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Domestic Church!

The idea of family as the 'little Church' is not new. The early church in the first century and in many places due to persecution in the history, Christians have met in homes for worship. Now, thanks to lock down, many Christian families worship God in their homes apart from a few Churches who arrange online worship services. Has God allowed it to the Christendom to bring those values taught to children from families?

Ecclesiolae in ecclesia, (Latin) means "little churches within the church". <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecclesiolae-in-ecclesia>

One of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium ("Light of the Nations"), describes the family as the 'domestic Church' because it is the first place where young, baptized Christians learn about their faith. <https://aleteia.org/2013/02/25/why-is-the-family-called-the-domestic-church/>

Family is the place where new citizens are born and they are sent to the world with God's benevolence and proper teaching from the Scriptures. The Bible places importance to the church-family unit as they both serve the same purpose in bringing up God's new society. One of the basic principles of the family unit is that the members are knit together as one unit, as it is expected of any Church. Young people from Christian background have the luxury of being strengthened in Christian faith and learning values from home when the 'family altar' is well maintained?

It would be good for us to retain this value of family serving as the Church to help the younger generation, especially from non-Christian families, emulate the model. The importance of practicing 'Open Home' needs to be reinstated than ever before, as we await the 'new normal'.

Happy reading from experiences and lessons from experienced writers in that little church!

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OPEN HOME

"House Quarantine" "Do not come out of the house" "Do not visit anybody's house" – familiar words in this time of Covid. But we consider the Open Home, a wonderful channel in God's ministry.

What is an Open Home?

UESI was born in the living room of **Prof. Enoch**. It grew in the Open Homes of the graduates and staff across the country, to evangelize, and mentor. **Prof. Enoch** once said **"We have thousands of children."** That was the result of the sacrifices he and his wife made to nurture students, graduates and the staff in their open home.

Values to learn from the history

Dr. Devapaul in REC (NIT), Warangal, wanted to keep his home open for students. He told his wife, **"I will bring the students. You feed them. That is enough."** Hundreds came to Christ including **Prof. Michael Kumar**. Now his home near Karunya University is an open for students and have even week-end camps.

Prof. SPR Ebenezer from Chennai ICEU chose to teach in Virudhunagar. He and **Bro. Rajasingh Warrior** opened their homes for students. More than 30 full time workers and many EGF and Church leaders have come out including the staff of UESI: R Billy, Athma Soruban, Arul Manohar, Christopher, and P. Jebaraj.

During our 5 years ministry in Odisha, God brought at least 10 full time ministers. A senior experienced Odiya graduate recollected how they came for the ministry – **“You brought those boys, kept them to stay in your house for days and weeks and fed them. That is the cause for them to come for the ministry.”** One leader moved to a Metro City rented a small house to avoid people coming and staying. The Covid reveals the “temporariness” of our properties and wealth. Are we willing to sacrifice our belongings for eternal purposes?

Functions of an Open Home

1. **An Oasis:** A **“Home away from home”** for hostel students. Freshers face fears of a strange place, ragging, different food, etc. Inviting them home for a cup of tea with the family will help to get over the “home sickness”.

One Christmas we had 9 students, (26 another year). We all worked, cooked and ate together. During informal sharing, a Buddhist medical intern from Bhutan said he was fully convinced about the love of Christ that day and committed himself to Christ. He as an orphan grew up in hostels all his life, That was the first day in all his life he had entered a house and shared a meal with a family. Love showered on him won him for Christ.

Once a medical student called up to meet my wife Sasi. A heavy load of work was pending after the UESI Golden Jubilee. Yet Sasi asked her to come, sat and talked for 8 hours. She had a relationship problem and had decided to commit suicide. She fixed everything and put her head into the noose, lifted one leg. There was pain and fear. Then she made the call. If we would have said we are busy, it would have come in the news that a medical student committed suicide. An Oasis indeed.

2. **Evangelism Base:** An Open Home is a place where a staff worker or graduate stays and meets the students to evangelize. Old EU Hand Book tells the graduates to provide “Bed

and Breakfast". In "Old Days", there was no luxury of phones, bikes and cars. Staff and graduates used to visit unreached cities, stay in the homes of the graduates and pioneer the EU ministry. The Lord opened Lydia's heart. She opened her home as a base for Evangelism for many days – **"come to my house and stay."** Acts 16:14,15, 18,40.

Bro. Sathkeerthi Rao, a pioneering staff of UESI was later with other Missions. He said, **"They stay in star hotels. To sleep on a mat on the floor of a graduate's home is more enjoyable than the star hotels."** I have stayed in the homes of many graduates across the country and with students in hostels. In my 35 years of service as a UESI staff, only one day I have stayed in a lodge in a pioneering place.

3. **For Dialogue:** The two disciples of John asked, "Teacher, where do you stay?". Jesus did not give his visiting card or fix an appointment. He just said, "Come and see". No dirty thing to be swept below the carpet or a secret channel or site to be changed in the TV or laptop. His life was transparent. Without prior appointment, Jesus allowed them to stay with Him. Maybe they had a good spiritual discussion. They recognized the Messiah – John 1:35-42. Nicodemus came at the night to meet Jesus – John 3:1-21; 19:39. Jesus taught him about New Birth. In an Open Home we can explain the Gospel to a seeker, solve his doubts and lead him to Christ.

