hundreds of people attending the festival throughout the week. The Lord moved in a mighty way in every service. Many were transformed and

blessed. The festival changed the whole atmosphere. Revival continued. New believers were distributed to the regional churches. Leaders were trained to mentor them. Church and spiritual lives made a difference all around. Many leaders were born to take care of the multi-fold dimensions of ministry. Many believers were sent out from the churches to the ministry and some youths committed to full time ministry.

Months passed by. Milan also witnessed successful trial run of his office project in the range. Suddenly, one day he received his transfer order back to his base office. It was time to bid adieu to the town and its wonderful people. It was a hard time to leave fellowship of loving and caring people. They made him quite at home here. On the final day, many leaders came to see him off at the station. As the train chugged out, Lavey and Prakash were waving at him with placard, "Make every effort to keep unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Milan looked up with a thankful heart and a voice in silence echoed, 'Mission accomplished'.

Scripture References: John 15:16, 17:23, Rom 12: 5 and Eph 4:3



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Job's Spiritual Status - A Challenge for Satan

In the game of World Wrestling Entertainment, we see wrestlers coming before one another in a ring with the cheering audience around to challenge one other before they begin their game.

One wrestler challenges the other to fight against him in the upcoming match. The other wrestler accepts the challenge to fight, either keeping his own strength in mind, or to show a positive attitude towards the challenge, to show his passion for the game or not to be humiliated before the audience. Whatever may be the reason, the challenge is accepted.

In the book of Job chapter 1 we see God challenging the Devil regarding the character of His servant Job. "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." (vs. 8). God declares to Satan the spiritual status of Job. In verse 3 we see the Holy Spirit recording Job as one of the wealthiest persons in the East. This was also God-given economic status to Job. But during

the interaction with the Devil, God testifies that Job was Number One in the matter of uprightness, blamelessness, fearing God and shunning evil. He was topmost in spiritual aspects as testified by God. And God challenged the Devil regarding Job's uprightness.

In reply, Satan challenges God about sincerity/selfishness in Job's commitment. He argues that the God-fearing life of Job was a result of His abundant blessings. "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan counter-questioned "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land" (Vs. 10). Now Satan challenges God to take away everything from Job and see Job fail in *maintaining* his spiritual status. "But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face" (Vs. 11). God, keeping in mind the blameless character of Job accepted the counter-challenge of Satan. He allowed Satan to destroy all his earthly blessings, his children and his health. Satan quickly destroyed everything belonging to Job.

Yet we see in verses 2:3 and 2:9 that Job ***maintained*** his integrity. "In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing" (vs. 1:22). He maintained his spiritual status and Satan was miserably put to shame. God's acceptance of challenge knowing the faith of His servant achieved grand success.

Similar challenges take place even today in heaven. The Accuser Satan accuses us continuously before God regarding our love, loyalty, self-denial, dependence, commitment, faith, etc. (Revelation 12:10). The question arises here: Does God accept the challenge of Satan or answer him about our spiritual status? Do we keep our spiritual status far above the earthly things/status as Job did? Do we maintain our integrity and spiritual level as Job maintained in times of testing? Who is glorified by us in all these, Satan or God?

In Isaiah 14:13 we see Satan tried to raise his status: "I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon" but God's word in Jude 1:6 says that angels failed in keeping their positions



in heaven “the angels who did not **keep their positions** (status) of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day” (Jude 1:6). The Satan used the same strategy in Eden Garden by enticing Adam and Eve to uplift their status from being human to become like God (Genesis 3:6), the result was the Fall of their spiritual status. Today many believers are victims of the same strategy of Satan. They are very much status-conscious. They try hard to uplift their different status in terms of finance, property, education, position, etc. God Himself provides and lifts up people to different positions (Job 36,7; James 4:10; Prov. 4:8). But we all know that these statuses were not discussed at all in heaven in Job Chapter 1.

Our Lord Jesus accepted the challenges: to defeat Satan, to overcome temptations, to live a sinless life on earth, to overcome world and to defeat death itself. He put His status as God **ASIDE**, took the nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Hebrew 2:9 says He was lowered for a little while. He fought and achieved the greatest Victory of all Eternity. And God seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion (Ephesians 1:21-22).