Paul was under house arrest in Rome. Instead of worrying, he had an Open Home. Acts has an open ending: **"Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came**

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to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.” Acts 20:30,31. At home there is no opposition for ministry.

4. **For Edification:** Apollos was a talented teacher but did not know Jesus. Aquila and Priscilla Invited him to their home and explained the Gospel. He became a great resource person - Acts 18;24-28. At home we can guide people for maturity.
5. **Meeting place:** Aquila and Priscilla had Home Church in Rome, Ephesus and Corinth. They had Paul at their home for work and evangelism. Acts 18;1-3; Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor.16:19. When Peter was arrested, Christians had an All Night Prayer in the house of Mark – Acts 12:12. In these Lock Down days we have worship and meetings online. On normal days students and graduates find it difficult to find a place for EU and EGF meetings. Can we open our homes? The fellowship atmosphere is great in a house than in a common place.
6. **Leadership Development:** Jesus gave quality time to the Apostles who were pillars of the Church. As an itinerant preacher, Paul mentored and brought up Spiritual children as leaders – 2 Tim 2:2; 1 Tim.1:1,2; 2 Tim. 1:1,2; 2:1; Titus 1:1; Phil.10. Prof. Enoch's home was open for staff Bro. Chandapilla, Bro. PC Varghese, Bro. Sathkeerthi Rao and Bro. Arthur Hope. They in turn have mentored and produced hundreds of leaders for the EU, Church and the Society. Now it is our turn.
7. **Rest and Refreshment:** Paul's team stayed in the house of Philip. His family which was co-operative took care of Paul's team for many days and provided for all their needs of the long journey. Acts 21:8-10,15. Full time workers have annual holidays. But they don't know where to go as not many, including their relatives are not willing to receive them. If we offer stay and food for a few days, that will help the missionary for a family vacation. Hospitality is a Qualification for leadership – 1 Tim 3:2;5:10; Titus 1:8

Blessings to have an Open Home:

1. It is our privilege to have Open Homes for evangelism and mentoring.

2. We get closer fellowship with believers than just meeting them.
3. Children get many brothers, sisters, uncles and aunties. It helps them to know Christ and to grow in Him. A speaker stayed with 'Wesleys' led John Wesley to Christ.
4. Children get adjusted to accommodate people in their home. This helps in character building.
5. Seeing the parents spending for the people, the children begin to enjoy giving.
6. As we pray with the guests our spiritual life gets strengthened.
7. We see the blessings of the Lord like Obed-Edom – 2 Sam 6:11,12.
8. On the lighter side, having meetings or guests to stay helps us to keep the house clean, neat and tidy all the time.

Problems of an Open Home:

1. The privacy can be affected.

Plan for the “spaces” for the family and for the guests.

2. If both the spouses work, they can't give the needed time for the visitors.

Proper discussion between the couple can solve the problem.

3. It can affect the children's studies. Syllabus now is too much which needs parents help.

Discussion with the children, one spouse giving time or arranging someone to coach will help.

4. Girls can face the risk of sexual abuse by the visitors.

Proper orientation for girls about the possible advancement of any men and to inform the mother immediately.

5. Some guests can exploit the host by undue demand of time, food and other privileges.

If this gets repeated, prayerfully explain to the guest the cost paid by the host.

6. If one spouse is not from EU background, he or she may not understand the fellowship.

Discuss all details together before allowing a guest or giving place for a meeting.

7. Entertaining many guests can affect the finances.

A budget has to be made. The food menu can be simple to suit our budget.

"A man with a small house has a big heart. One with a big house has a small heart."

"God gave because of love. So we give. John 3:16; 1 John 3:16 "

"You can give without loving. But you cannot love without giving."

We enjoyed the hospitality of our seniors to find Christ, and to grow in Him. In return we have to give the same hospitality to the next generation to nurture them leaders.



P. Jebaraj & Sasi Jebaraj are UESI Field Partners living in Chennai after retiring from UESI as Staff workers. They are blessed with three married daughters.

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FAMILY - THE CHURCH CLOSEST TO HOME

There are virtues that are a common denominator in a Christian family and church and can be game changers in building the home. If one has learnt the art of applying them in the church, they can be successfully applied in the home and vice versa. Both, the family and the church are in the midst of a constant battle – spiritual battle - that is so invisible and mysterious (just like corona virus) that we just cannot believe it's happening right in the vicinity that we are living. No wonder just like Covid19 infection and its aftermath, there are many Christian homes and churches cracking and breaking so easily. What can keep the family united and strong are instructions which Paul the apostle gave to the churches – at Ephesus, Phillipi and Romans

Ephesians 4:2 - ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Phillipians 2:3 - ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves

Romans 12:10 - ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

All these verses if obeyed in letter and spirit, are bound to keep the unity and peace in a family just like a church. We become one when we get married, we just have to maintain the unity. While we can pick up several virtues and build a case for unity I will restrict to a few for now.