Dear fellow believers, we are not in a game of WWE. We, as children of God are in the battlefield, in actual fight with the Devil and his forces. We are required to accept challenges in our day to day life, family, career, ministry and social life, etc. Let's work hard at maintaining and concentrating on our spiritual status. Let

The only way it is possible to have one mind is to have the mind of God derived from the unity of the Spirit of God, a unity which comes only when believers find the will of God and give themselves unselfishly and unstintingly to its fulfillment. - John F. Walvoord

Satan be defeated and God be glorified through us. Let's be less concerned about earthly status and become Spiritual-conscious children of God.



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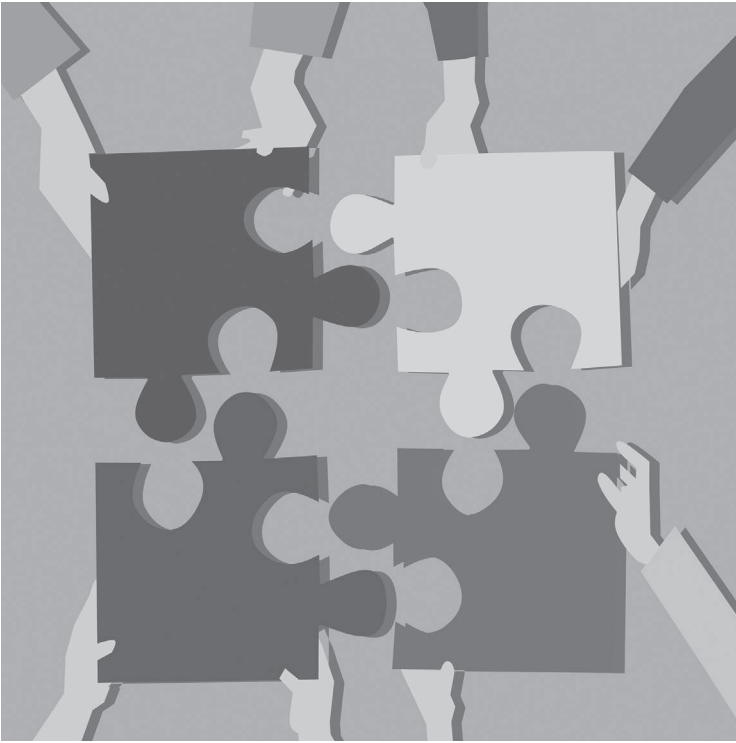
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The Jigsaw Puzzle Pieces

They all looked so *different*- not even one was similar to another! Their colours, designs, shapes – all varied. But they came together in one box and flowed out into my hand, one hundred of them, jumbled up like a mess.

The picture on the box was that of a grand palace, surrounded by orchards, and fountains and meadows. It said '*100-Pieces Jigsaw Puzzle*'. And as they tumbled out of the box, you couldn't say for sure if they all would make up for the picture on top of the box.

"I am the biggest piece" announced one of them.

"No, I am bigger than you" said another.

"You may be big ones, but there's no design of the palace on either of you!" argued a third. "Look, I have the door of the palace on me. So I am the most important."

"But I have the pinnacle of the palace designed on me!" shouted another.

"You all are talking about your sizes and designs, but you all have what look like holes on your sides. Empty spaces. Pity! You all look so lame!" said another proudly. "Look at my shape – it has so many hoops... they make me bigger and weightier than you!"

"Middle pieces you all! None of you deserve to be taken first!" screeched another! "Look at my sides – two of them are as smooth as butter! I make for the border... so I will be taken first."

"HUSH!" I said. "Stop making noise, let me observe the picture on the box first." They all quietened down for a while. The beauty of the bright palace caught me. The shining doors and carved walls looked so attractive. There were apple and pear trees on one side of it, and grape vines, rose gardens and lush green meadows on the other. Fountains on the top seemed to flow right down to where I was. Come, let me start solving this exciting jigsaw puzzle...

"Me first!" "Take me first!" "Here, take me!" the noise started again.

Up jumped the one with two smooth sides – "Here! I come, the first of all!"

"You may come first, Mr. First, but you certainly need the other pieces to make the entire picture" was my reply. "The others will soon join you to match up where you have the extra hoops."

And soon, the others did match up, one by one. It took quite an effort, and much time to look at each piece's design and figure out its place in the big picture. But as the design started to come up, it felt so exciting! The matching of each piece with its adjacent one was like a reward.

"Ouch!" cried some, when their hoops were pushed into the empty spaces of their adjacent pieces. "It's just a little rubbing at your sides, and it doesn't do you any harm, my little ones!" I continued.

"I don't like the colour of this brown one next to me! Nor of the shades of the blue waters, they don't match with my dazzling

white” grumbled one of the palace-wall parts. “Your white colour dazzles, but it cannot make up for the entire picture! It is the variety in colours that make the picture beautiful.” I explained.

The palace was almost done. The fountains and the orchards, too. But the meadows had a few gaps in between. Oh! Their absence made the rest of the puzzle look unpleasant! I needed them soon! And there they lay – upside down... “What happened to you? Why are you looking downwards?”

“We just have a few tiny flowers on us. Nothing great about us” they answered.

“So what? Do you think the puzzle could be complete without you? No! See how the empty meadows gape at me without you! Come quickly, you are lovely lilies. Even the palace residents wouldn’t be as beautifully dressed as you!”

And as they filled up the gaps, oh how excited I was! Till ... it was almost done ... almost ... not yet complete though! Where’s the last one?

“Dinner is ready! Come, sunny...” mummy called me.

“Not yet mom! Let me finish making my puzzle. There’s just one piece left”

Beneath the table... over the boxes... behind the curtains... where could this last piece be? I will leave the ninety nine solved and adjusted pieces and search everywhere till I find my missing piece!

“At last! There you lay hidden under the carpet! I’m so glad I found you!”

“The cat pushed me down”

Forgive and give as if it were your last opportunity. Love like there’s no tomorrow, and if tomorrow comes, love again. -Max Lucado

“No worries, now that you are in my hand, my most precious piece, I will put you where you make my design complete!”

“Wow! This is my One-Hundred Piece Beautiful Puzzle. And oh! Not a puzzle anymore... It’s a grand palace in the most attractive setting I could have ever dreamt of! Let me show this awesome picture to all my family and friends...”

We all are like these puzzle pieces. Each with a different design, colour and shape of our own. But put together in the right place, we make the beautiful design of God’s Temple, His dwelling place. None of us is more important, or less, than the other. Each of our gifts and abilities complement that of others. Let us enjoy the differences. It would be boring if all of us were the same.

Cherish the friction, without grumbling, as God joins us together in the One Body of Christ. Stay patiently in your place, trusting in the wisdom of the Great Designer.



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Unity, Love & Prayer



UESI has selected this three part theme for the next two years – what could be the reason? I feel we are falling back on all three; it is high time that we realise our folly and go back to these basics. So, good choice.

Unity - UESI is inter-denominational. What unites us, believers from different Churches, is the blood of Jesus Christ. We are from different geographical areas, from different family backgrounds, from different financial situations, from different upbringing, with different education levels, and different occupations. But we all have experienced what it is to born again. Irrespective of all the other differences, our old self is dead in Christ, it is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. Not I, but Christ – should be our motto. That unites us. United we stand in Christ, divided we will fall.

Love – it is one of the most commonly used word – but misinterpreted, misquoted and misused in many occasions. The world says we should love ourselves. But our primary love should be to our Creator, Saviour, Protector and Provider i.e. God – to Him and Him alone. When that love is in place, we will be able to love others in the way we should. On the other hand, if we go by the worldly way and love ourselves more than

anything else – we are in for big trouble in all phases of our lives – being a bully with friends, infatuation and one-sided affairs, ego clashes with colleagues, broken relationships within the family, alienated in the society, etc. The Word of God describes the various love relationships “You shall love your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength and all your mind”, “Love your neighbour as yourself”, “Husbands love your wife as Christ loved the Church”, “Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you” – all these things are impossible if we try to do it on our own. But as Apostle Paul said “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”.