Humility

Late William Barclays, Greek scholar writes that, *"Before Christianity humility was not counted as a virtue at all. The ancient world looked on humility as a thing to be despised... In classical Greek there is no word for humility"* Many New Testament writers make a mention of Humility.

This is one humble virtue, if available in large measure within a family, can keep the unity of the family like no other because many virtues are hidden in this one virtue. As humility is unleashed the others come out one by one. For eg. Forgiveness – a humble person can forgive easily while a proud person finds it hard. Other virtues like kindness, love, patience, tolerance in a family are often practiced by humble people. Humility is one virtue Christians should be the first to practice and should come naturally, yet it's a virtue we struggle to produce. Why? Because we forget our beginnings. A wretched, hopeless, hell bound sinner forgiven by the Lord gets a permanent place in the eternal glorious kingdom by sheer grace. I have to do nothing, literally! What more we need to stay humble?

During a conflict between husband and wife, usually the humble of the two at that moment takes the lead in asking forgiveness and resolves the conflict. During a conflict when one wins the argument, the marriage is lost but a humble Christian will never strive to win the argument but win the marriage. Winning an argument only fuels the pride in us. Look at your own married life. Could you have resolved your conflicts better if you were humble, but pride came in the way?

How many a broken Christian homes could have been saved if humility had dominated the conversation yet pride subtly rules in our homes and we don't even realize. I call pride the silent killer of homes, just like BP and Diabetes are silent killer of lives. If not

recognized and treated on time, it can slowly bring a crack, widen the crack and one day blow up and destroy the home.

Paul could not find a better example than Jesus for perfect humility who considered himself nothing although he was God the Son. The Lord could not die on the cross unless he humbled and he did that because of his agape love for us. Those who agape love their spouse are willing to be humble.

Honoring and valuing your spouse above yourself

This one is an offshoot of humility. Paul writes, in humility value others above yourself and elsewhere he writes, honour one another above yourself. Honour means to regard or treat (someone) with admiration and great respect. But our natural self wants honour for ourselves. We want to be treated well by our spouse, we want to be admired and to be respected - That's our natural self.

But this verse tells us to do exactly the reverse – Honour your wife or husband above yourselves, give preference to other in honour. I like how ESV mentions this verse – “Outdo one another in showing honour”. We should be literally competing with our spouse by honouring them above ourselves – holding them in high esteem in the church, at home before children, among your parents – their in-laws and in public. By doing this you are actually increasing the

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value of your spouse and guess who the beneficiary is? You and the Marriage! Do you remember when you last honoured or valued your spouse more than yourself? What can be the result? An outstanding marriage, an extraordinary marriage and God glorifying marriage.

Gentleness or Meekness

The Greek word for Gentle or Meek is ***prautes*** and William Barclay writes *“This is a great Greek word which has no precise English equivalent. Aristotle defined it as the mean between excessive anger and excessive angerlessness; it is the quality of the man whose feelings and emotions are under perfect control.”*

Losing control over emotions mostly happens in homes and sadly for our loved ones, who deserve a better treatment for all that they mean to us and do for us. We are normally under control with our office colleagues or friends because there are consequences, sometimes irreversible consequences for temper tantrums. But who cares if I blow my top at home? Usually it is the weaker partner who ends up at the wrong end of the emotions. The spouse who thinks superior will often raise their voice, lose their cool and be often demanding.

How can such a marriage be honouring to God where there is no equality and respect? Many times words spoken freely and carelessly are a result of lack of meekness -- power not under control. I can be technically right in a given circumstances compared to my spouse but can do wrong by letting out words loosely and uncontrollably, only to regret later.

While humility is an attitude and honouring your spouse is a willful act, gentleness is choosing not to act when it is in your power to act.

I know you are tempted to think which one of these virtues your spouse lacks. How about you, which of the three you want to cultivate? Remember your family is the closest church to your home.

*The author of this article **Mr. Norbert** lives with his family in South India and is actively involved in UESI ministry*



THE MAKING OF A VICTOR

Daylight is about to fade away. Tests, seminars and classes marked the day for pre-final year students in the college. Declaration of results for the previous exams drew most of them towards the notice board. Some preferred to check their results online. Anxieties and exasperations were visible on their faces as they huddled to check the assessment report. This result carries significance as campus placement is round the corner. After a hard and long haul, Jeevan pulled his legs forward to jostle with his friends to catch a glimpse of results displayed on the board. A red mark against his name confounded him. He rubbed his eyes in anguish and inspected the board once again. He could not believe his eyes. He just could not stand. He was losing balance

of his mind and body. Somehow he held the edge of the board and collected himself. He tried to walk but he felt as if all strength has left him.

Eventide set in. He slowly stood at one end of the length of tract that leads to the hostel. At the end of the day, this road becomes meeting point of fun and frolic for him and his friends. Today he cannot be part of the crowd. For the first time he sensed he is alone. He withdrew to himself. Slowly, he moved with small steps with his head bowed to the ground. He could not withstand babble of others. The world beyond does not subsist for him anymore. He does not like anyone intrude into his way. Others around him are non-existent.