Prayer – it is the most talked about topic, but least put into practice. Prayer is sought as a tool by most people when they run into trouble. Otherwise, when the sailing is smooth, they depend on their own strength and wisdom. And when we pray also, we see it as a means to put forward our complaints, demands, etc. to God. Prayer is communication and if communication has to be effective – it has to be two-way communication. Yes, prayer is a time of pouring out our heart to the Lord. But it should also be seen as a time when the Lord speaks to you, and hence you need to sit quiet and listen intently. Many a times, we do not enjoy prayer because it is not done in the proper manner. Yes, it is ideal to set apart some quality quiet time, preferably in the early morning at the feet of the Lord. But, sometimes we make it so sacrosanct that, if that time passes by, then there is no quiet time or prayer in the day. You can speak out to your Heavenly Father at any time of the day or night, or any place or any occasion – it can be during driving, it can be during resting, it can be while you are in a public transport, or waiting for someone. The most important thing is that you communicate i.e. you pray.



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Power of Unity

Love is the pivotal virtue of a Christian. Apostle Paul writes, “Now three things remain; faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). Only love for Christ and His people will bring real unity among His people and their united prayer will surely bring great blessings from God.

Let us see two examples for, how this principle of unity based on love resulted in prayers that brought God’s blessings, one each from the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Old Testament Example:

Daniel and his friends in Babylon is a classic example of a life of unity based on love, resulting in answered prayer.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah loved the Lord God more their own lives and were willing to die for Him (Daniel 3:14-18; 6:6-10). Even though they were captives in Babylon, they loved each other because of their love for the Living God.

In Daniel chapter 2, we read that Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon was troubled in spirit because of a dream. So he called all the magicians, astrologers and the sorcerers in his kingdom, to tell his dream and interpret it. But they could not do so. So Nebuchadnezzar became furious and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

On knowing this, Daniel met the king and got time to interpret the dream. Then he shared the king's decision with his three friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah so as to pray to God for the revelation of the King's dream and its meaning. These four people prayed together fervently to God to reveal and interpret the dream. And God answered their united prayer. Even though God revealed the dream and its meaning only to Daniel, in answer to their united prayer, Daniel did not think highly of himself. While he thanked God for answering their prayer, he said, "I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, and have made known to me **what we asked of You, for You have made known to us** the king's demand." (Daniel 2:23). He recognized and accepted the power of united prayer with other people of God.

New Testament Example:

Prayer based on love and unity of early Christians emboldened them to preach the gospel even in the midst of opposition and intimidation.

When rulers, elders, and scribes, including Annas the high priest threatened the apostles Peter and John and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus, they informed other believers. On knowing this, **they all prayed in one accord**. When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and **they spoke the word of God with boldness**.

Now the **multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul**; neither did anyone say that any of the



things he possessed was his own, but **they had all things in common.** (Acts 4:1-33)

IMPORTANCE OF LOVE, UNITY & PRAYER:

Love is the hallmark of Christianity. Christ is the embodiment of love. God sent His only son to manifest His love for us. (1 John 4:9). Father God's great love is revealed when the sinners and enemies of God are transformed and adopted as His own children. (1 Jn3:1)

The proof of a person being born of God is his/her love for other children of God. (1Jn3:10b / 1 Jn 5:1). Love is more precious and treasured than all kinds of knowledge, gifts of the Holy Spirit and even faith. Love never fails. (1Cor13). Love is called the "bond of perfection" (Col 3:14) Love is the fulfilment of the Law (Rom 13:8-10). Serving others should be out of love for Christ (2 Cor 5:14)

The manifestation of love is forgiving people. When there is lack of love, there won't be real unity and prayers offered without unity will not bring answers. Not forgiving others shows a lack of love for them and it is a great hindrance to get answers for prayers, as it results in disunity.

Jesus promised "If **two of you agree** on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them. (Matt 18 :19, 20) And **whenever you stand praying**, if you have anything against anyone, **forgive him** that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. (Mk 11:25)

Paul urged the Corinthian believers to forgive the repentant believer as an expression of love for him. (2 Cor 2:7, 8) Apostle

Every experience proves that the real problem of our existence lies in the fact that we ought to love one another, but do not. - Reinhold Niebuhr

Peter also has emphasised the importance of forgiving others as a mark of loving them so as to have a meaningful prayer life. “But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in **your prayers**. And above all things have **fervent love for one another**, for **love will cover a multitude of sins**. (Forgiveness)” (1 Peter 4:7, 8)

If we love Christ, we will also love other God’s people. Unity of Christian believers based on their love for Christ is so powerful that it will make the unbelievers to believe Jesus Christ (Jn 17:20, 21) Let us yearn for that day.

As God’s children, let us inherit God’s blessings including answers to our prayers by loving one another and living in unity. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for **brethren** to dwell together in **unity**! For there the **LORD commanded the blessing**-- Life forevermore.” (Psalm 133). We, God’s people should be eager and strive earnestly to guard and keep the harmony and oneness of (produced by) the Spirit in the binding power of peace (Eph. 4:3 Amp). To have this unity, we should be humble and gentle. Being patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of our love for one another (Eph. 4:2 LB).



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READERS' RESPONSE

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Hon. Editor

FROM THE FATHER ABOVE



This is the story of my beloved daughter and her foreign master. Read on...

It's incredible that my daughter
Caught by an Aramean raider
Serving the wife of her captor
Becomes a divine messenger

She's a lovely, cheerful care-giver
For her, everyone's a sis or a brother
Oh! How she cares for her offender
And leads him to revere his Maker

She's just a humble domestic helper
For her, her master's agony does matter

"If only my lord meets the Samaritan healer"

She says "surely he will recover"

Let me tell you what happens when Naaman, her master heeds to her advice and goes to the land of Israel.

Here comes the commander
A mighty man of great valour
On whose arm, leans his master
Despite him being a leper

With him, he brings silver
Gold, clothes, and the king's letter –
"I'm sending my dear officer
That you may cure his disorder"

"Am I God?", exclaims the reader
Tears his clothes, no wonder
King Jehoram, Israel's ruler
Knows not the prophet healer

**When the prophet Elisha learns
of the king's doing, he informs
the king to send Naaman to him.
And then . . .**

With horses and chariots stands the
commander

At door, hoping his torment will
soon be over.

Then, Elisha conveys through a
messenger

"Go and wash seven times in Jor-
dan river"

"Huh. . . He didn't meet or utter a
prayer!!

No waving of hand to make me
cleaner!!

Are not the rivers of Damascus
even better?"

Is it the patient who is raging with
anger?

Quick to admonish are his servant
advisors

"Wash and be clean, isn't it much
simpler?"

So, he dips seven times in the river

Now his flesh is as healthy as a
toddler

He is healed, no longer a leper
No more sorrow, bitterness or
anger

Pride replaced with peace much
greater

He received more than he asked,
ever.

**When he returned to the prophet
to offer his gifts, the man of God
refused. He took nothing.**

Hey. . . Are you LISTENING TO what I
am saying?

No need to worry about diabetes
or Cancer

Your heart is precious than all gems
together

I want not your coins, gold or silver

You are forgetting, I am the Creator

Why don't you leave your ego and
come nearer?

I will be your redeemer and ever-
lasting Father

Cling to me, for my grace is suf-
ficient forever

You too will be a fountain of love,
hereafter



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We pray spontaneously, according to our needs, or those of our dear ones, and present our requests before God. We rejoice when our prayers are answered, we praise God, and rightly so. But there are things in the heart of God, His needs and His concerns, which we may not know unless the Holy Spirit makes them known to us as we wait in His Presence.

The Scripture says, "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them. . . . And having chosen them, He called them to come to Him. And having called them, He gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, He gave them his glory." (Rom 8:26-28, 30; NLT)

Hannah was chosen, called and given a right standing with God. So the Holy Spirit helped her to pray *in harmony with God's will, with groans she couldn't express*. Her desire was a son, to fill her empty womb. Emptiness is a vacuum, and vacuum has the power to hold. Her emptiness attracted God.

Elkanah, her husband loved her, but couldn't understand her. He said to her, "You have me, isn't that better than having ten sons?" (1 Sam. 1:8) How could she explain the difference between what she had and what she needed? No reply.