That way appeared to be too long and the journey gloomy. No energy was left in him. Somehow he managed to open the door of his hostel room and dropped himself on the chair. The unexpected result has thrown him down and torn him apart. He could not accept how a good student all through like him was plucked in one subject and as such failed in the crucial exams. He knew he had to work hard on that subject. He did whatever he could. But the outcome was shuddering.

Evaluation might not have been proper! How can the result be declared so soon? The evaluator did not award due credit for right steps in the answer. Scepticism prevailed in his mind. Slowly his mind petered out. Darkness overshadowed him. He started blaming himself and doubted his capability. Back paper will push him back when all of his batch mates will go forward. His participation in placement is in limbo now. How can he show his face to his friends? What will his parents think of him? They have toiled hard to send him to this prestigious institute. They have reposed all confidence on him. They always appreciate him in front of relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. It is too ignoble a shame to bear.

"I cannot live with failures' any more", he thought. "I have proved most unsuccessful; my life has turned into a flop show; I am no good and of no use", thoughts kept pouring in. There was frustration all over and around him. No light at the end of the tunnel was apparent. The result had spoiled his career and future. He felt totally shattered. The world around him had crushed in. He just could not think of anything else. "This is the end of the road",

he thought. "Life has no meaning; nothing to look forward to," he thought. It is all doom and gloom around him. He did not intend to see the light. He preferred to live in an umbrage for a while and then slip off to shadow of the night. Fear gripped him. He could neither go forward nor backward. It was just a long restless pause.

Suddenly his mobile rang. He stooped from the chair hurriedly to switch it off. But before switching off he glanced at the screen. It was his mother calling. He fell to the floor as despair eclipsed his mind. He started sobbing like a child. Tears rolled down his cheek as he remembered his mother. He recalled how his mother put him to sleep with the song, "Jesus loves me this I know, For the Bible tells me so, little ones to Him belong, they are weak, but He is strong." The stories of the Bible narrated to him by his parents were still vivid in his mind. He remembered Jesus telling, 'let the little children come to me. Do not stop them! For the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are like these children' "Is anything worth more than my soul?" The favourite story of a young Hebrew, Joseph flashed in his mind – Joseph's abandonment at the pit by his brothers out of jealousy, abuse at Potiphar's house where he was sold as a slave and subsequent convict's life in the prison for no fault of his – they did not deter him of becoming the chief ruler in a foreign country. Joseph knew how to face failures in life and still trusted God to fulfil the dream he was given.

Family prayer every evening with stories from the Bible heroes of faith used to amuse him. His father very often cited and read out the life of Daniel and his three friends. Daniel lived an uncompromising life. His prayer three times a day and refusal to bow before any other statue/person other than the Living God pushed him in great troubles. He was thrown into a lions' den. God shut the lions' mouth because Daniel knew 'He who is in him is greater and mightier than Lion (and who is in the world). It flashed in his mind how his parents used to come to his room,

READERS' RESPONSE

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Hon. Editor

kneel down near his bed and pray daily for God's protection for and blessings upon him so that he will shine like Joseph and Daniel and make a difference in the society. They also sent him to this hostel after prayers by the pastor and his parents.

His parents were particular that Jeevan attended Sunday school every week and Vacation Bible school during summer. Whenever crisis and difficult times assail the family, Jeevan remembered how his father gathered all family members and bowed in prayer with the song "what a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer..." His parents kept praying and trusting God in spite of struggles and never gave up faith in the God who is good all the time. They believed in God's word, "Cast all your cares upon Him for he cares for you." He had also seen how his parents always lend a helping hand to any family in need in the society and fellowship group. He had grown up seeing his parents praying and studying the Bible everyday. As a small child he used to imitate his father's postures as he spent time with God.

Jeevan was inconsolable. As he wiped his tears, he lifted up his voice in prayers to the Lord casting all his worries and burdens of his failure and seeking rest in Him while surrendering completely unto Him. The next moment he experienced peace and comfort of God of all comforts. He switched on the light. Hope dispelled Cimmerian shade. He walked out from the hostel to the open ground and looked up. Stars were shining brightly in the sky. Full moon was flooding outside with its bright light. As he kept gazing the word of God came alive, "For I know the plans I have for you... plans for welfare and not for evil, to give a future and a hope." He decided to clear the paper in the next available chance and allow God His best plan to fulfil in his life. He took the courage to call up his mother, narrated the recent episode and declared, 'I am not a victim; I am a victor.'

Scripture References: Matt.19:14, Mark 8:37, I John 4:4, I peter 5:7, Jer. 29:11



Dr. Nanda Dulal works as Group Director in an organisation and lives with his wife Geetanjali in Bangalore.



THE FARRAGOS TAUNTING THE FAITHFUL

The 'Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary' defines '**Farrago**' as '**a confused mixture of different things**'. This article is an attempt to take on different kind of 'farragoes' that continue to trouble the believing community and tries to answer the following age old questions:

- Does it really matter what you believe, as long as you have faith?
- Are there errors in the Bible?
- Was Jesus just a good teacher? Can anyone prove His resurrection? And what does that have to do with me?

Know what you believe about your faith... and why it is true!

Let's begin...

THE COSMIC COP

Is God a cosmic cop guarding the universe? Who is really killjoy your life? God or Devil? Does Satan give you pleasure and happiness?

We imagine God as a cosmic cop standing in the center of the galaxies and sleuthing people. "Hey, you! Yeah you. You look like you're having fun over there. Well cut it down"!

We assume God as the cosmic killjoy. God just wants to spoil our fun. Conversely, we imagine the devil as a fun-loving imp. Comedian Flip Wilson popularized the phrase, "Devil made me do it." As if the devil is a "good old boy". That's a lie. 1 John 4:8 says God is love. A song by Lenny LeBlanc and Paul Baloché has a lyric as thus:

"Crucified laid behind a stone You lived to die rejected and alone
Like a rose trampled on the ground You took the fall and thought
of me Above all."

He undertook all sufferings just because for **US**. He came to the earth to die on the cross and to forgive our sins. He is faithful. Everyday we are living by His grace. We do certainly have laws and commandments to be followed. Obeying these laws make **us** to be noblesse oblige and also inherits the **heaven**. In psalms 119:14, the psalmist enjoys following the rules as one finds in riches.

Satan hates our guts. He threatens to finish you off. . "Devil is always seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

A group of tourists in holy land were told by their guide, "You're probably used to seeing shepherds driving sheep in your countries. But in Palestine things are different. The shepherds lead the way, going before the flock." Much to the amusement and embarrassment of the tourist and the guide respectively, the first flock they saw was driven, not led. The guide asked the man, "How is it you are driving and not leading the sheep?" The man replied, "That's true. The shepherd does lead the sheep. But I'm not a shepherd. I'm a butcher."

Satan is a butcher. He gives destruction to your life albeit a short lived pleasure and happiness. Jesus said, "The thief (Satan) comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that you might have life and have it to full." (John 10:10) In 1 Peter 5:8, Peter says us to be alert for our enemy devil prowls like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Satan wanted to cause sickness to Job (Job

2:1-8) and ruin everything he had; to test him because he was a faithful servant of God. We often hear people saying, "There are no trials and worries, if you believe in God." That's a lie. Satan tests people who are faithful only.

Considering the current situation, we would have come across the saying, "We are God's children and so, we will not be affected by COVID-19." It means not only covid-19 but no disease can touch the children of God. If it were the case, are not all the Christians affected by COVID-19 God's children? Being safe is God's grace. If we are affected by it we should be thankful to God. Always remember God is in control and it maybe another test of the Lord to test our faith. God can heal any disease. But He will not cure diseases for all. Dr. Jaffray, a missionary to Indonesia, said that he was cured from diabetes when their household went shortage in saccharin during World War 2.

Let's give thanks to our God for everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

God does not want to spoil your fun. He wants you to enjoy your life to the fullest. He wants you to experience the eternal pleasures the psalmist talks about: You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalm 16:11.

Courtesy:

1. Don't knock your brains at the door – Josh McDowell & Bob Hostler
2. Evidence not seen – Darlene Deibler Rose
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Miss. Bettina Helen Prakash has just completed her schooling. She with her parents is actively involved in UESI ministry in Madurai, TN.



PARENTS, NEVER GIVE UP!

Dear Parents,

Being a parent and bringing up our children in God's ways is a very challenging mission in these days. As you know, children are God's gifts (Psalm 127:3). But some of them may go astray from God's ways due to various reasons. You may be discouraged, disheartened and even lose hope because of your wayward son/daughter. Never give up! I believe that a miracle performed in the life of a young man by our Lord Jesus Christ will strengthen your faith and renew your hope. It is recorded in three of the four gospels. (Matthew 17:14-21 / Mark 9:14-29 / Luke 9:37-42)

**Let us analyse this miracle as recorded in Mark 9:14-29
(NKJV):**

And when Jesus came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?" Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child (young man) was cured from that very hour. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

The son:

He was the only child of his father. (Luke 9:18) He was a young man according to Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, for Matthew 17:18 ("Mark 9:21 implies, as indeed the Greek does here, that the sufferer had passed beyond the age of childhood". / also mentioned in Matthew 17:18; Luke 9:42 -Tamil Bible). He was possessed by an evil spirit even from his childhood (V21). So he

was suffering for many years. Many times the evil spirit tried to kill him by throwing him into water and fire. So his life was in danger. As he was under the control of the evil spirit he had lost his freedom and free-will. He could not do anything on his own. His parents could not help him to be delivered.

The father:

He did not blame God or anyone else for the pathetic condition of his only child. But he was very loving and compassionate to his demon-possessed son. His love was unconditional. He did not disown him. He did not abuse him either verbally or physically. For many years he was vigilant and watchful to save his son from death. His relatives, friends and neighbours would have blamed or mocked him to have such a son. But he was not ashamed to identify himself with his demon-possessed son. He did not give up the hope regarding the healing of his son. Even though his attempt to get the healing through the disciples of Jesus was a failure, he did not lose heart. Although he was filled with unbelief, he came to Jesus Christ and prayed to grant him faith. His pleading was answered and the son was miraculously healed.