Penninah, her rival wife "would taunt Hannah and make fun of her because the LORD had kept her from having children." (1 Sam 1:6) Oh! How unbearable to be mocked by human beings when God was dealing with her! No reply.

Eli the priest misunderstood her to be a drunkard; "Must you come here drunk?" he demanded. "Throw away your wine!"

"Oh no, sir!" she replied. "I haven't been drinking wine ... Don't think I am a wicked woman! (1 Sam 1:14-16). The Hebrew word for 'wicked woman' is 'daughter of Belial'. Belial (worthlessness) is later used as a name for Satan (2 Cor. 6:15). How it hurts when priests, prophets or pastors misunderstand us, or think of us as worthless!

Though surrounded by emptiness, misunderstanding, mockery and accusation, the Holy Spirit helped her. He opened her eyes to see the need in God's house – it was empty too. She waited in God's Presence, and heard Him: 'Hannah, do you think only your womb is empty? My house is empty too. Do you think only you are misunderstood, taunted and mocked? I face the same, in multiples. Do you think people don't recognize your worth? I am not recognized by My people either. The ox knows its master and the donkey its manger, but My people don't know Me.' Through her pain, she was able to understand God's pain. She heard him and felt the emptiness in God's house. Thus she could pray this godly prayer of dedication:

"O LORD of Heaven's Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him



back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime.”(1 Sam 1:11)

When she clarified about her pain and prayer to the priest who was in charge of God’s house, God responded to her through Eli, “Go in peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of Him.” “Oh, thank you, sir!” she exclaimed. Then she went back and began to eat again and was no longer sad.” (1 Sam. 1:17-18) Hannah knew that God had heard, and would answer her. She was confident that God would enable her to keep her vow, too.

Samuel was born!

When we bring our desperate needs before God in prayer, and wait in His Presence, He shows us what is in His heart. There may be precious lessons awaiting us there – lessons that He alone can teach. Those may be the reasons behind our obvious needs. We need to ask, “*What is God trying to tell me through this situation?*” The Holy Spirit reveals to us the will of God, and helps us to pray meaningfully.

Do we see the weighing balances in God’s hand? The heavier side is His need to save His Creation by giving birth to sons and daughters of light to deliver the groaning creation from the oppression of the enemy. Like Hannah, do we hear His pain at His children being mocked, robbed, scoffed and misunderstood? If only we be emptied of our self, Satan and the temporal things of the world, then we can be filled with the Presence of God. He is waiting to give us children of light.

Like at the beginning of Creation, the Holy Spirit of God is hovering over the Church to shed light in the darkness, to bring order where there is chaos, and to fill our emptiness with His fullness. May the Spirit of God help us to offer godly prayers – prayers that are in harmony – aligned with His will, and receive answers according to His bountiful resources.



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Understanding Hebrew poetry

SONG OF SOLOMON

ECCLESIASTIES, LAMENTATIONS



Dr. T. NORTON STERRETT

We generally recognize that certain Old testament books, such as Jobs, Psalms, Proverbs, perhaps Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, are books of poetry. It may not be as widely known that many other portions of the Old Testament are poetical in form. This is true of sections of the prophetic books. Some modern versions of the Bible print these portions in stanza form

So, there is much poetry in the Old Testament, and it is important to recognise and know how to interpret it. The Holy Spirit has used poetry as one of the channels for communicating God's truth to us. How can we learn that truth in the poetry?

In ordinary literature we don't read or judge poetry as we do prose. We recognise differences, and talk about "sober prose" or "poetic license." The poetry of the Bible also has its special features, which we must understand if we are to know those parts of Scripture.

First of all, we must remember that Hebrew poetry *is* not like English poetry. For example, it does not have rhyme.

"When I survey the wondrous **Cross**

On which the Prince of glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride."

We can hear the similar sound of cross and loss, also of died and pride. This similarity of sound, coming at regular intervals at the end of the lines, is called rhyme. Not all English poetry has it, but it is commonly used, Hebrew poetry does not have this.

Hebrew poetry is also largely lacking in rhythm, that is a regular pattern of accented and unaccented syllables. Read out loud.

“The boy stood on the burning deck

Whence all but him had fled.”

Notice how boy. . . on. . . burn. . . deck. . . all. . . him. . . fled are stressed in a speaking, while the other syllables are not. This is rhythm, and is a common English feature, though the patterns may differ. It is lacking in Hebrew poetry.

But Hebrew poetry does have some clear features of its own.

The first one is called “parallelism.” We might call it rhythm or pattern of thought rather than of sound. It means simply that the basic structure is a couplet, two lines of poetry so connected in thought that in some way the second line answers to the first. It does not always answer in the same way, so there are several different kinds of parallelism. We can name them as follows:

1. Synonymous or similar parallelism. In this, the second line repeats the same thought as the first, usually in different words, and sometimes not repeating the complete sentence. A good example is,

“For they will soon fade like the grass,

And wither like the green herb.” Ps. 37:2.

In this verse, fade and wither are alike, as are grass and green herb. Though the synonyms don’t mean exactly the same thing, yet the thought is closely similar. There are many examples of this in the book of Psalms. See 37:6; 59:1; 1:5. The effect of this parallelism is to emphasize the truth by repetition, and sometimes to make it clearer if one of the synonyms is more easily understood than the other.

2. Antithetic or contrasting parallelism. In this, the second line gives a contrasting thought to the first. It can be seen in

“For the wicked shall be cut off;

But those who wait for the

Lord shall possess the land.” Ps. 37:9.



The two lines express opposite thoughts, and the parallelism is clear. Often, as in the above example, the word “but” beginning the second line is the key to parallelism. See also Ps. 20:7,8; 37:21, 22; 1:6. and many verses in Proverbs.

3. Synthetic or additive parallelism. The second line gives a thought different from the first, but one that in some way complements it. Notice

“Delight thyself in the Lord,
And He will give thee the
desires of thine heart.” Psa. 37:4.

Often, as here, the second line tells the result or effect of the first. The word “and” is the key. But sometimes there is no connecting word, but the meaning is the same. For instance, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” Psa. 23:1. It is obvious that the second line follows because of the first; the parallelism is clear. See Ps. 37:31; 55:6.

4. Climactic or enhancing parallelism. Here the second line expands or heightens the meaning of the first. How expressive that becomes IN

“But the meek shall inherit
the earth and shall delight themselves
in the abundance of peace.” Ps.37:11.

There is a fuller, more vivid touch to the thought in the second line. See Ps.112:1; 55:12 13 (note the negative and positive contrast).

These are not the only forms of parallelism. There are modifications of these, and some additional forms. Sometimes there is a triplet (three lines) instead of a couplet. Sometimes the parallelism may be doubled and extended over two or even three verses. The Holy Spirit did not make a mechanical pattern. Those who wish to study the subject further may refer to the relevant articles in the New Bible Handbook, New Bible Commentary, or New Bible Dictionary.

This poetic parallelism adds much to the language of the Bible adding expressiveness, beauty of thought, and clarity. And it helps the interpretation of the poetry. There are different ways in which we can get help.

1. One line often makes clear the other one; usually the second clarifies the first, but sometimes the other way around. Perhaps one line has a difficult word in it, or a figurative word that could be misunderstood. The other lines show what it means.

For example, look at Psa. 116, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." What does the word "knoweth" mean? is it only that God is aware of the way of the righteous, or is it more? The second line, "but the way of the wicked shall perish", shows that God's knowing has a saving purpose for the righteous, almost the idea of protecting. It is the opposite of perishing.

Again, in Psa. 22:16 the first line is, "For dogs have compassed me." But who are what are those dogs? Are they animals? The second line is similar in thought, showing that dogs and the wicked are parallel. It is clear that evil men are pictured as dogs.

You may like to study other verses like these: Ps. 9:17; 22:6, 20; 34:18.

2. The two lines together show how truths are related, and this gives a fuller truth. Usually this is in synthetic parallelism. Often the key is in a small connecting word. If it is "to... (with infinitive), it shows purpose. "For" shows reason or cause. "So" indicates result. But there may be no connecting word, still there is a connection.

See Ps. 37:31. where the first line explains why the steps of the righteous man do not slide. Or Psa. 23:1, where similarly the first line gives the reason for the second. Why shall I not want?