Lessons for the parents:

Let us accept our children even if they do not fulfil our desires and expectations. We should shower our love on them without any conditions. If any of our children go astray, let us humble ourselves and not be ashamed to be his/her parent. As a parent, our motive should be to help and rescue our child from any sinful habit or addiction. Sometimes gifted servants of God may not be able to bring healing or deliverance to their own children. Never give up hope. Let us approach God directly through Jesus Christ, our compassionate High Priest to receive His mercy and grace (Hebrews 4:15, 16). Let us reflect the love of our Father God who manifests His compassion by not constantly accusing, nor remaining angry with us nor punishing us for all our sins or deal harshly with us, as we deserve. (Psalm 103:9, 10, 13 NLT). Know that Jesus promised "with God all things are possible." in the context of salvation of souls (Matthew 19:25, 26).

But do what Lord Jesus commanded the grief-stricken women on the way to His crucifixion: "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children". Let us

regularly fast and pray for the spiritual healing of our children as Jesus instructed in Mark 9:29. I think no other person can pray fervently, consistently and faithfully like a parent for his/her own child. It is a great encouragement to know that Monica -mother of St. Augustine (354-430 A.D. – a Christian theologian and philosopher whose writings influenced the development of western philosophy and western Christianity) prayed persistently for his salvation for more than thirty years!

We should never be an irresponsible parent by depending on the prayers of any preacher or God's servant. To know/hear that our children are walking in God's truth (not that they are billionaires / achievers) should bring us greatest joy (3 John 4).

May our Almighty God bless you and your children as He has promised in Isaiah 8:18 "Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion".



Mr. Abraham Jebaveeran lives in a North Indian city with his wife and youngest son. They are ministering to young people including university students.

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A shepherd looks unto the Shepherd

Most Christian families know Psalm 23 from memory. If not for the whole chapter, every Christian will surely know these first few words: “The Lord is my shepherd”. A couple of days ago, these words came to my mind time and again. I meditated upon them and compared those times with the current situation related to COVID 19, migrant crisis and racism.

The present situation is a pressure test for the elected leaders to demonstrate their ability to lead the nations from the front, like shepherds leading their flocks. In the Bible, there was a King, David. He was not equipped to rule the country or had any prior experience to fight in a war. He only knew one thing - that the Lord is his shepherd. He worshipped the Lord as his shepherd, which shaped his life to emulate God’s character while dealing with his people of Israel.

1. A shepherd:

1.1. Share and care:

David himself was a shepherd, before becoming the King. He cared for his sheep and protected them from danger and led

them into green pastures. The Prophet Samuel anointed him to be a designated king of Israel. At one point, while David was running for his life, the Amalekites raided their camp and took their belongings. David went after them with his six hundred soldiers. Half way through, two hundred soldiers backed off as they couldn't proceed anymore. On that day, God has gave him a great victory.

When they returned to their camp after victory, the four hundred soldiers who fought the battle were reluctant to share their plunder with the two hundred soldiers who stayed back. David rebuked them and asked them to share the possession. He made a law that each one has to receive their share alike.

David liked to share things but Saul was the opposite. He kept and took from the people just as Samuel highlighted the consequences of asking for a king who will take all that they have.

1.2. Leading the battle:

A shepherd should go before and lead the flocks into a fertile place that will provide them with enough food. King David led many battles on many occasions for the nation. Many times Saul didn't lead the battles. When Goliath defamed the Israelites, he was watching without taking any action unlike David who defeated Goliath. David took his life into his hands to protect the Israelites from the Philistines.

1.3. Wait patiently:

David, the designated king, had two opportunities to kill Saul, the then king of Israel when he was being chased by Saul. If David would have killed Saul at that time, he would have become the king immediately. He could have avoided his run from pillar to post for his life. But, David did not do it; He waited patiently for his rightful time.

2. The Shepherd:

David, the king of Israelites, looked unto the Lord for his deliverance and also hoped for the great Shepherd who was to come according to the promise of Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:14. But, we are a more privileged people, as we know the shepherd, Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour who came into the world to defeat

sin and death and to redeem all people by his blood to include them in His kingdom.

2.1. Share and care:

God, the eternal father, lavished his love upon His eternal son. The Father's love is self-giving and flows unto us by sending his son to the world to save us from the sin. Jesus Christ, the eternal son, accomplished that salvation on the cross and was resurrected on the third day. He shared his life to give life to us. He accepts us to be His children and granted us the privilege to be with the Father.

As we know Him, and believe in Him, our desire is that our heart, and attitude to be changed like Jesus Christ. If we follow the Shepherd, our love will be outflowing and self-giving life for others: Jesus commissioned Peter to 'Feed the lamb'. Our life has to be shaped like the shepherd, if we follow the great Shepherd Jesus Christ.

2.2. Leading the victory:

Jesus Christ, being divine, set aside everything to become a servant and humbled Himself till death. As a result, God raised him from the dead and exalted him to the highest place. He comes to the world to fulfil the scriptures written about him in Psalms, the Prophets and Moses' literature. He is the Lamb of God, the tabernacle, the prophet, the temple, and The great 'I am'.