The Lord is my shepherd. Look also at the following verses for the same principle: Ps. 4:8; 11:7 13:6; 18:3; 21:7; 27:1 (double) 34:16.

A general statement in the first line may be made more specific and definite in the second. This usually comes in synonymous or climactic parallelism.

“Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord”, says Psa. 112:1. Many people wonder what it is to fear the Lord. It doesn’t sound good. rather slightly wrong. But the second line shows at least one specific meaning of fearing the Lord, that is to delight greatly in His Commandments. How clearly this helps us to understand, and be definite in our application of God’s truth. Other such verses are: Psa. 21.4-6; 24:5; 35:20; 41:5.

A truth expressed in one line is strengthened, made more forceful, more vivid, by the second line. It may be by a picture of figurative expression. By this the truth makes a greater impact on us. Climactic parallelism has this effect.

Psa.69:12 is a good illustration. The first line is a plain statement of people opposing David the psalmist. But how vivid is the second line, that he is the butt of drunken songs! How it pictures the irresponsible and unworthy enmity that can come to the believer.

Similar passages are Ps. 12:6; 19; 10; 30: 5 (double); 35: 19; 46:9; 36:7, 8; 62:5.

As we have noted, figurative language often comes in here. To recognize figures and interpret them as figures is important. Sometimes difficult problems are wrapped up in them. For example, Psa. 58:10. How can a righteous man wash his feet in the blood of the wicked? But that is a figurative expression, not to be taken literally. Even then, the spirit indicated seems to be contrary to true righteousness, the “rejoicing” of the first line seems wrong. But v. 11 shows that the joy is not for ‘personal vengeance, but for the vindication of God, His justice and truth.

So, the parallelism in Old Testament poetry is a very prominent factor in the meaning. Sometimes it may be less significant, other times more. We need to study it prayerfully, asking God for discernment and understanding. With discernment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we may draw more rich treasures of truth from the mine of God’s Word.

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YOUR I AMS ARE MY ANSWER

**When I thirst and hunger,
You say, 'I am the Bread and the Living Water.'**

**When I am in the dark night,
You say, 'I am the Light.'**

**When I cannot reach You,
You say, 'I am the Gate.'**

**When I go astray and long for Your word,
You say, 'I am the good Shepherd.'**

**When I fear in deep contrition,
You say, 'I am the Resurrection.'**

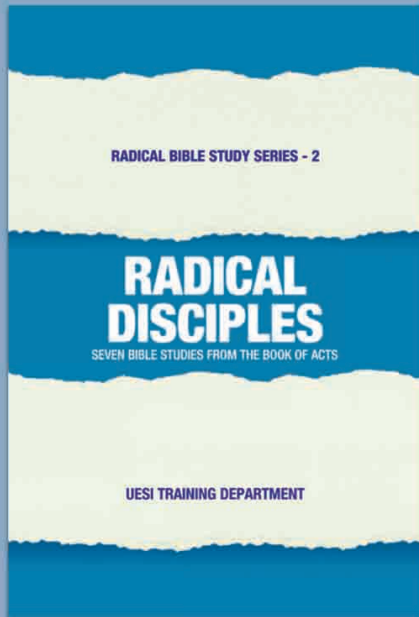
**When I have lost my way and strife,
You say, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.'**

**When I feel disconnected and whine,
You say, 'You are the branch and I am the True Vine.'**



Lamminlun Haokip, former president of ICEU Churachandpur, Manipur. He is now a staff worker of UESI Manipur, based in Chandel District

RADICAL DISCIPLES



“Being Radical” is a challenging concept. A radical is one who practices fundamentalism and known for having extreme political or religious ideas or one who is different in his or her thinking and action from others. Being radical means being misunderstood and rejected by others. But it always has the positive connotation of bringing about drastic changes to the existing lifestyle and value system of individuals and society. Hence, to be radical means, to be willing to take risks and dare to be different!

The second Bible study in this series is Radical Disciples which consists of seven Bible studies from the book of Acts. John Stott says, “Basic to all discipleship is our resolve not only to address Jesus with polite titles, but to follow his teaching and obey his commands.” That is Christian discipleship all about—learning from Jesus and obeying Jesus.

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