Just the way David went as a champion of Israelites to defeat Goliath, Jesus went to the cross as a serpent crusher to crush the head of the serpent and deliver the people from sin and death. He was resurrected on the third day and is living forever.

Jesus obtained victory on the cross which is the great salvation and the gift of salvation has been given to us. As His soldiers, we need to follow Jesus Christ, celebrate his victory, and proclaim him.

2.3 Wait patiently:

The main purpose for which Jesus came to this world is to deliver people from sin. Jesus' brothers, Satan and disciples tempted him to be a popular leader or go through short cuts to obtain the earthly throne. Jesus Christ waited for His hour. Once His

hour has come he clearly set his face towards the cross. He didn't succumb to the pressure of the people.

Conclusion:

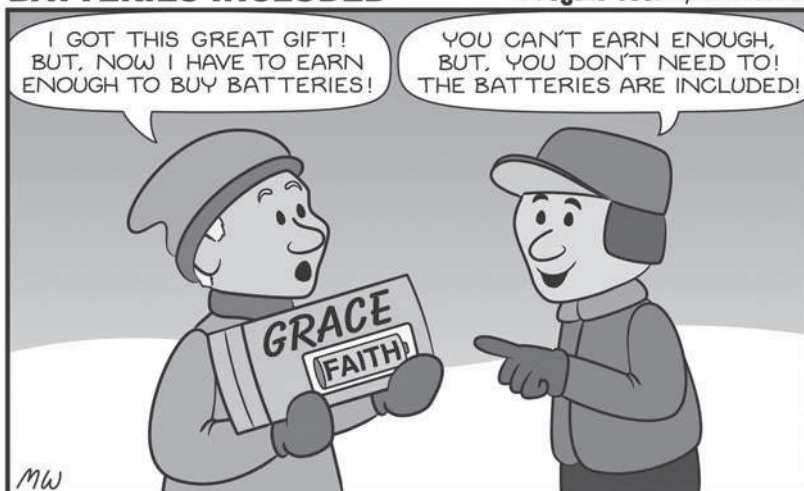
As David the shepherd, looked unto the Shepherd, in the same way, the present leaders need to look unto the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, to lead the people with compassion and care. He came to the world: to die for our sin, was resurrected on the third day, to share His glory with us, and take us to the Father in order to keep us near in His bosom becoming the Children of God. Let us therefore, live a holy life, follow the shepherd who has won the battle of sin and death and wait patiently for his return, show selfless love and outflowing love to others and bring others to Christ.



Peter Daniel Joseph, lives in Perth, with his wife and two grown-up daughters. Presently joined as a student, doing Graduate Diploma in Divinity in Trinity Theological College, Perth.

BATTERIES INCLUDED

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



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For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

— EPHESIANS 2:8-9 KJV

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THE IMPACT OF FAMILIES . . .



A couple moved into a new house on their transfer to a town. One morning while having breakfast, the lady saw her neighbour drying the washed clothes on the clothesline. This woman said to her husband, "It looks like she doesn't know how to wash clothes well, or may be the washing powder is not good... or their washing machine may be old."

Her husband looked on but remained silent.

The next day also, she made the same comments while her neighbour hanged her washed clothes.

After one week this woman surprised to see that her neighbour's clothes were well washed and hanging outside. She said to her husband, 'Look! she learned to wash well'. The man replied,

'I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows'

This is how our perception matters.

During this pandemic situation, how we perceive people matters. God requires of us 'empathy' rather 'sympathy' towards our neighbours. Let our homes be the nursery where godly values are nurtured and also a channel of blessing for others around us. Every home should become a little church, where people come to praise God for His wonderful deeds and to pray for their sorrowful situations.

Last Sunday, our church conducted the Holy Eucharist in a new way in this pandemic situation. In a live service our pastor prayed for the bread and wine. The instructions were given to all the members- 'Every home should become a small Church; father should serve the bread and wine to the members of that family after the pastor's prayer.' So, in every home, the husband / father became a servant of God that Sunday. COVID19 changed the perspective and manner of The Holy Eucharist. To fulfil the Lord's command every home became a small Church. This is wonderful.

'Every Home a Little Church' is a 300 year old concept. It was introduced and practiced very strictly by Puritans. They believed the father of the house should be the pastor ministering in his home, as ordained pastors minister in the church. One writer called home, "the seminary of the Church." The Puritans even published elaborated manuals of family worship. If the father neglected the spiritual training of his family, he could be brought before the elders for Church discipline. If he refused to take proper leadership role, he could be debarred from the Lord's table¹. Such thoughts and ideologies may seem too extreme to us but our perspective is also important. It's the matter of how we perceive family worship.

An exemplary believing family:

There was a family in 1st Century in Lystra (now it is in Turkey). They heard the gospel through Paul and Barnabas during their first missionary journey. In that family first convert was Mrs. Lois. Through her, Eunice her daughter was also converted. Eunice's son Timothy also accepted Jesus. At the time of Paul's second missionary journey he was a young believer. Because of Timothy's reputation as a believer, he got the privilege to work with Paul, a great theologian. This small family of that pagan area produced a Bishop of the church at Ephesus.(2 Tim 1:5, Acts 16)and one of the first missionaries for Europe. What an impact of a believing mother and grandmother! They encouraged him to study the word of God (2 Tim 3: 14-15). He was the co-author of 6 out of 13 epistles of Paul. **Open hearts and homes of believing families**

Open home is the hallmark of UESI, through which many students and graduates nurtured and encouraged to follow the Lord. A Christian home is a miniature Church. There should be singing, Scripture reading and supplication in that 'Little Church'. It is the

place where its members enjoy love, rest, privacy, a sense of security, and learn to play, pray and plan.

When we were students we were nurtured by sacrificial graduate families, where we learnt singing, music, interpreting the word, praying, how leading meetings, cooking, washing dishes, etc.

As students in Union Biblical Seminary, Pune we were mentored by Professor Dr Isaiah's family. 15 to 20 students would meet on Fridays at their home. We sang songs, played instruments and read Scripture, after which Dr. Isaiah would share a small expository sermon. (at that time he was the only person who did Ph. D in Homiletics in India). Every little church (family) should have three essential practices:

Songs:

Learn and teach songs of the Christian faith to the members in your little Church. This is not just a good advice, it's a Biblical command. "Speaking to one another with psalms hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord..." (Eph 5: 19). God commands us to learn Christian music and to teach children. Singing with musical instruments is very beautiful. Christian children have a peculiarity they are inbuilt God given music sense. Encourage children to learn musical instruments. There are hymns, gospel songs and many contemporary choruses in English and even in local languages also. Sing to your children. Sing with them. Say the words and have them repeat after you. Use videos, song books to teach or to learn them yourself. This is doubly important in an age where the younger generation is turning away from good words to slang from peer groups. Many Christian icons learned many songs in their childhood. Charles Spurgeon's sermons were filled with quotations from hymns. It is said that when he was young, his grandfather greatly admired the hymns of Isaac watts and his grandmother offered him a penny for every hymn he could recite perfectly. He memorised so many that she lowered the amount to half a penny.

Scripture:

When I was child my father bought a pictorial Bible from CLS, Hyderabad. That created my interest in the Bible. Then I thought myself, if I don't read the Bible now in my student age I may not

read the Bible in my life time. So I read whole Bible with much reverence. Bible stories are more interesting than movies. Our youth must read them to believe in God's omnipotence. Whatever it takes, make sure your children hear and read the Word of God at home.

Supplication:

Supplication is a big word for prayer. We need to pray for our children and students and with them also. They need to hear us pray and then they should pray with us. When young, I feared much to pray before elders. Once when I was asked to pray in a group, I shivered, and could not pray, but after that I learnt. Supplication means not simply asking, it means begging earnestly. Supplication is not an option; it is our obligation. Our dear Lord commands us to pray earnestly in Luke's gospel (Lk 18: 1-8).

We do not have to compare with other sin spiritual matters. Theodore Roosevelt said **"comparison is the thief of joy."** We should not let anything steal our joy of salvation. **Believing families should see the world**

This little Church should see the world and should develop a global outlook. We are servants of God. That's why we should train our children and students in singing, reading scripture and in supplication. We should move from the narrow mind of 'my family' to 'the world is my family.'

In this COVID-19 time, children of Mozambique East Africa laid their hands on the maps of countries affected by the virus, and prayed with tears. Certainly, those children have a global outlook in their hearts and minds.

Young Churches in China sent more than 50,000 missionaries to the middle east with a slogan 'back to Jerusalem.' Now a days the concept of Church is changing, but concept of 'That Little Church' never changes. Now the world needs more impact of "Little Churches" than any time before in Church history. How we perceive the world matters.



Jason Battula is a teacher living in Chirala with his wife Sneha Latha and two college going children. They are actively involved in UESI ministries in Andhra Pradesh. Jason served as the honorary editor of UESI-AP's state magazine Vidyarthi Jwala.

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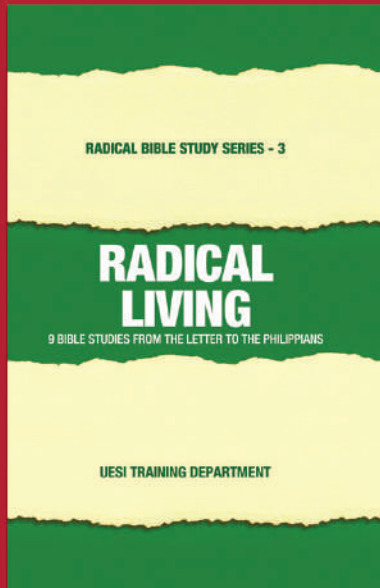
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RADICAL LIVING



“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!

Radical Living’, which is the third in this series has nine Bible studies from the epistle to Philippians. These studies help us evaluate our value systems and lifestyle against that of Apostle Paul, a radical disciple of Jesus. Following a radical Master will inevitably result in radical living. The epistle reveals Paul’s radical approach to life and relationships, the prayerful study of which will make a radical impact on our lives.

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